

Information Center Overview

The Edward Lowe Foundation's Information Center houses a historical exhibit of Ed Lowe's business ventures, entrepreneurship initiatives and involvement in the Cass County community. Located at 58220 Decatur Rd. in Cassopolis, Mich., the center is open to the public on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (except holidays). For more information, call 800-232-5693.



Launching a new industry

Before Ed Lowe introduced Kitty Litter in 1947, cat owners used ashes or sand in litter boxes. A cleaner and more efficient alternative, clay-based Kitty Litter sparked

a brand new industry: Today cat-box filler generates nearly \$1 billion in annual global sales.

What's more, by enabling more cat lovers to keep felines indoors, Lowe helped reshape pet demographics with cats outnumbering dogs in U.S. households.

Early on, Lowe experimented with other pet products, ranging from cat toys to franchised pet stores. Yet he discovered that his real niche was the mineral business. By focusing on cat-box filler and other clay-based products, Lowe built a company that generated \$165 million in annual revenue before its sale in 1990.



An entrepreneurial mindset

"Ed was always thinking, always questioning," says Dan Wyant, the foundation's president and COO. "He had an inherent ability to create a process on the spot—or improve a product."

Reflecting this penchant for innovation, Lowe secured 32 patents, 115 trademarks and 36 copyrights. Many of these were unrelated to the cat-box-filler business, such as a bird feeder, an integral page-and-tab system to mark books and magazines, and a method for plotting and disseminating data on the paths of violent storms.

Lowe was also known as a savvy marketer. The Information Center features advertisements, packaging and product displays that date back to the 1940s—many of which were cutting-edge for their time.



Supporting entrepreneurship

In 1985 Ed and Darlene Lowe created the Edward Lowe Foundation to provide greater support and resources for entrepreneurs and entrepreneur support organizations.

The foundation conducts research, recognition and educational programs, with a focus on second-stage companies (those beyond the startup phase striving for significant, steady growth). Among key programs are:

- YourEconomy, an online tool for tracking business activity in communities.
- Companies to WatchSM, which recognizes companies driving economic growth.
- PeerSpectives[®], a unique CEO roundtable system.
- Retreats that help business leaders learn new tools and gain insights to accelerate growth.



BRV: a learning laboratory

Lowe had a flair for finding valuable property—and improving it. Among the 11,238 acres he purchased was Big Rock Valley, which today serves as headquarters for the foundation.

Big Rock Valley comprises 2,600 acres of woodland, farmland, prairie and wetland. Its diverse landscapes and ecosystems attract a wide variety of animals, plants and insects. Many of these are listed as endangered, threatened or of special concern, such as the eastern box turtle, massasauga rattlesnake, cerulean warbler and cut-leaved water parsnip.

Displays at the Information Center highlight some of the research and land-management practices conducted at Big Rock Valley, such as managing for old-growth woodlands and prescribed burning.