



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Kennedy Joins Save the Michaels of the World, Inc. President & Founder Avi Israel to Announce \$450,000 in State Funding for Lifesaving Addiction Resources Organization

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY May 16, 2019

| ISSUE: **ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE, COMBAT HEROIN AND OPIOID ADDICTION, HEROIN & OPIOID ABUSE, HEROIN & OPIOID FUNDING**



BUFFALO, N.Y. - Senator Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) stood with Avi Israel, President & Founder of Save the Michaels of the World, Inc. at the organization's headquarters in Buffalo to announce he secured \$450,000 in the New York State Budget for operating expenses of the lifesaving addiction resources organization. Save the Michaels of the World is a nonprofit

organization that is on the front lines of the addiction epidemic tearing through communities across the region and the nation. It directly serves individuals suffering from the disease of addiction, as well as provides support for the families that are supporting loved ones during their journey towards recovery. Western New York has been heavily impacted by the opioid and prescription drug epidemic, and although the crisis has improved in recent years, in part thanks to state funding for recovery and education programs, significant challenges still exist. Organizations like Save the Michaels are critical for bridging the last mile gap for those in the community who need it the most, yet are unable, through access or economics, to take advantage of traditional rehabilitation.

“Avi and Julie Israel are shining examples of what it means to be a citizen of the City of Good Neighbors,” said **Senator Tim Kennedy**. “They have taken a profound tragedy, the loss of their beloved son, and turned it into a force for good by saving countless lives across the region. I can think of no better stewards for this state funding than Save the Michaels, who will be able to connect individuals struggling with addiction with the services that they and their families need and deserve. I applaud the Israel family and the amazing team at Save the Michaels for their dedication to saving lives and bringing an end to this deadly epidemic.”

“We are very grateful for Sen. Kennedy for helping us maintain the services provided to the people of WNY,” said **Avi Israel, President & Founder of Save the Michaels**. “Last year, we helped 1,100 people into treatment and we are currently working with 260 families. This new funding will allow us to purchase another transport vehicle, hire more drivers, more peer/family recovery coaches and case managers. We are planning to expand our services to people in recoveries to other areas of WNY; currently expanding in Niagara County and hoping to expand in rural areas.”

“I am incredibly thankful that Senator Kennedy secured this \$450,000 grant for Save the Michaels,” said **Buffalo Common Councilman and Save the Michaels Board Member Joel Feroletto**.

“Avi Israel and Save the Michaels have assisted many individuals and families suffering from the opioid epidemic and Senator Kennedy’s grant will help continue the mission.”

The model of support for which the organization advocates is not just backed by evidence but it is also compassionate in its nature. By educating and outfitting family members with the critical tools they need to support the recovery of their loved ones, they can achieve better outcomes and build more resilient communities. Save the Michaels has grown and has expanded its footprint in response to the needs of the communities that it serves. When local treatment centers are filled to capacity, Save the Michaels has stepped forward to ensure those who need it are immediately transported to treatment facilities throughout the state. When parents called loudly for more education to help spread an understanding of the disease of addiction, Save the Michaels created a multi-pronged educational lecture series, given free of charge, to the families who needed it the most.

Save the Michael of the World, Inc. was founded in 2011 in memory of Michael David Israel. Michael had developed an addiction to prescription pain pills, but was denied help by insurance companies, providers, and specialists, and was refused referral to a treatment bed. Distressed by the constant headwinds in his struggle, Michael ultimately took his own life. The organization was founded by Avi and Julie Israel in order to help other families break through the barriers to treatment that are experienced by countless individuals.

In 2012, working with the Israel family and advocates across the state, the New York State Legislature passed legislation co-sponsored by Senator Kennedy, the Internet System for Tracking Over-Prescribing Act, known as I-STOP. This legislation was designed to identify patterns of abuse by patients, doctors, pharmacists, and more by cracking down on “doctor shopping” and tracking substance prescription history.

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