

# Unique Morgantown-based company's research could cure disease

BY JIM BISSETT  
For The Dominion Post

Donald Trump may have the art of the deal, but it's always about the biology of business for Steve Turner, who founded his WVU-based Protea Biosciences company here five years ago.

The company takes its name from the field of proteomics, which targets proteins in human cells — cells that have gone wayward to cause cancer, diabetes and a host of other medical maladies for which there's no cure.

Targeting such proteins could mean tailoring medicines that may deliver a knock-out punch to those conditions once and for all, said Turner, a Stanford University pre-medicine graduate.

Housed in WVU's Clark Hall, home of the university's chemistry department, Protea Biosciences is developing a host of protein

identification products exclusive to the field of proteomics.

"There's no one ahead of us in the world right now," said Turner, who has founded five medical research companies over the past 30 years.

This particular one in Mountaineer country is a pioneer venture if ever there was one, he said.

"We're the only company of our kind in the world right now," he said. "The first. This is an exciting time for our company, and it's even more exciting when you think that it's all happening in Morgantown and WVU. This is a great community with great people."

Like the way his company's products target proteins, Turner targeted WVU for his company, because of the buzz in biometrics that university researchers were mak-

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ing. His idea in 2001 became an odyssey to create a company that would license and market their research.

It wasn't long before Protea Biosciences began generating buzz of its own.

The company clicked on its lab lights for the first time in November that year. Just two months later, the new venture was a highlight in then-Gov. Bob Wise's 2002 State of the State address.

The governor handed down a glowing endorsement, and even introduced Turner, in the audience that evening by invitation.

Today, the company, which now has 10 researchers, has partnerships with major



industry players such as Novartis Pharmaceuticals. Novartis is using the Protea Biosciences' technology to target "biomarkers," or conditions that make proteins morph into what they are, in blood samples of certain cancer patients.

Turner allows himself to dream big, just like The Donald.

"Five years from now," he said, "I envision a \$100 million company, right here in Morgantown."

### Steve Turner

■ **OCCUPATION:** medical researcher and entrepreneur who founded WVU-based Protea Biosciences in 2001

■ **AGE:** 60

■ **EDUCATION:** B.A., pre-medicine, Stanford University, 1967

■ **FAMILY:** married with two grown daughters and a son

■ **QUOTE:** "Every morning when I put my feet on the floor I pray and thank God. Because when you think about it in the big scheme, all we're doing is just showing up for work."

# Lucky's Attic thrift shop raises money to build no-kill animal shelter in Mon County

FOR MORE information about Lucky's Attic or Animal Friends of North Central West Virginia, call 291-5825 or e-mail gspgainer@aol.com.

BY MARY HELEN HINCHLIFFE  
The Dominion Post

Suzanne Gainer's daily efforts lift the hearts of area people and save the lives of area animals.

As the founder and coordinator of Lucky's Attic, a thrift shop that benefits Animal Friends of North Central West Virginia, Gainer puts five days a week or more into organizing and selling treasures to save the area's homeless animals.

"I felt that the biggest gift that I could give Animal Friends was to come up with something that was an ongoing source of funds," she said. "I like knowing that I am making a difference. The animals don't have many people to speak for them."

She has been involved with Animal Friends for about 3 1/2 years. The nonprofit rescues cats, kittens, dogs and puppies in Monongalia County. It also works closely with the Mon Canine Adoption Center to rescue animals and make them available for adoption.

Gainer, a board member and volunteer, said fund raising for the organization in the past has been difficult.

"When I came on board to Animal Friends, it was a small group, and

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unteers and sells items donated by the public. And it keeps Gainer busy.

"We accept everything new and used, except shoes, clothing and purses," she said. "When I'm not there at the shop, I'm picking up donations with our van."

The shop is open Thursdays and Fridays from noon-7 p.m. and on Saturdays from 10 a.m.-7 p.m.

She came up with Lucky's Attic as a way to expand the group's fund-raising ability. One of Animal Friends' most costly goals has been to create the area's first no-kill animal shelter.

With donations and funds from Lucky's Attic, the shelter is taking shape. Gainer said the remodeling to convert the Brewer Road building to an animal shelter may soon be complete.

"The shelter is moving along, and were hoping it's going to be open by July," she said. "That justifies every hour I spend at this shop, knowing this dream is coming true."

Presently, Animal Friends rescues homeless animals and transports them into Maryland to no-kill animal shelters there, she said. Members also provide foster homes for animals until they can be transported or adopted.

"Had they stayed in the pound in Morgantown, every one of them

### Suzanne Gainer

■ **POSITION:** founder and coordinator of Lucky's Attic, the Animal Friends of North Central West Virginia's thrift shop

■ **AGE:** 62

■ **FAMILY:** husband, Brooks; daughters, Kristin and Shelby; grandsons, Hunter, 7, Harrison, 4, and Avery, 4; granddaughter, Abigail, 5

■ **QUOTE:** "I like knowing that I am making a difference."

She has five dogs and seven cats at home and said each one brings great joy to her family.

When Gainer isn't busy helping area animals, she is a caregiver for Stephen Ministries, a St. Louis, Mo., based program that provides congregations with training courses for lay counseling. The trained volunteers provide one-to-one spiritual and emotional counseling to the bereaved, hospitalized, terminally ill and others facing a crisis.



Bob Gau/The Dominion Post