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IN MEMORIAM

Louis Sachs, longtime Chesterfield real estate developer, philanthropist

By BRIAN MCDOWELL

Louis Sachs left an indelible mark on the city of Chesterfield. The development of the Chesterfield Valley, Chesterfield Mall and the city's commitment to both parks and the arts all stem from decisions made by Sachs. The real estate developer died of heart failure on May 27 at the age of 83.

"Louis was a visionary and had such a deep love for Chesterfield," Kathy Higgins, longtime president of Sachs Properties, said. "We are feeling such a loss. He was such a good friend to all of us. I have never met a more kind and good individual."

Sachs was born to an immigrant family; his father was from Lithuania, and his mother was from Russia. His father graduated from Washington University and founded Sachs Electrical Engineering. Sachs also attended Washington University and worked for his father's company until the age of 35.

Later, Sachs started his own real estate development business, Sachs Properties. He eventually owned multiple properties of varying sizes around Chesterfield. At the time, most of the area was either woods or farmland.

Sachs was instrumental in the building and development of what he called "Chesterfield Village." The highly specific plans that Sachs drew up for the area closely resemble what the central core of the city looks like today – a large and teeming commercial district with plenty of room for walking, biking and greenspace. Sachs owned 1,500 acres of this area, and his involvement in development started when he convinced a group of shopping mall builders to build Chesterfield Mall at its present location in the early 1970s.

The company currently owns more than 1 million square feet of office and retail space, hosting 200-plus businesses.

Sachs' widow, Mary, said her husband developed a great interest in the history of the area after talking to some of the farmers who originally owned the land that became Chesterfield and hearing stories from them about original settlers. He started collecting historical material from the area. His interest compelled him to name streets in his developments after notable past residents of the area.

Mary Sachs described her husband as the most intelligent, strong-willed person she ever has known. She said in business, Sachs was itemized, detailed and very hands-on.

"When he was in the room, architects that worked on his projects pretty much had no choice but to get out of the way," she said.

Sachs was a philanthropist also, donating to many West County entities and organizations. He financially supported Faust Park, where the Sophia M. Sachs Butterfly House was built and named after his father's second wife. He donated land to the YMCA to build the organization's only community theater and paid for the auditorium. Sachs donated land to the Jewish Community Center, STAGES St. Louis, Junior Chamber International world headquarters, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Kol Am Temple and Ascension Catholic Church. He donated land to the city of Chesterfield for its trail system.

A parcel of land Sachs donated to the St. Louis County Library became the Samuel C. Sachs branch, named for Sachs' father. He was also instrumental in the upcom-



Louis Sachs

ing construction of a new property in Chesterfield that soon will host the library's collection of genealogical materials. Sachs funded the restoration of the old Antioch Baptist Church cemetery and provided the site for the Kemp Auto Museum in Chesterfield Valley.

Sachs created Chesterfield Arts, a non-profit organization devoted to fostering art appreciation throughout the community. He led the idea of adding numerous sculptures throughout the area, personally donating at least 10 pieces to the effort, including the replica of the well-known sculpture "The Awakening" that rises from the ground in the city's Central Park.

For his many efforts, Sachs in 1999 was named Chesterfield Citizen of the Year and in 2003 received the annual "Spirit of Chesterfield" award from the Chesterfield Chamber of Commerce. Chesterfield was rewarded the Creative Community Award from the Missouri Arts Council in 2011 due largely to cultural contributions Sachs made to the area.

"He never wanted this kind of glory," Mary Sachs said. "He hated it. He told me he did all this so when he went to heaven, he could look down and say, 'Not bad.'"