



For Immediate Release

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Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center Reaches \$36 Million Fundraising Milestone

\$2 Million Gift From Zev and Shifra Karkomi Names Permanent Exhibition, Brings Museum to 80% of \$45 Million Goal

CHICAGO – The Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center today announced it has surpassed a fundraising milestone of \$36 million – 80 percent of its fundraising campaign – thanks to a generous \$2 million donation from Zev and Shifra Karkomi of Chicago. In honor of their significant contribution, IHMEC will name its permanent exhibition space after the Karkomi family.

In the Jewish tradition, the number 18 – or *chai* in Hebrew – means life, and is considered to be a lucky number. The number thirty-six is referred to as “double *chai*” – or twice as good.

Designed by award-winning architect Stanley Tigerman, the 65,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art facility is set to open early next year in Skokie. It will be the largest Holocaust learning center in the Midwest dedicated to preserving the memories of those lost in the Holocaust and to teaching current generations about their role in combating intolerance and genocide in today’s world. The museum’s significance is international in nature, as it supports international human rights projects such as the Cambodia Tribunal Monitor (www.cambodiatribunal.org) and will bring international human rights figures to the Chicago area for its Voices of Conscience lecture series.

“We are tremendously grateful to the Karkomi family for this remarkable contribution,” said Museum Capital Campaign Chair J.B. Pritzker. “Their generosity has taken us beyond 80 percent of our \$45 million fundraising goal. Thanks to friends like the Karkomis, hundreds of thousands of students and adults each year will learn how important it is to stand up against hatred and bigotry.”

Zev Karkomi, an independent real estate investor, and his wife Shifra, a retired teacher, came to the United States by way of Israel after departing Eastern Europe at the dawn of World War II. The couple and their family ultimately settled in Chicago in 1960. Over the years, the Karkomis have become dedicated philanthropists with strong ties to the Jewish community and to organizations that share their commitment to education, diversity, and issues of social justice.

(more)

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“My parents and brothers were among the many who perished during the Holocaust,” said Zev Karkomi. “We are naming this exhibition for them. It is important that we ensure their legacy and that the history of the Holocaust is preserved in the hearts and minds of today’s youth and for generations to come. The Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center will offer an essential learning opportunity for Chicago and the Midwest, and we are honored to be a part of it.”

The Karkomi gift is one of many significant donations that have allowed the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center to reach this milestone. Other contributions of \$1 million or more have come from the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, the Larry and Lillian Goodman Foundation, the Brill Family Foundation, and others. Contributions under \$1 million have been received from the Smolyansky Family Foundation, the Glen and Wendy Miller Family Foundation, the Irving Harris Foundation, the Alvin H. Baum Family Fund and Mr. and Mrs. Joel M. Friedman, Glenview State Bank, Lawrence and Brenda Feis, Michael and Jacqueline Ferro, and Bruce and Elizabeth White and others. The Museum also received a grant from the State of Illinois in the amount of \$6 million.

“We are incredibly grateful to all of the donors who recognize our shared responsibility to never forget,” said Richard Hirschhaut, museum project and executive director. “We have reached a significant achievement in our \$45 million campaign effort. With the continued support of the Chicago community and friends dedicated to our mission, what started out as a simple idea among a group of Chicago-area Holocaust survivors will soon become a world-class Holocaust Museum.”

Expected to host more than 250,000 visitors each year, the new museum will reach students throughout Illinois and across the Midwest, educating them about the Holocaust and other genocides and instilling in them awareness of the dangers of unchallenged bigotry. By law, students in Illinois are required to learn about the Holocaust and other genocides. The Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center will help fulfill this mandate.

The Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center is a project of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois. Founded by Holocaust survivors more than 25 years ago, the organization is dedicated to teaching about the Holocaust and the dangers of unchallenged hate. The organization has taught school and community groups through a small storefront museum and speakers’ bureau since 1981. To learn more, visit www.ILHolocaustMuseum.org.

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