

Marisa & Gustavo Rymberg Legacy Endowment Fund

The course of Gustavo and Marisa Rymberg's lives changed abruptly on July 18, 1994 after a terrorist attack on the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA) killed 85 people in their home town of Buenos Aires. The attack, coming in the wake of a terrorist bombing of the Israeli Embassy two years earlier, became the impetus for their decision to leave Argentina.

In January 1997, Gustavo, Marisa, and their two young daughters, Melina and Jazmin, arrived in Winnipeg for a fresh start in Canada. They were the first family to arrive as part of the Jewish Federation's Grow Winnipeg initiative and their daughter, Melina, was the first Argentinian child to enroll in the community's Jewish day school. Marisa soon found a job in retail, and Gustavo, who was a graphic designer by profession, accepted a marketing position at the recently built Asper Jewish Community Campus.

The emotional support the Rymbergs received from the Jewish community meant the world to them. "I never felt like an immigrant," said Marisa, "even though our first year in Canada had many challenges." Marisa had been working with her father in a family business before they left Argentina, and leaving her parents behind was not an easy decision. "It was difficult to leave," said Marisa, "but I had to consider what was best for my kids and for us as a family." The Rymbergs received an extraordinary warm welcome in their new home. "Someone from the community even gave me my first job," said Marisa.

Over the next decade, the Rymbergs immersed themselves in Winnipeg's vibrant Jewish communal life. Federation had an immeasurable impact on Gustavo's life in particular. In addition to helping his family with all their settlement needs, Federation provided him with a grant that enabled him to enroll in a Masters program in marketing. It was during this period that Gustavo decided to pursue a career in Jewish communal work. He would go on to serve in various leadership positions in Winnipeg, Ottawa, and Toronto, before accepting the position of Hamilton Jewish Federation CEO in August 2017.

One of Gustavo's first acts in his new position as CEO can be traced back to the warm welcome his family received in Canada, from the moment they were met at the airport by representatives from the Winnipeg Jewish Federation. It's one of the reasons he made it a priority to revive Federation's Grow Hamilton initiative that promotes Jewish Hamilton as a desirable place in which to raise a Jewish family.



Gustavo and Marisa see that their family's Legacy Endowment Fund as a way to give back to the Jewish community and model for their daughters the Jewish values that have meant so much to their family.

"Being part of a community is to take care of each other," said Gustavo. "The idea of the Legacy Endowment Fund is to show the next generation that it's possible to transform your community. With hard work and community help, anything is possible."

