

MERAGE

PHILANTHROPIES

A PHILANTHROPIC FAMILY. MULTIGENERATIONAL IMPACT.

IMPACT REPORT 1998-2026



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A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Merage family doesn't just believe in giving back; they've built a legacy rooted in it. For years, improving the lives of individuals and communities through partnerships and investments has been woven into the fabric of who they are. Most of it unfolding quietly behind the scenes. Until now.

After more than two decades of sustained philanthropic effort across our collective of family-run foundations, this feels like the right time to pause, reflect, and share. Doing so allows us to celebrate the commitment that has been there from the start, help others understand the history that has shaped the way we give today, and recognize the people and organizations doing the real work.

Both the family and the Merage Philanthropies team continue to uphold their ethos around giving. What has shifted is our perspective. We recognize that there is value in communicating what our values, priorities, and dedication look like in action, demonstrating how our resources lead to positive change.

This report highlights the goals and missions being accomplished across our foundations and the organizations they serve. By showcasing this work in one place, we hope to offer a clearer view of what our team and the Merage family are doing to make a difference, including what we have invested in, what we are sustaining, and what remains possible in the communities we serve around the world.

The work we're doing at Merage Philanthropies is deliberate. While there are many moving parts, we believe that elevating the initiatives and organizations we support and helping others understand that work more fully can turn shared understanding into greater impact.

The legacy we're leaving behind belongs to all of us. Thank you for being part of this work.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Niyompong', followed by a horizontal line.

Michael Niyompong
Executive Director, Merage Philanthropies

MERAGE PHILANTHROPIES TIMELINE

For decades, the Merage family has been building a multigenerational legacy rooted in entrepreneurship, innovation, and giving back. From the business spirit Andre instilled in his children to the modern philanthropic vision that David and Laura have passed down to their own, the family has left a meaningful mark on communities across the United States, Israel, and beyond.

This didn't happen overnight. Here's a glimpse of the milestones, moments, and generational commitments that shaped their legacy:



1972

Andre and Katherine Merage leave Iran for the United States to join their four children



1977

Chef America, the company behind Hot Pockets™, was founded by David Merage, alongside his brother Paul, with support from their father, Andre

1998

Queen Esther Foundation was launched in Israel by David and his wife, Laura, which would later be renamed Merage Foundation Israel (MFI)



**DAVID + LAURA
MERAGE** *foundation*

2002

- David and Laura Merage Foundation (DLMF) was established in the United States by David and Laura
- The Merage brothers sell Chef America to Nestlé

2007

DLMF expands its mission to include the arts, investing in opportunities that foster education and meaningful engagement between artists and their communities



2008

- DLMF expands to support childcare and youth-focused organizations and education initiatives
- David and Laura's children, Jonathan and Sabrina, each establish their own foundations: Jonathan Merage Foundation (JMF) and Sabrina Merage Foundation (SMF)
- Queen Esther Foundation changes its name to Merage Foundation Israel

2017

Sabrina Merage, inspired by current events, embraces storytelling as a tool to create narrative change



2020

SMF launches Evoke Media, a private nonprofit supporting organizations, initiatives, and individuals advancing cross-cultural inclusivity through film and creative media



2022

Jonathan Merage relocates to Tel Aviv, Israel, a move that expands his personal and professional horizons as well as JMF's strategic focus



2023

MFI and JMF join forces to push Israeli innovation through disruptive technologies and advancements

2024

Laura and David launch the David Merage Foundation for Confronting Antisemitism to counteract growing antisemitism trends in the United States

2024

JMF expands support to fund the development of Israeli space technologies

2025

Sugarcane, a film supported by SMF and Evoke, is nominated for an Academy Award



DAVID AND LAURA MERAGE FOUNDATION

Founded: 2002



From the start, the David and Laura Merage Foundation (DLMF) has been dedicated to creating a more equitable society for all and leaving a legacy for future generations. To make that possible, the Foundation's core investment areas currently include early childhood education, mental health, Jewish life, and the arts.

