Andreas and Azucena Sofocleous

The story of two people who contribute in creating

better lives of our fellow citizens

Born in a poor family, the powerful lawyer and sportsman Andreas Sofocleous does not forget from where he started. He carries like an amulet the difficult but beautiful years in his village, which makes him spread his hand to anyone who needs it. His wife, Azucena, is the sweet side of his world and the man behind KEPAKY (Social Services Center Andreas Sofocleous), which counts 10 years of offer this year. On this occasion, they open up their home and explain how we can "build up" joy by joining hands!

It is well known, especially in Limassol, that Andreas Sofocleous has helped many to take their lives a step ahead. He believes that "only if you have somehow walked this path, you can support someone to stand on his feet and then make it on his own." As he explains, in order to help your fellow human, you must first be able to walk in his shoes. As for Azucena Sofocleous, the first you identify when you meet her is a natural courtesy and a clear anxiety in her eyes for a better world.

**They say that behind a strong man, there is a powerful woman. Does it apply to you?**

**Andreas Sofocleous**: Indeed, she is my rock! If you live with my rhythm and you do not have a person supporting you, you lose your momentum. We are together for 32 years!

**Azucena Sophocleous**: We are alike at many things, we are interested in common things, but we are also distinguished personalities. Andreas works in his own field and I work in mine. I do not feel like someone is behind each other. In the sense of support that you mentioned, I am definitely independent but I always feel support from my husband. Something nice among us is that we belong in different cultures. This thing makes life very interesting from the beginning to the present day. We complement each other. I believe that in all relationships it is important that the other makes you a better person. To be able to show you something that you do not see or to love with you what you discover.

**Mr. Sophocleous, you are an entrepreneur, lawyer, president of AEL. All this need real guts. Your wife is your sensitive side?**

My sensitive side is expressed through KEPAKY, which isran by Azucena. You know, I was not born with a name. I did not inherit anything. All I inherited was some important principles from my parents and the love for work, since I was a kid.

**What are these principles?**

To respect all people, to remember that we are all equal and to help wherever you can. That's exactly what KEPAKY's action has begun. When I found my way and there was an economic prospect I realized that you cannot and will not take with you the money you earned ...Thus, we started the Social Services Center to help other people. We invited remarkable friends and associates with social sensitivities to the Foundation's Board and started with the student aids. I come from a very poor family and fortunately there was the Soviet Union back then where we could study for free. So, I also wanted to help others who were unable to study because of financial difficulties. Initially, I did it independently. Along the way, we decided to organize it under the umbrella of a Foundation. Then, there were other needs that were brought forwad by society, such as children with Autism. The Association for People with Autism in Limassol, feeling that Azucena is very sensitive, approached her and she embraced them, which led in our help in the construction of the Model Center for Employment, Care and Treatment in Limassol

**Which characteristics led you to ask your spouse to take over KEPAKY?**

Her conscience and understanding people needs. Neither she was rich. To make charity, to help someone, you have to feel a little bit in their place. To have walked in their shoes... Feel the need and know that it is imperative to help someone take a step ahead. Take him by the hand, help him stand and then continue on his own.

**How do you feel when you see the results of the offer?**

**Azucena Sophocleous:** I feel great joy that we may be putting a bit to a better tomorrow. It gives me a motivation to get up in the morning thinking that the Foundation is very important and must continue. KEPAKY is definitely the most important social project of mine.

**Andreas Sofocleous**: Azucena has new ideas for KEPAKY all the time. She drives everybody crazy every day (laughs). She does not stop running various actions to develop the Foundation.

**10 years of social contribution then. What are the next goals?**

**Azucena Sophocleous**: The anniversary album we made for KEPAKY's ten years gives us the opportunity to see what we have done and what we could do better. Some programs that are fixed will continue and become even more effective. Then, personally, I would like to put even more emphasis on the countryside. To deal more with people who are in a disadvantageous place because they are not in the city, but at the same time they offer valuable natural and social goods. We are also very interested in the environment. Children, of course, were, are and will be our priority.

**If you take a look at the work of the Foundation, there is indeed a great weakness for children and young people ...**

**Andreas Sofocleous:** For what we do, personal experiences play once again a vital role. Let's take the example of aid provision to children in need during the holidays. When I was a child, I remember feeling the need for a gift every Easter and Christmas holidays, to wear new clothes, as the custom was. There were times when our parents could not buy us these things. It was this exact need I passed through the first days of KEPAKY. Similarly, the study aids. It is something that helps the other to feel confident to take life in his own hands.

