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EVJCC changes name to honor donors

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The Daron and Ron Barness Family Foundation has donated \$600,000 to the East Valley Jewish Community Center for its new Chandler facility.

The JCC will be renamed in the family's honor.

The donation will help cover expenses related to the purchase and renovation of the East Valley JCC facility and is the single largest gift the JCC has received for the capital campaign, said Ben Benedict, capital campaign chairman.

It is also the largest donation the Barness foundation has made to a capital campaign, according to Evan Bernstein, executive director of the foundation.

The Barnesses are not members of the EVJCC but recognize "its extremely important purpose in serving the Jewish community," said Ron Barness. "We feel a strong connection to the Jewish people wherever they are located and particularly feel compelled to assist members of our community here in the Greater Phoenix area."

A dedication ceremony and open house for the Barness Family East Valley Jewish Community Center will be held 1-3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 4, at the facility, 908 N. Alma School Road, Chandler.

After a ceremony to which local mayors, the Barnesses and representatives from the Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix have been invited, visitors will have an opportunity to tour the building.

The JCC kicked off a \$7.5 million capital campaign in October 2004 and has raised more than \$2 million to date, said Benedict.

The site is being developed in two phases. The first - with a goal of \$4.7 million - includes purchasing an existing building and land, renovating the building's interior and buying furniture, fixtures and equipment.

The second phase will be to develop 4.4 acres of land adjacent to the building into a full campus, including a swimming pool, ball field, health club and auditorium.

The Daron and Ron Barness Family Foundation was founded in April to promote philanthropy through partnerships with donors and community organizations.

Ron and Daron Barness and their two children, Jordana and Zachary, moved to the Valley from Los Angeles in 1994. Ron is the co-managing member of Barness Papas Investments, a real-estate company involved in the shopping center industry, and a part owner of the Arizona Diamondbacks baseball team.

He is chairman of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in Phoenix and is a vice president of the federation board.

Daron is a vice president of the federation women's division and serves on the board of Jewish Family & Children's Service.

The foundation has also made contributions to the Anti-Defamation League, Jewish National Fund, Phoenix Children's Hospital, Valley of the Sun Jewish Community Center and other nonprofits.

"(We) hope that our involvement will help to ensure that the (East Valley Jewish Community Center) is a success (and) that it will propel our entire community to bigger and better things," said Ron Barness.

The EVJCC has served the East Valley since 1972. Programs include a preschool, kindergarten, day school for grades 1-5, summer camp, after-school programming and vacation camps, as well as teen, adult and senior programming.

The center moved into its new building in August. A new executive director, Steven Tepper, will begin Dec. 1.

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