

## **The Margolis Family**

### **Rising From the Ashes**

by  
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The Margolis family may be some of the most positive and upbeat people you will ever meet. Rachel is a partner at Aikins Law and her husband Aaron is Vice President of Product at Investors Group. They have three children: Nicole, 15, Mitchell, 12 and Harry, 7. Aside from work and chauffeuring their children, Rachel and Aaron love to travel and are very active in their community.

They moved from River Heights to Tuxedo in 2002, essentially trading homes with a couple who were looking to downsize, and spent the next two years renovating their home. Unfortunately, that dream came to an end on May 25, 2013.

Rachel, for no reason she can explain, suddenly needed to return home from a yoga class; and she was home for just over a minute when the smoke detector went off. She quickly got her children outside, where they stood and watched their home burn. The fire, which began in the laundry room, burned the back part of the house, but caused a total loss of nearly all the contents through smoke damage.

This is where the Margolis family's spirit truly stands out. Instead of spending their time grieving the loss of all of their possessions, Rachel and Aaron chose to move forward with life. Rachel says, "Aaron and I are doers. We get things done."

They moved in with Rachel's parents for the first few nights after the fire, then with Aaron's parents for another week, while they began rebuilding their lives. Fortunately, both sets of parents live in Tuxedo. With this stable base, Rachel and Aaron wasted no time getting things back on track.

The fire took place on Saturday afternoon and by Monday morning the kids were in school in borrowed uniforms and supplies and Rachel and Aaron went to work. Their philosophy was, "It was just stuff. The important thing was that no one was hurt." The children absorbed their parents' strength and responded to the loss and change wonderfully. In fact, they probably adapted easier than we have," Aaron said.

Rachel believes that the experience has made them stronger as a family and made them appreciate little things much more. She says, “You really look at things through a different lens and we are all better for it.”

Rachel and Aaron’s response to the fire was to keep themselves and their children very busy with family, friends, activities and travel. They tried their best not to give up anything from their normal lives; work, school and activities. While they had to cancel a trip to Italy planned for July shortly after the fire, they replaced it with a trip to Israel this past spring. From vacations during the children’s winter break, to summer camp for the kids, life went on as usual.

As they worked to get back to normal, they found that much of the sense of aggravation came from the day to day tasks that could not be done as easily as it used to be. For example, Rachel talks about planning to make muffins and then realizing that she no longer had muffin tins. Or, the children getting ready to go to camp then remembering that they no longer had sleeping bags. These items could be replaced, but they simply weren’t there when needed, and that took some getting used to. They made, “It’s just stuff,” their family motto,

Their greatest hurdle came from the loss of family pictures and children’s art work. They managed to restore some of the hard drive of Rachel’s computer and save some photos, but everything taken before they had a digital camera, mainly Nicole’s younger years, are gone, other than those replaced by other family members.

Rachel consoles herself by saying, “Thankfully I don’t have to rely on pictures, I have the people.”

The Margolis family has come through this not feeling sorry for themselves because they are grateful to all be alive and safe.

Both Rachel and Aaron were overwhelmed by the outpouring of support from their friends and neighbours. Rachel talks about how their neighbours stood outside with them while their house was burning, bringing snacks for the kids and comforting them as the fire department battled the blaze. Without the help of their neighbours, she says, their situation would have been so much more difficult.

The loan of school uniforms, books and supplies, food, clothing, etc. helped the family turn their situation around and greatly contributed to their ability to start Monday morning, and many days afterword, with some sort of a routine. It wasn’t just the loaned and donated items that were offered, it was other things, like driving the children to events or taking them for sleepovers, everything was a help.

Not only did family and close friends step up to help; so too did acquaintances and business associates they may only occasionally see, also came forward to offer their support. Aaron said, “It is almost a reflection of what Winnipeggers are like, and it has been very comforting.”

Rachel and Aaron’s offices have both been very supportive and have done everything they could to help them out. Their experience includes everything from Rachel’s office sending a gift basket loaded with movie coupons and treats for the kids; to an associate of Aaron’s, who had a similar experience, who calls to chat and see how things are going. Their insurance company has also taken good care of them throughout their experience.

Now, nearly a year and a half since the fire, they feel that they are over the peak. Although they spent their first year living in a rental home only a block away; and the last few months in second rental in River Heights, a five minute drive away, they can’t wait to get back to their neighbourhood.

Their new “dream home” is being built on the site of their former house, and their neighbours are constantly updating them on the progress.

Aaron says, “Everybody is looking forward to having us back and we are definitely looking forward to being back.”

They feel that they are past the pain and are moving on to the exciting stage of waiting to see their newly designed home. Their scheduled return date is next May and the whole family is looking forward to coming back home. Rachel says, “We love the neighbourhood and we just feel blessed every day.”