**I read in the album a note from a young person you helped to study. "Becoming a doctor was my dream, my own flame. A flame that did not go away due to KEPAKY's offer. " How do you feel when you see young people you have supported, progressing in their lives?**

**Azucena Sophocleous**: It is a great satisfaction. It is not true that volunteering does not want anything back. We want back prosperity in our city, our country and the whole world. We want to see results. This is the reward: That we can have a better world for us, our children, our grandchildren. I am glad that a student is writing such words. This means that we have succeeded in making this "chain", which is the goal of the Foundation, to understand the importance of social offer and to give back those beautiful words that can inspire others!

**Where can someone find informations about KEPAKY? Do you need volunteers ?**

**Azucena Sophocleous**: On our website http://www.sofocleousfoundation.org/ one can get detailed information about our Programs and Services. Someone in need can contact us via Facebook, email (info@sofocleousfoundation.org) or by phone 25849129.

As for volunteers, we always want! As a non-profit, voluntary organization, we definitely need people to support us.

**Let's just go back to your acquaintance ... great love I imagine getting married so young in just a year of relationship ... What did you admire to each other and we reached today the relationship that counts for 32 years?**

**Andreas Sofocleous**: Azucena, just the way she is! She did not change at all. She is an interesting person, beautiful in her own unique way, with a smile that "hits" you right away. Until today I'm in love! I may be a little mad, but in love. (laughs)

**Azucena Sophocleous:** I loved Andrea's soul. We fought to be together. When I met him I realized that his soul is romantic and pure. It made me admire him and I continue to admire him.

**Andreas Sofocleous**: Indeed our life has always had action. We married abroad with our friends and fellow students without anyone of our families. Later, of course, we did a religious wedding in Cyprus. We did it spontaneously and it was very beautiful! For our relatives it was hard to come by. Azucena’s family is from Mexico. Our wedding was wonderful, and we celebrate that anniversary.

**You were still in Russia when you had your daughter. Are your two children lawyers?**

**Andreas Sofocleous**: They had no choice. (laughs) Ernesto is studying Law, while Christina is already a lawyer.

**Azucena Sofocleous:** The children always had a choice, and they both felt that this is their way.

**Attorney, sportsman, president of AEL, founder of KEPAKY. Do you anticipate them, Mr. Sofocleous?**

Does the phone ever stop? (laughs) When you learn to wind up, you can do it! I may talk and get angry on one phone and to laugh on the other line. You must be able to change roles automatically, otherwise you willget crazy. But after eight o'clock I dedicate myself to the family.

**Azucena Sofocleous**: And on weekends we are together, we go fishing, walks in nature, walks in the villages. We really like Akamas.

**Those who know you, Mr Sophocleous, are talking about a man who, while being financially a more comfortable businessman, is at the same time one of the most popular types** ...

I am a man of the village. You know, it depends what you want from life ... Do you want to belong in the “high society” or do you want a simple life, to go unnoticed, to be angry with someone as a simple person ? Do you want to go to the high new restaurant and club or drink a beer at the local Kafeneio?

**In this context, sometimes you are explosive in your statements. Doesn’t this put you in trouble?**

I never regret anything I say. It comes spontaneously out of situations I live in the moment. I always say what I see and feel. If it is wrong, we all have the right to make a mistake.

**Mrs. Sofocleous, how does your husband come back home when AEL loses the game?**

He may be sad, but the truth is that he manages to leave the problems outside the house. Unlike me, he knows when he is in the office, when he is at AEL, when he is at home.

**Andreas Sofocleous**: I spend very few hours at home, so you understand that it would not be good to return loaded with all that.

**Let's go to the recent success of AEL, after having won the Cup after 30 years. Your feelings ...**

It's like breaking a curse! We made many efforts to win the Cup and this was unexpected. You know how many people could go to the stadium that day and did not go, saying "I went so many times in the last 15 years and we didn’t win? Stay home to break the curse! "It was something that tortured us all at AEL. It was different in relation to the championship, which we did not expect. After 44 years, in a difficult year, we had no aspirations for a championship. We started slowly. It was something we did not expect, and the joy was different to the joy of the Cup this year.

**In your presidency, then, championship after 44 years, Cup after 30 years, AEL in the Europa League Groups. Are you satisfied?**

It is important that the fans feel satisfied. The most important thing we have done is to build stability in AEL, clear the debts we have inherited, and have the team in a manageable situation.

**For closing, tell me how you imagine your life in five years in all of the areas you are dealing with ...**

**Andreas Sofocleous**: I do not think I can change much of my everyday life. It's my way of life now!

**Azucena Sofocleous:** I see myself devoted to KEPAKY and my family. KEPAKY is a living organization that acts according to the needs of society and after discussion among the members of the Foundation. Sure, it will be a fascinating journey. I feel that in the coming years, voluntary actions in Cyprus will multiply! In the world we need more active citizens because only if we all act together, we can make better what we live