DLMF'S STORY



David and Laura Merage immigrated from Tehran, Iran, to the United States as teenagers in pursuit of a brighter future.

Philanthropy has always played a significant role in their lives. For David, it was ingrained in him by his parents, Andre and Katherine Merage, as it was a fundamental part of their daily lives. Laura's passion for giving back was inspired by her interest in the arts; she observed how her artistic peers often felt isolated and took the initiative to create community, inclusion, and support for them and their craft.

David also inherited an entrepreneurial spirit from his parents, co-founding Chef America, Inc. with his father and brother in 1977. After they sold the company, which was known for developing Hot Pockets™, David and Laura redirected their focus toward philanthropy. Using proceeds from the sale, they established several foundations under the Merage Philanthropies umbrella, including DLMF and Merage Foundation Israel, which is dedicated to strengthening Israeli society.

Today, David and Laura are dedicated to continuing the family legacy of intergenerational giving, inviting their children and grandchildren to be part of something greater than themselves.

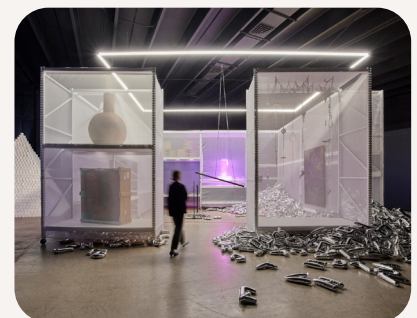
IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Since 2002, DLMF has funded 235 organizations and counting. Through grants, strategic partnerships, and other philanthropic investments, the Foundation supports organizations working to create opportunity and improve lives. Beyond its primary focus areas, DLMF has also made strategic investments in healthcare and community institutions, including Craig Hospital, National Jewish Health, and Soroka Medical Center.

235+ Organizations Funded Since 2002

5+ Years of Support to 38 Grantees

26 Organizations Funded in 2025



Black Cube. Photo: Third Dune Productions

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTS

BLACK CUBE

Laura Merage founded Black Cube in 2015, providing initial investment through the Foundation. This contemporary art hub redefines what a museum should look like by engaging global audiences through site-specific exhibitions, community involvement, and experimental practices. DLMF continues to be a proud funder and advocate for the organization and its programming.

9.32+ million
artwork viewers and program participants

240+ artists

170+
unique project sites
engaged, such as historic
landmarks, alleyways,
plazas, pools, and more

EARLY LEARNING VENTURES (ELV)

This independent public charity offers staffing and capacity support in child care, enabling high-quality care even when resources are limited. ELV serves child care providers and businesses both in Colorado and beyond by offering support through direct coaching, partnership opportunities, funding, back-office support, and more.

Since ELV's founding, DLMF has supported the organization, enabling it to scale in the following ways:

127,020 children
receiving enhanced care

2,866 providers
in ELV's network

DLMF'S TEAM

David Merage
Co-Founder

Laura Merage
Co-Founder

Michael Niyompong
Executive Director

Robert Nelson

Sabrina Merage Naim

Shari Beaudette

Sue Renner



Black Cube would not exist in its current form without the early leadership and sustained commitment of the David and Laura Merage Foundation. Over ten years, this partnership has enabled Black Cube to steward hundreds of artists' boldest ideas. The Foundation's impact is not just measured in scale, but in the freedom it has given artists to imagine what is possible and the accessibility [of] bringing artworks directly to communities."

– Cortney Lane Stell, Black Cube Executive Director and Chief Curator

ANDRE & KATHERINE MERAGE FOUNDATION

Founded: 2002



The Andre and Katherine Merage Foundation is rooted in the enduring values and philanthropic vision of its founders, whose belief in the dignity and potential of every individual continues to shape the organization's work today. Guided by a deep commitment to helping people build better lives, Andre and Katherine focused their giving on supporting individuals and families in moments of need, investing not just in programs, but in people. This legacy lives on through initiatives like Wings and the Pakal program, which offer support to individuals such as lone soldiers, offering not only resources, but a sense of belonging, stability, and care. At its heart, the Foundation's impact is found in the resilience of those it serves and the belief that meaningful change begins with seeing and supporting the person behind every circumstance.



