

STOCKTON COLLEGE

THE RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY



Azeez Presents Stockton College With Largest Gift in its History

Donates \$5 Million, Sam Azeez Museum of Woodbine Heritage
to College for Continued Advancement of Education, Community
Development, Prejudice Reduction

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Contact: **Tim Kelly**
 Office of Public Relations
 101 Vera King Farris Drive
 Galloway Township, NJ 08250
 Tim.Kelly@stockton.edu
 (609) 652-4950

Woodbine, NJ - Continuing a longtime collaboration and advancing mutual educational interests, The Sam Azeez Museum of Woodbine Heritage and The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey today announced a partnership resulting in the largest gift in the history of the College.

Michael Azeez, prominent businessman, civic leader and founder of the Museum has donated, through the Azeez Foundation, \$5 million to the College, as well as the Museum itself.

“I wish for the continuity of the Museum’s efforts to continue,” Mr. Azeez said. “There exists a synergy between the Museum, Stockton’s General Studies program, its Sara and Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center, and its community partnerships. This collaboration enables the Museum to advance its goals, accessibility and visibility.”

Stockton President Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. said the \$5 million gift would be used to establish The Sam Azeez Museum of Woodbine Heritage Endowment Fund to perpetuate the Museum’s activities, support its ongoing operation and maintenance for the continuation of its mission.

“Stockton is gratified and humbled by the trust Michael Azeez has placed in the College,” President Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. said. “The financial commitment Michael has made is remarkably significant. However, the act of placing the Museum, its contents and operation under our care represents something more important – the preservation of the region’s rich history as well as a commitment to reduce prejudice.”

The historic Woodbine Brotherhood Synagogue, which houses the Museum, was built in 1893. It was owned by the Sam Azeez Museum of Woodbine Heritage of which Michael Azeez

assumed control in 2001. Michael Azeez spent several years restoring the interior, exterior and grounds of the building, a National Historic Landmark, as closely as possible to its original form. In 2003 he established the Sam Azeez Museum of Woodbine Heritage, named to honor the memory of his father, a successful entrepreneur who grew up in Woodbine.

The Museum is a teaching center focusing on perpetuating the history of the wave of Russian Jewish immigration to the area in the late 19th century and working for the reduction of prejudice. Since its inception, the Museum worked with Stockton and the New Jersey Holocaust Commission in education, teacher training, the collection of oral histories and other activities.

The Museum contains a rich collection of historic photos, artifacts and documents detailing the story of the town's settlers who had been denied the opportunity to pursue agriculture in their native lands. Russian and Eastern European Jews were being persecuted through the various pogroms that drove them from their homes to seek safety in other countries. Through the efforts of the Baron de Hirsch Fund, they were resettled in the United States and Argentina. Woodbine was one of the largest and most successful towns.

"To this day, Woodbine remains a living example of the values and ideals of its founders," Mr. Azeez stated. "Our partnership with Stockton ensures the important story of Woodbine's history will endure."

Under terms of the gift, the Museum property, buildings and contents will be transferred to the College. In addition to the collection currently housed in the building, there are more artifacts currently housed at the Philadelphia Jewish Archives as part of Temple University's Urban Archives. As part of the agreement, Stockton will utilize the property and any improvements for the advancement of the Museum and its mission.

"This collaboration with Stockton continues Woodbine's heritage," said Mayor William Pikolycky "As a town our best 'crop' has always been our young people, with education foremost to the benefit of the growth of that 'crop.' Our relationship with Stockton will enhance educational opportunities through the Museum for the entire community."

"Stockton has long been a pioneer in the reduction of prejudice and hate through the activities of the Sara and Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center, our policies of inclusion and our community outreach initiatives," Dr. Saatkamp said. "The partnership we are announcing today is a natural fit."

Sam Azeez grew up in the area and as a young boy worked in his family's bakery. By the time he was 12, Sam was operating his own bicycle repair shop, launching an entrepreneurial career that would include banking, real estate development, venture capital investments and a pioneering role in the cellular phone industry. Through his company, Ultronic, he co-developed the world's first real-time computer quotation system, revolutionizing securities trading around the globe.

"My father never forgot his Woodbine roots, the more successful he became," Michael Azeez said. "The Museum aims to preserve the heritage of Woodbine and its contributions to the development of the region and beyond. I look forward to advancing the mission of the Museum in partnership with Stockton for many years to come," he concluded.

Michael Azeez, a graduate of the University of Denver, is co-founder of UNITEL, which operated cellular phone systems in rural areas around the United States. He is currently involved in a wide range of venture capital and real estate investment activities. In 2008 he became Managing Partner of Vermiel Wines, in partnership with former Philadelphia Eagles, St. Louis

Rams and Kansas City Chiefs Coach Dick Vermeil in producing quality wines from the Napa Valley region of California.

He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Museum and the Friends of Yemin Orde and the Executive Committee of the Sara and Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center. He also serves on the Board of Directors of the Natural Liberty Museum and Stockton Affiliate Services, Inc.

He is also a co-chair of the recently announced You Make The Difference: The Campaign for Stockton College, which seeks to raise \$20 million by June 30, 2014 for student scholarships, academic program enhancement and faculty support.

Mr. Azeez and his wife of 29 years, Kathy, are the proud parents of two grown children, Zach and Jessica.