



## Dr. John Robert Ohlfest

August 25, 1977 - January 21, 2013

Dr. John Robert Ohlfest, age 35 of Roseville, died January 21, 2013 of melanoma. John was born August 25, 1977 in Sioux City, Iowa and grew up in Lawton, Iowa. He loved fishing and traveled each summer to fish with his extended family in Ontario, Canada. John achieved a black belt in tae kwan do as a teen and held weight lifting records at his high school for years after graduating in 1996. John attended Iowa State University, completing a bachelor's degree in Biology in 2001. He earned a Ph.D. in 2004 in Molecular, Cellular, Developmental Biology and Genetics at the University of Minnesota, finishing the program in record time. In 2005, he joined the faculty of the University of Minnesota in the departments of Neurosurgery and Pediatrics. In 2010, John was awarded a McKnight Land-Grant Professorship, and in 2012 was named as the inaugural holder of the Hedberg Family/Children's Cancer Research Fund Chair in Brain Tumor Research. He was also awarded the John V. Atanasoff Research and Discovery Award for distinguished alumni by Iowa State University in 2012. Known for his endless ambition and creative thinking, John designed new treatments for human and canine brain cancers, employing over 15 lab staff in the Ohlfest Brain Tumor Lab and collaborating with numerous colleagues. John's passion, influence and contributions to brain cancer research and treatment will be remembered and carried on by many. John met his wife, Karen (nee Himmel), while both were attending graduate school at the University of Minnesota. They were married in 2008. John is survived by his wife, Karen; daughter, Grace; son, Lucas; his parents,

Doug and Carolyn Ohlfest of Sioux City, IA; sister, Dr. Jennifer (Dr. Justin) Sands of Ankeny, IA; extended family; and his pit bull terrier, Tillie. John was a devoted father, delighting in family time and fishing. The family is especially grateful to Dr. Arek Dudek, Dr. David Largaespada and Dr. John Wagner at the University of Minnesota for their support and mentorship. Funeral Service 11:00 AM Friday, Jan. 25, 2013 (visitation beginning at 9:30 AM) at CALVARY CHURCH, 2120 N. Lexington Ave., Roseville. Memorials may be made to the family to support the children's education.

# Tribute Wall

BG

“ John was an amazing person who left a wonderful legacy for all. I admire his dedication to cancer research. I was John's school nurse at Lawton-Bronson and was so proud of him for his contribution to the medical community. My deepest sympathy to all his family!

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**Bonnie Grigg** - January 28, 2013 at 12:00 AM

AB

“ Dear Ohlfest Family,

*I cannot begin to express how sorry I am for the loss of John. He was a brilliant man with a gentle heart who inspired me greatly. I will never forget him.*

*I met John in 2008 when I interviewed for a faculty oncology position at the UMN veterinary school. He immediately impressed me with his passion for comparative oncology. Over the years, he impressed me even more with his drive, kindness, multitasking ability, and the support he always found the time to provide. I miss him greatly.*

*I hope you can soon find comfort in all the good memories you have of him. My thoughts are with all of you during this difficult time.*

*Antonella Borgatti*

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**Antonella Borgatti** - January 27, 2013 at 12:00 AM

DB

“ John and I were the greatest friends in college. He introduced me to my wife, music, and we hung out every day for years. Had a lot of fun, caused a lot of trouble, but most of all he was a good man with a big heart.

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**Darren Binning** - January 26, 2013 at 12:00 AM

SV

“ Our prayers are with you and all of John's family and friends. Susan & Tom Viker

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**Susan & Tom Viker** - January 25, 2013 at 12:00 AM

DH

“ our deepest smypathes to the family, parents and friends on the loss of John. we had just learned of his death and are saddened at his passing.

*Mary Alice Hoberg*  
*Dr. Richard W. Hoberg*

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**Dr. Richard W. Hoberg** - January 25, 2013 at 12:00 AM

AE

“ Dr. John Robert Ohlfest

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**Angela Erickson** - January 25, 2013 at 12:00 AM

JC

“ Very sorry for your loss. I will keep everyone in my prayers.

