

Dr. Terri Lewis Lion of Judah Endowment Fund

Charitable giving has always been a big part of Terri Lewis's life. As a child, whenever she and her siblings received their weekly allowance, the first thing they were taught was to allocate a portion for those in need and add it to the blue tzedakah box on their kitchen table.

"Because our parents never forgot their humble beginnings, one thing we knew for sure was that in every budget we made, we had to include one line for savings and one line for charitable donations," said Terri.

In the early 1920s, two impoverished teenagers, Annette Dorfman and Sam Handelman, arrived in Toronto from Russia. The couple worked hard, married, and settled into Canadian society. By the time their third daughter Terri was a year old, they had saved enough money to open a poultry processing plant in Watford, Ontario. Despite their being the only Jews living in the small town located halfway between London and Sarnia, Terri's mother still kept a strictly kosher home.

While completing her undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto, Terri met and married Hamilton native, Milton Lewis, who was then completing his law degree. They moved to Hamilton and have lived here ever since. Terri went on to earn her PhD in experimental psychology from McMaster University. Through the course of her research she and a colleague discovered what newborn babies can see and how vision develops with age. Her research has resulted in more than 200 publications on the development of vision in normal children and children with eye problems. She is currently a professor emeritus at McMaster's Department of Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour, an adjunct professor at the University of Toronto's Department of Ophthalmology and Vision Sciences, and holds a position as vision scientist in the Department of Ophthalmology at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children.

Terri and Milton are long-time members of Beth Jacob Synagogue, where Milton is a past president. They have also been stalwart supporters of many other local Jewish organizations. Terri is a Lion of Judah, and recently made the decision to endow her annual gift. While the majority of the Lewis family charitable donations are done jointly by Terri and Milton, the endowment is something she has done on her own.

"I continue to be an active Lion of Judah donor while I am able to, and this endowment fund is to carry on after I am no longer here," she said. "I am pleased to be able to continue helping those in need. I think my parents would be proud."

