

Sylester Flowers, R.Ph. Pleasanton, California

A practicing pharmacist for 46 years, Sylester Flowers has seen the profession become increasingly specialized and complex over the years, with multichain drugstores slowly edging out the neighborhood pharmacies. He misses those days when pharmacists owned their own stores and were respected community figures.

As a poor child growing up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Flowers dreamed of improving his economic class and saw pharmacy as a chance to become a professional. "I thought there was something charming about the profession because the old-fashioned pharmacist had a soda fountain in his store," Flowers said. After graduating from Howard University's School of Pharmacy, getting licensed to practice in three states and years of saving, Flowers opened his first pharmacy, eventually owning at one point six community pharmacies. Today he operates a single state-of-the-art facility serving an ethnically diverse low-income community.

"The pharmacist is the most accessible person of the health care team. You don't need an appointment to see a pharmacist. We have the opportunity to take care of the underserved within their environments," he said.

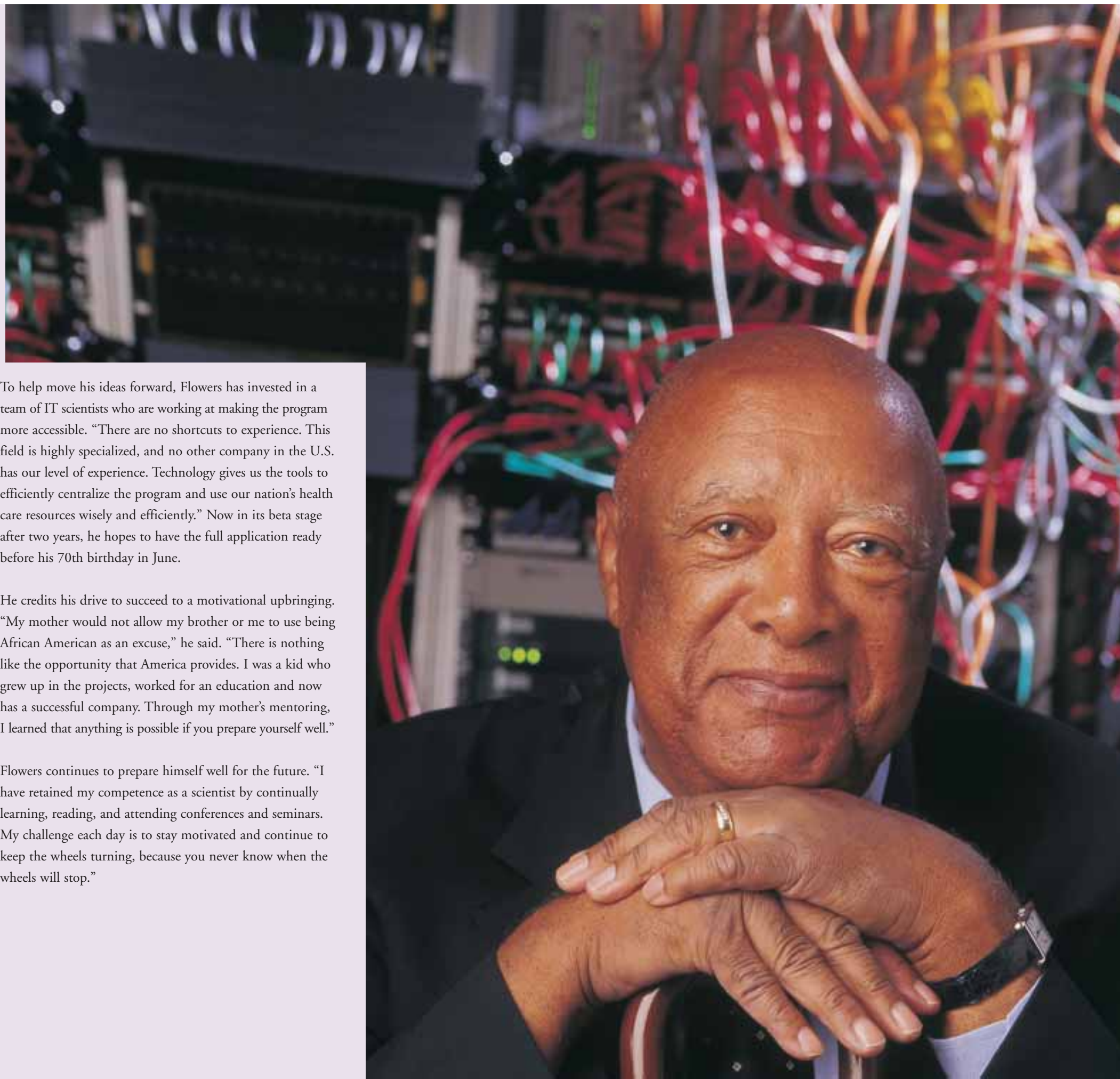
While remaining a community advocate, Flowers looked for business opportunities. In 1967, he formed Ramsell Corporation, which manages several companies, including the Public Health Services Bureau, a pharmacy benefits management (PBM) company that serves the medically indigent with HIV/AIDS in Washington state and California.