My family represents three generations of philanthropists that began with my parents, and we are now working on a fourth generation: my grandchildren. It is my greatest joy to see our philanthropic commitment to Israel extend through three, and now four generations, of my family."

– David Merage

MERAGE FOUNDATION ISRAEL

Founded: 1998



The Merage Foundation Israel (MFI) was founded in 1998 to make the vision of a thriving and united Israeli society a reality. The Foundation has been a pioneer in social and economic work, promoting a wide range of programs that focus on immigration, social resilience, and development in Israel.

Inspired by David Ben-Gurion, MFI became involved in the Negev promoting and empowering leadership development, community building, and regular collaboration with other Merage Philanthropies foundations, including the Jonathan Merage Foundation.

MFI'S STORY



Founded by David and Laura Merage, MFI was originally named the “Queen Esther Foundation,” and was primarily focused on facilitating Iranian immigration in Israel. Beginning in 2006, they extended their focus to the Negev region and continued work in Iranian community integration through the Foundation’s official renaming to MFI in 2008.

Over time, David and Laura expanded MFI’s focus areas to include medical facility launches, technology programs, and offerings tailored to new populations, from senior citizens to army reservists.



I am a deep believer in the power of opportunities to ensure prosperity is a right for all. I see my work at MFI as a living proof of the Israeli dream—a dream where everyone can participate and thrive in this country filled with potential and opportunities.”

– Nicole Hod Stroh, Executive Director, Merage Foundation Israel

Though the communities MFI serves have evolved, the core mission has not wavered: to build a stronger, more resilient Israel by investing in the people who make it so. Today, MFI operates amid mounting security, social, and economic pressures, responding by sharing resources and building regional partnerships that meet the times, enabling its continued success in driving systemic change and lasting impact.

MFI'S TEAM

David Merage
Co-Founder

Laura Merage
Co-Founder

Nicole Hod Stroh
Executive Director

Ariel Ben Gad
Aviv Jerbi
Chen Evron
Dalit Gat

Hadas Ben Shalom
Hila Sulimany
Irene Benjamin
Maayan Mellese
Ofri Weizman

Sarah Nisani
Sigal Aferiat Cohen
Sinai Gohar Barak
Sivan de Jongh

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Today, MFI's work is organized around two pillars: Community Resilience, focused on giving people the tools to integrate, connect, and build meaningful lives across Israel and Negev Development, focused on positioning the Negev as a global hub for innovation and agritourism.

Negev Development

From its outset, MFI identified the Negev as a strategic national growth engine. Over the years, it has led and funded high-impact initiatives, including the Merage Medical Center in Dimona, the Rehabilitation Center in Sderot, redevelopment of Soroka Hospital, employment and entrepreneurship initiatives, and holistic municipal development plans. Today, the Foundation focuses on scalable economic engines that position the Negev as a global hub for innovation and agritourism through several flagship initiatives.

Community Resilience

Strong nations are built on strong communities. MFI develops programs for immigrants, reservists, families, seniors, youth, and women, giving people the tools to integrate, connect, and build meaningful lives across Israel.

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTS

DESERTECH AND CLIMATE INNOVATION CENTER

By integrating cutting-edge desert and climate technologies with regional development, the Center works to both accelerate innovative solutions for arid environments and create high-quality, high-tech employment in the Negev.

3,000+
entrepreneurs
supported

WINE TOURISM AND AGRITOURISM

MFI played a catalytic role in securing protected Geographical Indication status for the Negev wine region—elevating its global reputation, strengthening regional economic development, and positioning it as a premier wine tourism destination. The Foundation remains active through infrastructure support, training, and the ongoing operation of its Wine Consortium, while expanding the model into new agricultural communities.

