Melissa Gerr (Host) ([00:01](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1.74)):

You're listening to Pull Up A Chair, stories from 100 years of creating community in Jewish Baltimore, a podcast created by The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore.

Linda Hurwitz ([00:12](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=12.65)):

It was just a defining moment in my life. That set my trajectory of caring for a fellow Jew.

Melissa Gerr (Host) ([00:29](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=29)):

Welcome back to Pull Up a Chair. I'm your host, Melissa Gerr. Each month, we explore a different theme that illustrates how for more than 100 years and counting The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore has been a place to turn to in times of struggle or celebration and for assistance in connection, you'll probably hear some familiar voices as we laugh, reminisce and learn a thing or two about what it means to build and be a part of a strong Jewish community. For this episode, we meet Baltimore born and bred Linda Hurwitz. A self-proclaimed has-been as in, she has been active in nearly every role at The Associated - from Chair of the Board and Campaign Chair, to Women's Campaign Chair and Founding Chair of The Baltimore-Ashkelon Partnership. Linda's energy, passion and commitment to improving the lives of Jews everywhere is her trademark stamp. And it turns out there is a powerful, personal story, a defining moment, that helped create that foundation of caring.

Linda Hurwitz ([01:32](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=92.51)):

We were in Israel for my younger brother's bar mitzvah, our entire family. It was in 1973 and it was when the Russian Jews were making Aliyah to Israel. And just out of luck, my father was able to allow our family of five to welcome Soviet Jews making aliyah to Israel, and we would be the very first ones to welcome them to their Homeland. And you can only imagine at 15 years old a teenager, when my father said we would have to get up at 2:00 AM to meet the plane, which would arrive at 3:00 AM. I was not very excited about it. Although my father consistent that we all go. So I was at the Ben Gurion Airport when a young girl came off the plane that truly still lives within me to this day. We looked completely alike. We both have very dark features dark hair, dark eyes.

Linda Hurwitz ([02:54](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=174.35)):

We gazed at each other same height, size, same age, and as she walked off the plane, we locked eyes and walked immediately to each other. And there was an immediate bond. It was just unbelievable. There was an immediate feeling that we had a relationship and a shared heritage. Even though we looked very much alike, we were very different. She was starting a new life in Israel. And I was, I was only a visitor. But I did know my grandparents came from Russia as well. And I guess instinctively, I thought 'that could have been me and she could have been in my position.' Spontaneously, I had been wearing a ring that I had from my bat mitzvah. And I guess to show my commitment and my connection, I took this bat mitzvah ring off my finger and put it right on her finger. And of course it fit perfectly. And I was hoping that it would symbolize to her that any Jew would do anything, take the shirt off their back, take the ring off their finger, do whatever they could, to make sure that she felt welcomed, cared for and, and truly loved. Basically what I learned from this experience is giving to our extended family, wherever they live is what all Jews do.

Melissa Gerr (Host) ([04:43](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=283.38)):

Linda attributes her outlook on life and dedication to philanthropy, to her father and her grandmother.

Linda Hurwitz ([04:49](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=289.62)):

You know, when I worked at, The Associated, I call at work, Marc Terrill used to say, 'Linda, Hurwitz doesn't think of the glass half full and certainly not half empty. She lives thinking that glass overflows.' Well, I got that wonderful, positive, personable and promising outlook from my father, Abraham Adler and his mother Anne Adler. And so I think my father, as I always say, gives 25 hours in a day. And so to get up at two in the morning is nothing to my father if he would have the opportunity to change someone's life for the better.

Melissa Gerr (Host) ([05:37](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=337.44)):

Linda has adopted the practice of always carrying photos with her - images of the children, women and men she's met from all over the world during her work and travels with The Associated, they are people like you and me who have directly benefited from the support and resources The Associated provides, but it's a young boy named Leonid from St. Petersburg, she says, that touched her heart and soul when they met and inspires her work.

Linda Hurwitz ([06:04](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=364.09)):

What I've learned in my many years at The Associated, it is that people that change the way you think. My husband and I were fortunate enough to go on a national mission, where we met a young boy, Leonid, who was told his whole life that Jews come from hell. And that is what he believed until he was 17 years old and found out that he was a Jew. He shared with us that he cannot wear a yamaka in the streets because he knows it is dangerous. And that it is, it is asking for trouble in St. Petersburg. So instead he wears a Jewish star necklace under his shirt every day, quote, close to his heart, end quote. After meeting, Leonid, and I did get his email. So we kept in contact. I shared with him how living in America we are fortunate to be able to wear the kippah, tzitzit and other ways of showing our Judaism, and how sad I am for Leonid to not have that experience. And yet Leonid wormed his way right into my heart to make me realize how fortunate again we are living here, not only in America, but in Baltimore, where every Jew can live the life they want to live in freedom and having their priorities and values the way they feel. They want to raise their family and live a Jewish life.

Melissa Gerr (Host) ([08:08](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=488.41)):

Linda's experience, meeting Jews from around the globe, is a driving force that sustains her to keep her working for the betterment of Jews worldwide and encouraging others to do so too.

Linda Hurwitz ([08:18](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=498.73)):

When I went to Odessa, when I was Women's Campaign Chair we went to the Hillel house, it had no lights on the front. It was any kind of building. You would never know there was a Hillel in that building for young Jews. When we went to Paris, we, my husband and I wanted to go to a kosher restaurant. We took a cab. You walk in, it was a magnificent kosher restaurant, but from the outside, you would never know. This happened over and over again in my experiences. And I, I need to say that in the 21st century, we can't put our heads in the sand and not realize that Jews cannot live with freedom in most places. How fortunate are we here in America to live this privileged life? And I don't think we can take that for granted.

Melissa Gerr (Host) ([09:27](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=567.71)):

In her nearly four decades with The Associated, Linda has witnessed its evolution and agility of response and how important that has been to the community.

Linda Hurwitz ([09:36](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=576.41)):

The Associated is not only my opportunity to give to every Jew, which is so important to me, but it also is one of the most progressive forward thinking organizations. Through my 35 years of working for The Associated, I have seen such transformation, whether it is for interfaith, whether it is for Jews of color, whether it is for Baltimore City and our needs to help in social justice, whether it is to listen to what our constituents want us to be, The Associated is able, willing and takes the necessary actions to be that Associated for that particular time.

Melissa Gerr (Host) ([10:41](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/8tAeZRiengsAlc_QQ1h6lnoRlhrgyDK59KZe9CaOKTCx-_yL9a9TSJPyHGlYMIgtA-H_doa9XR5VT0lg-IAyDr6t6N8?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=641.63)):

Thanks for listening to Pull Up A Chair. I'm your host Melissa Gerr. This podcast was produced for you by The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore. From East Baltimore to Forest Park, from Pikesville to Randallstown and beyond, The Associated has been there for the community every step of the way. Don't miss the next episode with more stories from your friends and neighbors in Baltimore's Jewish community. Thanks for listening. You've been listening to Pull Up a Chair, stories from 100 years of creating community and Jewish Baltimore. It's part of The Associated's Centennial Celebration.