



# Friends of Yemin Orde

Supporting educational communities for at-risk youth in Israel

## **Press Release: Friends of Yemin Orde Receives Transformative \$1.5 Million Gift from Longtime Donors, Kathy and Michael Azeez**

*The Azeez gift will allow for the completion of funding needed to build the new Davidson Auditorium and Cultural Center, as well as build two staff homes at Yemin Orde Youth Village. The auditorium and cultural center is the largest capital project ever assumed at Yemin Orde.*

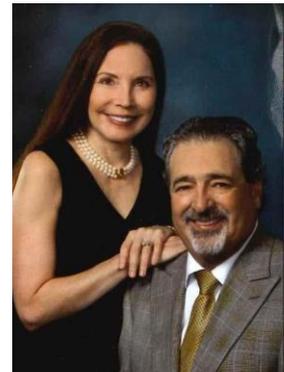
### **Friends of Yemin Orde**

**For Immediate Release: July 2019**

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BETHESDA, MD -- Friends of Yemin Orde is pleased to announce that it has received a transformative gift of \$1.5 million from longtime donors, Kathy and Michael Azeez. This important gift will allow for the completion of funding needed to build the Davidson Auditorium and Cultural Center, as well as build two staff homes, at Yemin Orde Youth Village in Israel. The Azeez family's leadership and generosity will be recognized during a special ceremony at Yemin Orde Youth Village when the center's construction is completed in December 2021. Friends of Yemin Orde is the philanthropic partner of Yemin Orde Youth Village and Village Way Educational Initiatives (VWEI), both located in Israel. The Village is home, school and safe haven to 430 at-risk youth from around the world, most of whom suffered trauma from poverty, isolation, family dysfunction and language, cultural and educational challenges. VWEI expands the Village Way educational methodology, successfully modeled at Yemin Orde, to 49 youth villages, therapeutic residential communities and high schools, including schools in Arab communities. Visit [yeminorde.org](http://yeminorde.org) for more information or email [info@yeminorde.org](mailto:info@yeminorde.org).



*Kathy and Michael Azeez*

In 2018, Manny and Brigitta Davidson committed the lead gift of \$4.5 million for a \$5.5 million project to build an auditorium and cultural center at the Village. The Davidsons challenged Friends of Yemin Orde to raise the remaining \$1 million. The Azeez's gift will also help accelerate the construction of a new staff apartment complex at the Village. Each complex will contain four staff apartments. Two apartments are already committed; the Azeez family gift will support the completion of the remaining two apartments.

### **Michael Azeez provides outstanding leadership for Friends of Yemin Orde**

Since 2009, Michael has served as a Board Member for Friends of Yemin Orde and he has served as Chair of its Marketing Committee. He continues to provide extraordinary leadership to the organization's ongoing rebranding project.

“We are grateful to Michael for his tireless dedication throughout his years of leadership with our organization, which has allowed us to impact Israel’s at-risk youth by elevating education and lifting lives the Village Way,” said Karen Sallerson, Executive Director, Friends of Yemin Orde.

When Kathy and Michael Azeez first visited Yemin Orde Youth Village in 1997, they knew instantly they discovered a magical place.

“We fell in the love with the people, the place and the mission,” said Michael. The Azeez family’s gift is made in memory of Michael’s parents, Sidney (Sam) and Anne Azeez.

Professionally, Michael joined American Cellular Network Corp in 1982 at its inception until after it was sold in 1988. He co-founded UNITEL, which operated cellular telephone systems in rural areas in the United States. He also serves as the managing partner of Vermeil Wines, in Calistoga, Napa Valley California. Michael also serves as Chairman and Founder of the Sam Azeez Museum of Woodbine Heritage where he was responsible for restoring the Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue and creating a museum on the history of the town.



*Kathy Azeez, YO graduate Nofar G. Desta, Michael Azeez*

Kathy Azeez is an avid and highly-skilled quilter and owner of Unique Quilt Patterns. She has donated three of her originally designed quilts to Yemin Orde, which are on display in the Village. Michael loves the great outdoors and enjoys playing golf, hunting and fishing. “Israel is one of our most favorite places to travel,” said Michael.

Michael credits his father, Sam, with being a role model for his charitable-giving.

“He was a big believer in giving back and he had a huge impact on my philanthropic efforts,” said Michael. “Just recently, two of our friends visited the Village. Afterwards, they sent me a note to say that now they understood why Yemin Orde is so important to me.”

Michael and Kathy travel to Israel frequently and have participated on Friends of Yemin Orde trips numerous times throughout the years. Their daughter, Jessica, served as volunteer at the Village for three months and taught yoga to the students. The family has also hosted fundraising events in their home in Palm Beach Gardens, FL, as well as provided home hospitality to Yemin Orde graduates and staff.

“Meeting with staff, alumni and current students is a continual source of inspiration,” Michael said. “The dedication of the staff is amazing. The experiences of our graduates and what they have overcome are a testament to their perseverance and the success of Yemin Orde and the Village Way.”

## **A meaningful commitment to Israel’s at-risk youth**

George Blank, Board Chair, Friends of Yemin Orde, said the Azeez’s gift will set an example and inspire others to support Friends of Yemin Orde in a substantial and meaningful way.

“Michael and Kathy have demonstrated their commitment to the future of Israel and the Village Way through their extraordinary generosity. I am proud to call them my friends and partners in

philanthropy. Our successes in 2019 will give us the energy and impetus to continue with our strategic fundraising goals into 2020,” Blank said.

Kathy and Michael both have BSBA degrees from Denver University. They have two children and three grandchildren. ###