Lily Safra

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Mrs. Lily Safra shared her commitment to caring for the less fortunate with her husband, Mr. Edmond J. Safra, one of the twentieth century’s most accomplished bankers and founder of the Edmond J. Safra Philanthropic Foundation.

Since 1999 she has chaired this Foundation, which supports projects related to education, science and medicine, religion, culture, and humanitarian relief in over 50 countries.

She has initiated many educational projects in memory of her husband, including endowing the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University. A long and distinguished relationship with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem led to the naming of the Edmond J. Safra Campus. In an impoverished area of northern Brazil, she founded the Alfredo J. Monteverde School, which teaches science and technology to 1,000 children.

Mrs. Safra is Honorary Chairman of the International Sephardic Education Foundation (ISEF), which she established with her husband in 1977. ISEF is the largest non-profit organization promoting higher education for gifted Israelis from disadvantaged backgrounds. Since its founding, over 16,000 scholarships have been granted, including support for more than 1,000 MA and PhD students.

Both personally and through the Foundation, she supports research into cancer, HIV/AIDS, and neurodegenerative diseases, particularly Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s, at dozens of hospitals and universities worldwide. Her awareness of the distress experienced by the families of those battling illnesses led her to construct the Family Lodge for patients and their families at the National Institutes of Health near Washington, DC. She and her husband built a cutting-edge children’s hospital in Tel
Hashomer, outside of Tel Aviv, which annually treats thousands of children from across the region. She is a member of the Board of the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research and of the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health.

Mrs. Safra is a Trustee of New York’s Museum of Jewish Heritage and the Somerset House Arts Fund in London, as well as a member of the Chairman’s Council of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). She is a member of the Director’s Circle of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and is an Honorary Governor of the International Board of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra.

Mrs. Safra has also taken a lead role in humanitarian causes including building homes for orphaned children in Romania; constructing the Jordan River Valley Camp for children with cancer in Israel; helping to establish the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village in Rwanda; providing welfare services for the elderly in Odessa; and assisting the Red Cross with its relief efforts after natural disasters around the world. She is a Co-Founder of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, dedicated to the sustainable and equitable management of natural resources.

Mrs. Safra holds honorary doctorates from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, Brandeis University, and Imperial College London, and is an Honorary Fellow of King’s College London and the Courtauld Institute of Art. She is a Commandeur of France’s Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, and she was named Chevalier de la Légion d’honneur by President Jacques Chirac in 2005.
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