980,000
wine bottles
produced

CONNECTED TO LIFE

Bridging communities across Israel and giving them the tools to connect and thrive is integral to MFI's mission. Since 2017, the Foundation has provided opportunities for senior citizens across Israel to build digital literacy in a quickly changing world.

7,000
senior citizens
engaged

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026, MFI plans to break ground on a new Wine and Culinary Center, move Negev innovations from testing to market, attract international tourists and investors to the region, and strengthen national infrastructure for reservists.

JONATHAN MERAGE FOUNDATION

Founded: 2008



The Jonathan Merage Foundation (JMF) was founded in 2008 to advance severe weather research and technology, and strengthen Israel's emergency response capabilities. Over time, the Foundation has evolved to embrace disruptive deep-tech innovations that address global challenges and create lasting impact for people and the planet. JMF collaborates with other Merage Philanthropies foundations, including Merage Foundation Israel.

JMF'S STORY



Jonathan Merage, founder of the Jonathan Merage Foundation, is a dedicated severe storm research scientist and philanthropist who bridges the gap between atmospheric study and high-impact social investment. The son of David and Laura Merage, he was born in Los Angeles, but spent formative years in Denver, Colorado, where his family built a legacy of giving back.

Jonathan developed a strong personal interest in earth and atmospheric sciences, particularly severe storms and tornadoes in North America. That fascination led him to establish JMF and is the basis of its original mission.



I've always been attracted to very powerful meteorological phenomena: tornadoes, lightning, storms, and hurricanes. They are some of the most powerful natural organizers of energy. I've made it my life's mission to understand such storm systems as intimately and intricately as possible."

– Jonathan Merage

In 2022, Jonathan relocated to Tel Aviv, Israel, a move that expanded his personal and professional horizons. Over the past three years, he has pivoted the majority of his philanthropic focus to Israel, spearheading transformative regional development and scientific infrastructure. As a result, JMF's mission has expanded to include innovations in disruptive technologies related to space, health, and climate. The Foundation also promotes resilience and rehabilitation efforts to strengthen Israeli society, advances emerging technologies that drive collective progress, and contributes to economic development in Israel's Negev Desert.

JMF'S TEAM

Jonathan Merage
Founder

Michael Niyompong
Executive Director

Nicole Hod Stroh

Sinai Gohar Barak

Sivan de Jongh

JMF'S IMPACT

Since 2008, the Jonathan Merage Foundation has supported 26 mission-aligned organizations through the invention, implementation, and advancement of cutting-edge technology. The Foundation's strategic investments focus on key areas:

Disruptive Israeli Innovations

From infrastructure and deep space to prototyping and applied research, JMF supports organizations advancing Israel's tech ecosystem, developing the next generation of innovators, and strengthening leadership in disruptive technology and space exploration.

Severe Weather

JMF invests in organizations advancing weather and climate research, from atmospheric science and storm prediction to renewable energy and disaster imaging, helping drive stronger science and safer communities.

Emergency and Community Resilience

JMF invests in solutions, organizations, and programs that help communities access essential resources, prepare for crises, navigate challenges, and recover from conflict.

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTS

CREATION SPACE

JMF is an early-stage investor supporting Creation Space, a new company that helps start and grow other businesses. They also focus on creating products for both Earth and space uses, positioning Mitzpe Ramon as Israel's national hub for space innovation. To support this work, JMF is turning a regional initiative into national infrastructure by closing the gap in Israel's space innovation, directly investing in operational capacity and building a community of leaders, policymakers, and academics who can move ideas forward.

RETORNO MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

In a collective effort to deliver emergency mental health solutions in Israel, JMF has partnered with Retorno, one of Israel's top mental health centers, which specializes in supporting and empowering at-risk youth. As a seed funder, JMF invested in Retorno's potential, contributing the early financial resources needed to accelerate its national plan and reach regions with the highest concentrations of vulnerable young people.

133x

Capital increase generated. JMF's early investments in Israel's National Space Hub catalyzed additional government funding.

62x

Capital increase generated. JMF's investment in MaxOvary catalyzed a competition award and follow-on investment.