Devoted to improving this country's HIV/AIDS drug programs, he donates his time and money to groundbreaking research in health administration technology. "My driving ambition is to centralize the AIDS assistance programs in the United States so that the level of funding is not based on the policies of individual states but on a centralized federally sponsored program for every eligible patient," he said.

To help move his ideas forward, Flowers has invested in a team of IT scientists who are working at making the program more accessible. "There are no shortcuts to experience. This field is highly specialized, and no other company in the U.S. has our level of experience. Technology gives us the tools to efficiently centralize the program and use our nation's health care resources wisely and efficiently." Now in its beta stage after two years, he hopes to have the full application ready before his 70th birthday in June.

He credits his drive to succeed to a motivational upbringing. "My mother would not allow my brother or me to use being African American as an excuse," he said. "There is nothing like the opportunity that America provides. I was a kid who grew up in the projects, worked for an education and now has a successful company. Through my mother's mentoring, I learned that anything is possible if you prepare yourself well."

Flowers continues to prepare himself well for the future. "I have retained my competence as a scientist by continually learning, reading, and attending conferences and seminars. My challenge each day is to stay motivated and continue to keep the wheels turning, because you never know when the wheels will stop."



ONE GOAL: *To Focus*

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>3 Daylight Saving Time Begins 1826: Poet-oralist James Madison Bell, author of the Emancipation Day poem "The Day and the War," born. 1990: Sarah Vaughan, jazz singer known as "The Divine One," dies.</p> <p>10 1943: Arthur Ashe, first black to win the U.S. Open and men's singles title at Wimbledon, born. 1947: Brooklyn Dodger Jackie Robinson becomes first black to play major league baseball.</p> <p>17 1983: Alice Walker wins Pulitzer Prize for fiction for <i>The Color Purple</i>. 1990: Ralph David Abernathy, civil rights leader, dies.</p> <p>24 1944: United Negro College Fund incorporated.</p>	<p>4 1968: Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.</p> <p>11 1899: Percy Julian, developer of physostigmine and synthetic cortisone, born. 1966: Emmett Ashford becomes first black umpire in the major leagues.</p> <p>18 1995: Margo Jefferson receives Pulitzer Prize for criticism.</p> <p>25 1918: Ella Fitzgerald, "First Lady of Song," born.</p>	<p>5 1951: Washington, D.C., Municipal Court of Appeals outlaws segregation in restaurants.</p> <p>12 1983: Harold Washington becomes first African American elected mayor of Chicago.</p> <p>19 1972: Stationed in Germany, Major Gen. Frederic E. Davidson becomes first African American to lead an Army division.</p> <p>26 1888: Sarah Boone patents ironing board.</p>	<p>6 1909: Matthew A. Henson reaches North Pole, 45 minutes before Robert E. Peary.</p> <p>13 1950: Historian Carter G. Woodson, author of <i>The Miseducation of the Negro</i>, dies. 1997: Tiger Woods wins Masters Golf Tournament.</p> <p>20 1894: Dr. Lloyd A. Hall, pioneering food chemist, born.</p> <p>27 Administrative Professionals Day 1968: Dr. Vincent Porter becomes first black certified in plastic surgery.</p>	<p>7 1915: Jazz and blues legend Billie Holiday born. 1959: Lorraine Hansberry becomes first black playwright to win New York Drama Critics Award (for <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>).</p> <p>14 1775: First abolitionist society in U.S. founded in Philadelphia.</p> <p>21 1966: Pfc. Milton L. Olive III awarded posthumously the Medal of Honor for valor in Vietnam.</p> <p>28 1839: Cinque leads Amistad mutiny off the coast of Long Island, New York.</p>	<p>1 1950: Blood research pioneer Charles R. Drew dies. 1989: Bill White elected president of the National Baseball League.</p> <p>8 1974: Atlanta Braves slugger Hank Aaron hits 715th career home run, surpassing Babe Ruth as the game's all-time home-run leader.</p> <p>15 1964: Sidney Poitier becomes first black to win Academy Award for Best Actor for <i>Lilies of the Field</i>.</p> <p>22 1922: Jazz bassist and composer Charles Mingus born.</p> <p>29 1899: Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington, jazz musician and composer, born.</p>	<p>2 1984: Georgetown coach John Thompson becomes first African American coach to win the NCAA basketball tournament.</p> <p>9 1898: Paul Robeson, actor, singer, activist, born.</p> <p>16 1862: Slavery abolished in the District of Columbia.</p> <p>23 Passover Begins (sundown) 1856: Granville T. Woods, inventor of the steam boiler and automobile air brakes, born. 1872: Charlotte E. Ray is first black woman admitted to the District of Columbia Bar.</p> <p>30 1952: Dr. Louis T. Wright honored by American Cancer Society for his contributions to cancer research.</p>

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AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY CALENDAR
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