

## **The Establishment of the Kozhaya and Nora Akiki Internship Grant at LERC**

LERC has always been active in providing internships for interested local and international students since the day it was established. Many of the students who have interned with LERC have gone on to find work in various international and local organizations, companies, embassies, and businesses or have gained acceptance to further their education in graduate schools in reputable universities around the world.

Internships are an excellent way to acquire valuable work experience and to improve networking and communication skills. Interns at LERC have their transition from college to job market greatly facilitated through their involvement in research, survey, profiling, media clipping and collecting, event organization, orientation, and reporting.

Through the success of this internship program, LERC has gained an outstanding reputation for fostering students' self confidence, practical and timely skills, willingness to learn, international standard work ethic, and ambition to be the best. Consequently, the 'LERCies', as they now call themselves, have a bond amongst themselves and with the Center and NDU.



LERC's Director Ms. G. Hourani presenting Mr. K. Akiki official documents relating to the internship grant (May 2011).

The internships were unremunerated and this was always a concern of Director Guita Hourani, who, whenever possible, aided the interns by involving them in the commissioned work performed by the Center in order to assist them in their expenses.

Ms. Hourani was elated when Mr. Kozhaya Akiki offered to contribute funds to establish a grant for LERC's internship program. Students interested in benefitting from this grant will have to compete for the two \$1,000 grants per academic year. LERC will announce the competition through a public campaign and will place the announcement on its website and Facebook.

Mr. Kozhaya Akiki has been a friend of, and believer in, LERC since the first time he visited his old friend Director Hourani at the Center in Lebanon. Mr. Akiki knew Ms. Hourani through the Maronite Research Institute (MARI) which she had founded in the USA in 1995. His annual visits to Lebanon from Tupper Lake in New York with his late wife included a stopover at LERC to see Ms. Hourani and get acquainted with the Center.



Souvenir picture with Mr. Akiki, (seated from left to right) Ms. G. Hourani, Mr. K. Akiki, Ms. N. Mazraani. (Standing from left to right) Ms. D. Darwiche, Mr. E. Sfeir, Mr. E. Nabhan, Dr. G. Abdel Nour, Mrs. S. Kassis-Abi Rached (May 2011).

His commitment to LERC's mission of being the collective memory of the Lebanese emigration led him to share his family migration story by donating to the Lebanese Emigration Archives and Database (LEAD) family photos, a book of memories he lovingly put together in memory of his late wife, a sample of her obituaries, and press articles that trace the Akiki family accomplishments. The materials donated are assembled in the Kozhaya Akiki Collection.

Inspired by his own goodwill, he has established a grant that aims to assist students who are following an internship at LERC. The Kozhaya and Nora Akiki Internship Grant will provide some financial assistance to local Lebanese students through the transition period between graduating and finding a job.

This grant indicates Mr. Akiki's commitment to education, his belief in supporting young people, and his love to his homeland Lebanon.

### **Biography of Mr. Kozhaya Akiki and his Family**

*Mr. Akiki was born in Kfardebian, Lebanon, in 1938. He attended the Jesuit school in Ghazir, where he completed his baccalaureate studies. In the United States he went on to receive his bachelor's degree in 1963 from Saint Michael's College in Colchester, Vermont. He was awarded a Master degree in Education in 1967 from Saint Lawrence University in Canton, New York. For thirty years, until his retirement in 1993, he taught French in the public schools of the State of New York. During this period he was a steady contributor to Tupper Lake Free Press newspaper. Along with his deep faith and personal commitment to the Maronite heritage, Mr. Akiki combined his interest in history and religion with his recognized linguistic qualifications, to translate the hagiographies of three Maronite saints from Arabic, by the late Father Paul Sfeir, into English: The Blessed Nimattullah Kassab Al-Hardini, Saint Nimattullah Kassab Al-Hardini, Saint Rafqa: The Lebanese Nun, and Saint Sharbel: His Life and Spirituality. His latest translation is a hagiography entitled: Blessed Brother Estephan Nehmeh: His Life and Spirituality. Mr. Akiki translated a book entitled The Lebanese Maronite Order: Milestones and Educational Methods by Father Karam Rizk and by Abbot Paul Naaman. Mr. Akiki authored a book: Saint Ephrem: The Harp of the Holy Spirit and it was published as a commemoration of the seventeenth century of the death of the Saint. Mr. Akiki met his wife Nora Bernadette Maroun, resident of Tupper Lake, New York, in 1958, while she was on a visit to Lebanon. They married on the 25<sup>th</sup> November of the same year at Saint Ephrem's Church in Kfardebian, before the couple moved to the United States.*

*Mrs. Nora was born in the USA to Lebanese emigrants. She gained her degrees from Potsdam State College and went on to work in education for 39 years. She was President of the Tupper Lake Teachers Association and President of the Mercy Hospital Auxiliary as well as volunteering for Meals on Wheels. She passed away in November 2008. Mr. and Mrs. Akiki were married for fifty years. They were blessed with three sons, the twins, Gregory Shekrallah and Geoffrey Maroun, and the youngest, Michael Ephrem. The twins graduated from Clarkson University, Potsdam, New York, with Bachelor's in Chemical Engineering while Michael graduated from Clarkson University with a Bachelor Degree in Electrical Engineering. Gregory received his Master Degree from Lehigh University in Pennsylvania and married Carole Saab, with whom he has three daughters, Nicole, Christine, and Leah. They live in Williston, Vermont with Gregory working as a manager with IBM Co. Geoffrey went on to receive an MBA Degree from the University of Vermont in Burlington Vermont. He then married Maria Kerbage and has two boys, Stephen, who attends Clarkson University, and Andrew. The family lives in Abu Dhabi, where Geoffrey is in charge of Global Foundries division there. Michael received his Master Degree from the University of Vermont in Burlington, Vermont. He married Jeanine Farah and they have two children, Samer and Maya. They live in San Diego California. Michael is a manager with Qualcomm Co. and his wife is a manager with IBM Co.*