JMF'S PATH FORWARD

In 2026, JMF is looking to grow Israel's distributive technologies that help solve humanity's acute challenges. The Foundation plans to directly invest in cutting-edge startups and support infrastructure growth engine companies that build and scale new deep-tech startups.

SABRINA MERAGE FOUNDATION

Founded: 2008



The Sabrina Merage Foundation (SMF) was founded in 2008 to spark inclusivity among diverse cultures through partnerships, initiatives, and campaigns. The Foundation’s approach is simple: drive impact and measure what matters, helping to create grassroots social movements that shift political, social, and educational dialogue.

In 2020, SMF founded Evoke Media to expand its work through support for films, podcasts, and other creative media. The intention of this move was to catalyze conversation and create connections. The launch of Evoke demonstrates the Foundation’s commitment to changing how we talk about complex social issues.



SMF’S STORY

Sabrina Merage Naim, founder of the Sabrina Merage Foundation, is the daughter of David and Laura Merage. From an early age, Sabrina developed a deep passion for understanding the world and promoting tolerance and inclusivity within it. After college, she continued her family’s tradition of giving by establishing her own foundation. It was her way of channeling that passion into action.



The impact we seek is when stories that move us and expand our minds on screen, start to work their way off the screen. Whether that’s in the form of local and communal action, policy reform, deep and engaging conversations, or just an idea that sticks with one person, these are all potential pathways to real, lasting impact.”

– Sabrina Merage Naim on Evoke Media’s impact

In its early years, SMF focused on more traditional forms of philanthropy. Over time, Sabrina embraced her own instincts and her parents’ approach, dedicating her energy to building bridges between diverse religious, cultural, racial, and ethnic communities through educational programs for young people.

After witnessing many of the polarizing historical events of her lifetime, Sabrina really found her stride, recognizing storytelling as a powerful tool for fostering social change and dialogue. Leaning in, she established Evoke Media as a SMF subsidiary to spark difficult but important conversations. Today, her work centers on telling stories that unite, creating opportunities for people from all backgrounds to connect, teach, and learn from one another.

SMF AND EVOKE MEDIA’S TEAM

Sabrina Merage Naim
Founder

Michael Niyompong
Executive Director

Geovana Oliveira

Jamie Newton

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Since its founding, the Sabrina Merage Foundation has funded 101 mission-aligned organizations. And, in the five years since its founding, Evoke has become SMF's storytelling and media engine, amplifying the Foundation's work through film, narrative, and media that moves people. Together, SMF and Evoke have supported an Academy Award-nominated film, shifted narratives for underrepresented communities, and built a body of work that spans causes, geographies, and impact.

Films Supported:

- *Refuge* (2018)
- *The 8th* (2021)
- *The Gig is Up* (2021)
- *1946: The Mistranslation That Shifted Culture* (2022)
- *Split at the Root* (2022)
- *Sugarcane* (2024)
- *Lowland Kids* (2025)
- *Creede, U.S.A.* (2025)
- *Shuffle* (2025)
- *Father Figures* (release expected 2027)

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTS

MEM GLOBAL (SMF)

As the new parent brand for Moishe House, Mem Global unifies all programs under one central identity. This organization engages Jewish young adults worldwide and helps them develop as leaders, empowering them to create and sustain Jewish communities that meet their own needs and interests. Sabrina and SMF played a visionary, founding role in Mem Global's international expansion, with one-third of all programming now taking place outside of North America.

SUGARCANE FILM (EVOKE)

In 2021, the discovery of unmarked graves at a former Indigenous boarding school in Canada prompted a long-overdue discussion about the abuse many children experienced. *Sugarcane* examines the legacy of Indian Residential Schools and their lasting impact on Indigenous communities, while celebrating the resilience and strength of the people who carry that history forward. Nominated for an Academy Award in 2025, the film is testament to Evoke's reach, credibility, and long-term cultural impact.

Executive Producer Sabrina Merage Naim played a key role in launching *Sugarcane*. Since its debut, the film has been screened at the White House and prompted the United States' first formal apology for its role in Indian residential schools.



