

**Blessing Project AZ Report - September 14, 2011**  
**Prepared by Nancy K. Splain, Project Committee Member**

**Description:** Blessing Project AZ centers around bringing to the Valley of the Sun the one-of-a-kind, 2,000 foot multimedia exhibit “Pope John Paul II and the Jewish People: A Blessing to One Another” as well as presenting programs to bring members of the community together to learn, reflect, enter into dialogue and fellowship. The exhibit immerses visitors in the life and times of Karol Wojtyla and his lifelong Jewish friend Jerzy Kluger—a friendship that changed the course of history. Separated by the war and Holocaust in 1938, they were reunited only in 1964, over 25 years later. When Karol Wojtyla became Pope John Paul II, Mr. Kluger agreed to be his personal emissary to the State of Israel, helping to lay the ground work for dramatic historic healing of Christian-Jewish relations. In the course of his papacy, Pope John Paul II shattered the chain of 2,000 years of painful history between Christians and Jews, officially visiting and recognizing the State of Israel and engaging in a public act of repentance for the Catholic Church’s historical treatment of Jews.

**Venue:** George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center, (Carver Museum), 415 East Grant Street, Phoenix. AZ 85004 (South of Chase Field ballpark, west off of 7<sup>th</sup> Street).

**October 26 - December 11, 2011.** Hours: Noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Weekday mornings for school field trips and other groups by prior reservation. **(NOTE: Date change from earlier report)**

**Why Arizona, Why Now:** In our Centennial year, Arizona is at a crossroads. The exhibit and accompanying programs can inspire visitors to reflect and incorporate into their own lives the values personified in the lives Pope John Paul II and Mr. Jerzy Kluger: openness, respect, dialogue, understanding, reconciliation. These qualities are essential to building healthy, harmonious communities as we in Arizona deal with difficult contemporary issues and plan for our future.

**Project Update:**

**Fundraising:** **Tom F. Brady** is chair of this committee. To date a total of \$93,000 in cash and pledges has been raised; \$60,000 additional funds are needed to cover operating costs, additional security expense and publicity. Donations can be made on our website at [www.blessingprojectaz.org](http://www.blessingprojectaz.org)

**Publicity/Promotion:** **Diane D’Angelo** had to resign from her role as publicity chairperson due to work and other responsibilities. We are happy to report that **Jill Bernstein** and **Marcie Colpas** have agreed to head up the publicity/promotion component. Both have extensive experience in PR; Marcie has just retired from a position in PR with the City of Phoenix. They will concentrate on media, social media and coordinating with AEC and committee members on outreach to faith communities.

**Exhibit Logistics:** The Blessing Exhibit is scheduled to arrive on semi trucks on October 17. Bob Shelton the contractor from Cincinatti will be in Phoenix to oversee the installation which is currently scheduled for October 17 through 21 from, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily with final work on October

22 and 23 if needed. **Volunteers are needed** to serve as the installation crew, a crew of 6 people and a licensed electrician. In addition, **Barbara Nordlund**, member of Scottsdale United Church of Christ, is chairing the committee to recruit, train and schedule greeters, hosts, and docents to volunteer at the Museum during the 7 weeks that the Exhibit is here. Weekday morning and afternoon shifts are available as well as Saturday and Sunday shifts. People interested in providing this hospitality can contact her at 480 946-8026 or at dnordlund@cox.net

**School Outreach:** **LeAnn Gast**, former Program Director of the Arizona Science Museum, is chairperson for this committee. With the help of volunteers **Mary Benin**, retired ASU professor, and **Hojin Seo**, a student at Xavier College Preparatory, a data base of social studies teachers of public, parochial, private and charter schools was prepared and emails inviting these teachers to bring their students on field trips to the exhibit are being sent out. A 32-page educators' guide has been developed for use by the teachers providing resources and pre-visit and post-visit activities. Teachers can schedule their field trips directly on our project website at [www.blessingprojectaz.org](http://www.blessingprojectaz.org)

