



Contact: Anna Goodson
Communications Director
Anna@SADS.org

SADS Foundation honors Fred Smith, founder of FedEx and SADS champion

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The Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndromes (SADS) Foundation is sad to announce that Fred Smith, founder of FedEx and one of the SADS Foundation's most generous champions, passed away this week at age 80.

After losing his daughter Windland "Wendy" Smith Rice to undiagnosed Long QT Syndrome in 2005, Fred turned his grief into action. He funded the Windland Smith Rice Genetic Heart Rhythm Clinic at Mayo Clinic and provided the SADS Foundation with sustained gifts that power core SADS programs – from our family support program to physician education.

"On behalf of the SADS Foundation, I want to express my deepest sympathies to Fred's family," says Dr. Michael Ackerman, Mayo Clinic, President of the SADS Foundation Board of Directors.

"Fred's support has led to many breakthroughs in the diagnosis and treatment of inherited arrhythmia conditions. His commitment to honoring Wendy - and preventing other families from experiencing a similar tragedy - is unparalleled. As a physician, scientist, father, and board president, I am deeply grateful for Fred, for his friendship, and for his decades of commitment to this cause."

Fred Smith's philanthropy reflected his belief in giving back to the community and supporting causes he cares about. "What interests me are the institutions and the causes, not the naming or the recognition," Smith said.

Over the past twenty years, he has donated generously to support the SADS Foundation - in particular, our medical education program. This included a major gift in 2024 that allowed us to hold a meeting about LQTS for the FDA and to push the needle forward for new treatments.

"The SADS Foundation will honor Fred by pressing forward until SADS tragedies are a thing of the past," says Walker Frahm, CEO of the SADS Foundation.

About the SADS Foundation (SADS)

Established in 1991, the SADS Foundation is an international nonprofit organization that supports and advocates for families with inherited heart arrhythmia conditions that can lead to sudden death in young, apparently healthy people.

Warning signs include family history of unexpected, unexplained sudden death under age 40; fainting or seizure during exercise, excitement or startle; and consistent or unusual chest pain and/or shortness of breath during exercise. Learn more at StopSADS.org.

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Supporting Families. Saving Lives.

4527 South 2300 East #104 • Salt Lake City, UT 84117 • 801-272-3023 • www.StopSADS.org