December 17, 2024

It is a tremendous honor to host all of those gathered at the White House for this screening of *Sugarcane*.

I have always believed that we must know the good, the bad, and the truth of our past so that we can begin to remember and heal. That is why I became the first President to issue a formal apology for the Federal Indian Boarding School era—one of our Nation's most horrific periods.

For over 150 years, the Federal Government ran boarding schools that forcibly removed generations of Native children from their homes to live at schools that were often far away. The schools aimed to assimilate Native children by stripping them of their languages, religions, and cultures, often separating them from their families for years, with some never returning home. Native children endured physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and at least 973 children died in these schools.

The *Sugarcane* documentary shines a light on this shameful chapter of history, helping ensure that it is never forgotten or repeated. It is in that same spirit that, earlier this month, I designated the Carlisle Federal Indian Boarding School—the first federal off-reservation boarding school—as a national monument. Here, we can take a step toward redress and national healing in the arc of the survival, resilience, and triumph of Tribal Nations and communities.

I know the story told in *Sugarcane* wasn't an easy story to tell, but we do ourselves no favors by pretending it didn't happen. I thank you for your dedication to sharing the stories of so many Native children, families, and communities and shining the light of truth upon these wrongs.



Evoke's support has been invaluable in creating meaningful, inclusive content. Their commitment to impactful storytelling and fostering genuine connections around social issues has brought incredible depth to our collaboration."

— Sigrid Dyekjær, Film Producer

DAVID MERAGE FOUNDATION FOR CONFRONTING ANTISEMITISM



Founded: 2024

The David Merage Foundation for Confronting Antisemitism (DMF) was established in 2024 by David and Laura Merage to ensure that Jewish communities have what they need to feel safe and supported. The Foundation focuses on holding people accountable for hateful words and actions to safeguard dignity and prevent hate crimes. From convening a multifaith Congress to fostering allyship and advocacy, DMF also supports educational initiatives that promote understanding and coexistence across the United States.

WHY DMF EXISTS



In America, Jewish communities are facing increasing threats. Systemic hate has found a place in our schools, streets, and even on our screens. DMF exists to speak truth to power, elevate righteous voices, and mobilize a movement grounded in urgency and strategic clarity.

WHAT DMF DOES

The Foundation addresses antisemitism as an urgent issue that threatens the safety of our communities and poses a risk to democracy, pluralism, and our shared civic life. Under Laura Merage's leadership, DMF responds through targeted philanthropy, strategic dialogue, and cross-sector partnerships.



If DMF helps even one generation live more openly, more safely, and more confidently as Jews in America, then this work will have been worth it."

– Laura Merage

DMF'S APPROACH

Shifting narratives

DMF reshapes public understanding of Jewish identity through storytelling, media, and cultural campaigns.

Driving excellence through interventions

DMF is committed to funding what works, challenging what does not, and investing in early-stage leaders who disrupt the status quo.

Building field infrastructure

DMF convenes unexpected partners, shares actionable data, and fosters strategic alignment to transform fragmented efforts into a coherent movement.



DMF'S TEAM

David Merage
Co-Founder

Laura Merage
Co-Founder

Dafna Michaelson Jenet
Executive Director

Amanda Lilly

Andrea Martinez

Dan Leshem

Michael Niyompong

Robert Nelson

Sabrina Merage Naim

Shari Beaudette

Sue Renner

GRANTEE HIGHLIGHTS

Project Shema

The Free Press

ADL National Litigation
team

American Israel
Education Foundation



Laura and I founded the David Merage Foundation because antisemitism is not an abstract concern for us—it is something we lived. As young adults, we fled Iran to escape the kind of anti-Jewish persecution that strips people of safety, dignity, and opportunity. Having built our lives in the U.S., we are acutely aware that the freedoms we found here cannot be taken for granted. Today, we see familiar patterns of hatred and normalization re-emerging, and we refuse to accept that as inevitable.”

– David Merage

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merage.org