### **Our Programs at the Carver Museum while the Exhibit is there.**

**Faith Community Leader Day.** Thursday, November 3, 2011. 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**Rev. Jan Olav Flaaten**, AEC Executive Director, and **Dr. Stephen Batalden**, Director of the Melikian Center at ASU, are co-chairing this event. This daylong event for clergy and lay leaders promises to be an important interfaith event-- a day of study, discussion and fellowship with historians from ASU and theologians re prejudice and religious tolerance. The morning will consist of a panel presentation on "Pope John Paul II and the Jewish People in Historical Context" with Hava Samuelson, Director of the Center for Jewish Studies at ASU; Anna Cichopek-Gajraj, School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies at ASU; and Dr. Stephen Batalden, Director of The Melikian Center at ASU. The afternoon will consist of a panel presentation by theologians (to be announced) examining and leading discussion on prejudice, religious tolerance, developing understanding and building bridges. At the end of the program, participants can tour the Blessing Exhibit. Call Lita at AEC at 602 468-3818 to register.

**A Dream in Doubt.** Thursday, November 10, 2011 – 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Film documentary followed by commentary and Q&A with Mr. Rana Singh Sodhi. Mr. Bill Straus, Arizona Regional Director, Anti-Defamation League (ADL), will be the facilitator. Mr. Sodhi's brother, a Sikh businessman in Mesa, was killed in America's first post 9/11 revenge murder. The film documents Rana Sodhi's odyssey from persecution

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in India to embracing the dream of religious freedom in America, his family's journey to reclaim the American dream after his brother's tragic death, and the family's commitment to combat hatred with courage, hope and dedication to work for understanding and reconciliation. Free event, but seating is limited. Call Blessing Project AZ at 602 274-1113 to register.

**Law Justice and the Holocaust – Lessons for Today.** Tuesday, November 29, 2011 -- 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Presentation on the factors and stages in Germany leading to the Holocaust by Paul Wieser, a Mandel Fellow of the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, followed by panel response relating these factors to the U. S. Constitution and legal framework and to contemporary challenges

and issues facing Arizonans. The panel consists of the following distinguished members of the Arizona legal community: Arizona Supreme Court Chief Justice Ruth V. McGregor, ASU Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law Constitutional Law Professor David Kader, and Yavapai County Attorney Sheila Polk. Jerry Landau, Director of Government Affairs for the Arizona Supreme Court, will serve as facilitator for audience Q&A and discussion. Free event, but seating is limited. Call Blessing Project AZ at 602 274-1113 to register.

**Other events.** As the Blessing Project AZ host committee has met with various organizations regarding the project, the following have scheduled a meeting or event of their constituencies at the Carver to include a tour of the Blessing Exhibit:

Anti-Defamation League, Phoenix Sister Cities Commission – Ramat-Gan Committee, and the Girl Scouts.

- Tuesday, November 15, 2011. 12 noon – 1:30 p.m. Anti-Defamation League Brown Bag Luncheon at Carver for its Education Committee.
- Thursday evening, November 17, 2011 – Phoenix Sister Cities program (tba)
- Saturday, November 19, 2011. 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Girl Scout Day at the Exhibit

**Summary:** The Blessing Project AZ host committee and volunteers are working conscientiously to make this project a success despite challenges regarding funding. To assure success—that the largest amount of Arizonans as possible are able to visit the Blessing Exhibit, attend the programs and participate in this project, we invite everyone's help in "spreading the word", encouraging involvement and support. Project contact information:

Phone: 602 274-1113

Email: [info@blessingprojectaz.org](mailto:info@blessingprojectaz.org)

Website: [www.blessingprojectaz.org](http://www.blessingprojectaz.org)

Facebook: The Blessing Project AZ

Twitter: BlessingAZ

YouTube: [www.YouTube.com/user/The](http://www.YouTube.com/user/The) Blessing Project AZ