

## **“The Anna and Mark Reznik Centre of Learning” endowed by the Susan and Isaac Wakil Foundation**

The Sydney Jewish Museum is grateful to be the recipient of a \$1million donation by the Susan and Isaac Wakil Foundation for the endowment of the Museum’s lower ground floor as a Centre of Learning in memory of Susan Wakil’s parents, Anna and Mark Reznik.

The dedication ceremony took place at the Museum last Tuesday and was attended by various members of the Wakil family as well as directors of the Susan and Isaac Wakil Foundation. The dedication was followed by a piano recital for supporters of the Museum by renowned international pianist, Sarah Grunstein.

The Wakils are well-known and generous communal donors to a variety of causes in the broader Sydney community identifying especially with education and it is in this area that the Museum holds special interest for them. Mrs Wakil, who hails from Bessarabia in then Romania, is no stranger to adversity and the horrors of man’s inhumanity to man. When Mrs Wakil was seven, her father was imprisoned in a Siberian gulag. Her mother did not survive the ordeal and Mrs Wakil together with an aunt escaped to Australia where after his release, her father was able to join them. Mr Wakil was born in Baghdad.

In numerous discussions with the Museum’s Development Director, Rob Schneider, Mr Wakil emphasized his belief in education saying that this should be the focus of any funding they would direct to the Museum. He said “Susan and I appreciate the role that the Sydney Jewish Museum plays in educating the community, especially young people on the horrors of war and the need to promote mutual tolerance and respect. Sadly, during WW2, Susan’s family experienced firsthand, tyranny and oppression and we hope that by endowing a study centre at the Museum, we will be contributing towards greater human understanding.”

“The endowment by Susan and Isaac Wakil of the Museum’s lower ground floor which houses a large study area as well as the Museum’s archives and historical research section lends itself to the fulfilment of the Wakil’s wishes for expanding the Museum’s education outreach” said Rob Schneider, the Museum’s Development Director. “The adjoining John Saunders Auditorium is accessed from this area and is extensively used for both youth and adult education. In addition, the generous support of donors such as the Wakils assist the Museum in expanding its adult programs especially in areas such as healthcare as well as law enforcement and other areas” he said.

The Wakil’s were quoted recently as saying that they wanted to “give back to the city” that made them, and the Sydney Jewish Museum is certainly an asset to this city and beyond. How lucky the community is to have benefactors such as Isaac and Susan Wakil who recognise the need to ‘give back’ to the city and country that have helped them achieve their success.

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