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**Jody Clements** - January 25, 2013 at 12:00 AM

JW

“ Karen, Words cannot express our sorrow for your loss. John accomplished so much in his short time . We will continue to pray for you and Grace and Lucas.  
Sincerely, Woodford"s

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**Jl'm &Lori Woodford** - January 25, 2013 at 12:00 AM

XZ

“ Dear Karen,

*I am very sorry for your and our loss of John. I was John's colleague at UMN and didn't know that he had melanoma when I left UMN last July. John was smart, creative, fun and had a great sense of humor. I have been inspired by his hard work and determination in curing cancer with cell and gene therapy. I will miss John deeply.*

*Xianzheng*

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**Xianzheng Zhou** - January 24, 2013 at 12:00 AM

RH

“ Dear Carolyn and Doug,

*I am so sorry to learn of the death of your son. May God be with you at this difficult time. Know that you held him, nurtured him, advised him, and surely contributed to the special person he surely was.*

*Rita Habeger*

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**Rita Habeger** - January 24, 2013 at 12:00 AM

BM

“ I'm a colleague of Clark's at UW-L. I am sorry for your loss.

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**Betsy Morgan** - January 24, 2013 at 12:00 AM

FR

“ DOUG AND CAROLYN

WE ARE SO SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSE  
PLEASE EXCEPT SINCERE CONDOLENCE

YOUR IN OUR PRAYS

FRED AND CHERYL

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**FRED AND CHERYL RUSH** - January 24, 2013 at 12:00 AM

MS

“ *My dad was a former high school teacher and coach of John's. My first week here at the U as a undergraduate, John took me out to lunch to talk about his lab. He was so dedicated and passionate about his research and just lit up when explaining it all to me, as well as when discussing his family.*

*Being a part of both the U and Sioux City community I can say that John was an amazing asset and will truly be missed. We are so fortunate to have had a person like him.*

*My heart, prayers, and love go out to all of you in his family, he will be missed but know that his research and legacy will continue.*

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**Meghan Simpson** - January 24, 2013 at 12:00 AM

CH

“ Dear Karen, Gracie, Lucas, and family,

*Words cannot express how deeply sorry I am that John is no longer with us. I admired his passion for life and his family, his drive and intellect for scientific discovery, and his genuine caring for others. Even in sorrow, I celebrate what a truly wonderful person he was and his positive impact on those he interacted with in life. I extend my condolences.*

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**Catherine St. Hill** - January 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

SS

“ Dear Karen,

*I am so sorry for your (and our) loss. John was an amazing researcher and a wonderful human being. His enthusiasm and dedication to the fight against cancer was an inspiration to me and truly anyone who had the chance to talk to him. We will all miss him so much. You are in my heart.*

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**Sandi Sherman** - January 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

KW

“ Dear Karen and family,

*I am so sorry for your loss, my prayers go out to you that you find comfort and support from the love of others around you.*

*Kristi Wheeler*

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**Kristi Wheeler** - January 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

TR

“ John was a wonderful friend to my brother in highschool. The friendship he gave helped keep my brother afloat during the trying years of highschool. The world was a better place for John's kindness and compassion.

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**Theresa Rachel** - January 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

SP

“ To the Family of John:

*I was shocked and saddened to read that John had passed away this morning. Please accept my sympathy and condolences to everyone.*

*He will be missed by everyone <3*

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**Sarah (Packard) Paul** - January 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

AM

“ When i think of John, I think of this extremely intelligent creative child I had in 4th grade. I had them do many creative writing projects and he was terrific. My sympathy goes for all of you. Such a loss for all of you and all the world.  
You can be so proud of all he accomplished in such a short time.  
God bless all of you.A

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**Ann Mrla** - January 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

DD

“ Dear Karen and family,  
My thoughts and prayers go out to you all at this time. I have followed John's career for years at the University and always been inspired by him. It was a privilege to care for him while I was faculty there and he will be sorely missed by our cancer research community. He was an truly an inspiration to all of us.  
Best regards,  
Jonathan D'Cunha MD PhD

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**Dr. Jon D'Cunha** - January 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

BC

“ Dr. John Robert Ohlfest

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**Bob Cormier** - January 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

FO

“ John was an incredibly humble and brilliant gentleman. I will miss him dearly as a University of Minnesota Cancer Center colleague.

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**Frank Ondrey** - January 23, 2013 at 12:00 AM

LF

“ Karen,

*I come away from reading your husband's obituary in awe of what an amazing man he was and what a beautiful legacy, both in his children and work, he has left behind.*

*What an honor it must have been for anyone that had the privilege of sharing a life with him.*

*You are in my thoughts.*

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**Lynnea Fedyk** - January 22, 2013 at 12:00 AM

JN

“ *We will miss John's beautiful smile and wonderful laugh. He is a Minnesota Hero who lives in the hearts of all of us. May God keep you, John's family, in his divine grace and bless you in this time of sorrow.*

*Jim and Sue*

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**Jim and Sue Nelson** - January 22, 2013 at 12:00 AM