



## James Dale Wolford

April 25, 1968 - May 6, 2023

Jim Wolford of Golden Valley, MN passed away unexpectedly at his home on May 5th, 2023. Jim was born in Omaha, Nebraska on April 25, 1968, to Vernon Dale Wolford and Kathleen Wolford (Fleissner).

Jim was a serial entrepreneur, launching his first business at the age of 13. Thanks in part to money raised through his lawn care business, Jim was able to fund his way through and graduate from Creighton Prep School in 1986. Jim would go on to attend St. Johns University In Collegeville, Minnesota.

Following a hard-fought battle with addiction, Jim joined Alcoholics Anonymous in 1993. It's through the program that Jim was reborn, recognizing that sobriety, his family, and the friends made during this time had saved his life and put him on a new path. He would go on to help countless others through their own struggles with addiction and often spoke publicly about his sobriety.

In his 55 years on this earth, Jim made a name for himself as a brilliant businessman and a truth-telling changemaker. His multiple successful businesses blazed a trail for the local tech industry, and have transformed IT operations for hundreds of Minnesota businesses. In 2001 Jim founded Atomic Data, a thriving "IT as a Service" company where he would go on to serve as CEO for 22 years. Under his leadership and vision, Atomic Data

would go on to not only employ 200 people, but also find great success in the venue technology market, expanding Atomic Data's geographic reach throughout the USA. In 2006, Jim purchased Foundation Technologies and subsequently turned it into a successful, 40-employee boutique IT services firm for creative industries. Prior to his entrepreneurial streak, Jim spent time in sales, risk management, and business strategy.

Jim's philanthropy, kindness, and compassion were unmatched and renowned. Through his companies, he contributed millions of dollars to the arts, literacy, mental health, cancer research, veteran support, refugees, disabled persons, youth programs, homeless shelters, food banks, green energy, and many other worthy causes. His 2012 visit to Africa led to the construction of a permanent free library in Uganda, providing education and opportunity for 3,000 book-starved refugees a month. When literacy nonprofit Start Reading Now threatened to shut down, Jim took control and funded operations indefinitely so kids would continue receiving 10 free books a year. When Jim recognized the woeful underrepresentation of minorities in tech, he set out to create a first-of-its-kind private/public IT training program called Atomic Academy, providing no-cost education and job offers to those who needed it most. When Jim saw a way to make a change in the world whether at home, in the office, or across the globe—he simply did it. His legacy of change lives on, and the world will feel it for decades to come.

Jim was a one-of-a-kind human. He was a selfless and compassionate father, husband, son, brother, friend, business leader, mentor, and human-rights advocate. Every life he touched has created a ripple effect of charity, humility, selflessness, curiosity, and work ethic. He will be painfully missed by so many. As we grieve our loss of a true titan, this quote sitting on his desk reminds us to stay strong and carry on in his memory, "When you're going through hell, keep going."

He is survived by his deeply loved wife Amy, his cherished sons Atticus & Phineas, his mother Kathleen Wolford, sister Mary (Don) Casey, brothers Michael Wolford, John (Barb) Wolford, & Tom (Kelly) Wolford, mother-in-law Joan (Scott) Leas, and sisters-in-law Sara Santi & Christina Fenendael. Preceded in death by his father Vernon Wolford in 1982. In lieu of flowers please consider a donation to one of Jim's favorite nonprofits, Start Reading Now ([startreadingnow.org](http://startreadingnow.org)). A remembrance of Jim's life will be held on June 10th.