

MICHIGAN

Holocaust Memorial Center gets largest ever donation

Duante Beddingfield Detroit Free Press

Published 5:27 p.m. ET Dec. 15, 2021

The Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus will look to add staff, virtual programming and facility upgrades after a sizable gift from a longtime donor.

The center announced last week a donation of \$15 million from the Zekelman family and Zekelman Industries.

The donation, that largest single gift in the Farmington Hills museum's history, kicks off a \$100 million fundraising campaign aimed at establishing a permanent endowment fund for the center's long-term sustainability.

“This is really great,” said CEO Rabbi Eli Mayerfeld. “Because of the great foresight of the Zekelman family, they would like to see this gift used in places that we need it the most. That includes things like paying for additional staffing so we can continue to provide virtual programming. It means being able to do upgrades to ventilation and air filtration to make our building as healthy and safe as we can. It's really meant to be flexible so that we can continue to grow and serve the community.”

The center, 28123 Orchard Lake Road, is the first free-standing institution of its kind in the United States, and Michigan's only Holocaust museum. The 55,000-square-foot structure opened in October 1984 and has hosted more than 1 million visitors since, with more than 100,000 crossing its threshold annually, pre-pandemic, to learn about the Holocaust and speak with survivors. During the pandemic, it reached more than 20,000 virtual attendees throughout Michigan, the U.S. and internationally.

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The Zekelman family is a longtime supporter of the Holocaust Memorial Center, both individually and through Zekelman Industries, a Canadian steel and pipe company that has a long history of philanthropy. The company maintains a location in Plymouth.

The \$15 million donation brings the Zekelmans' total funding of the Holocaust Memorial Center to \$25 million.

“We’ve always been impressed by the positive and lasting impact the Holocaust Memorial Center has had on millions of lives,” said Barry Zekelman, chairman and CEO of Zekelman Industries. “It’s truly inspiring. With antisemitism and hate crimes on the rise, we feel a sense of urgency to help organizations, like the Holocaust Memorial Center, that are passionately working to combat it.”

The museum's current special exhibit, "The Girl in the Diary: Searching for Rywka from the Lodz Ghetto," runs through the end of December. Based on a diary discovered in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp after World War II, it presents a unique view into lives disrupted by the Holocaust.

For museum information, visit holocaustcenter.org. The Holocaust Memorial Center can also be found on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.

Contact Free Press arts and culture reporter Duante Beddingfield at dbeddingfield@freepress.com or follow him on Twitter @DBFreePress.