

Dear Friend,

I am pleased to report very positive developments at InterfaithFamily.com over the last four months!

- An outstanding outreach professional, [Karen Kushner](#), joined our staff giving us a training capability and a West Coast presence, and we have a terrific new managing editor, Benjamin Maron.
- Karen has expanded our content with [a series of wonderful downloadable booklets](#), and our High Holidays content was very popular again this year.
- We successfully piloted our first online discussion group for couples, [Love and Religion - Online!](#)
- Demand for our Jewish Clergy Officiation Referral Service remains very strong, and we're getting increasing numbers of requests for rabbis for services other than weddings.
- Our Network continues to grow, and we've created a new [Community Page](#) to make it easier to find everything of interest in a local community. Your community should have one!
- Our extensive coverage of Chelsea Clinton's wedding attracted high traffic and included blog entries on [Huffington Post](#), the [Washington Post](#), and perhaps my most important op-ed to date: [The Missing 'Mazel Tov.'](#)
- We put intermarriage on the agenda at the General Assembly of the Jewish Federations of North America with our session, [Can We Encourage In-marriage and Welcome Interfaith Families?](#) I ended up #18 in the JFNA's Jewish Community Hero contest, drawing additional attention in the federation world to our cause.
- The Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund and the Walter and Elise Haas Fund made grants supporting Karen Kushner joining our staff; we had a wonderful event on October 28 to celebrate our new San Francisco presence; and Lippman Kanfer Family Foundation has made a matching grant to enable us to hire a Chief Advancement Officer.

**October 2010**

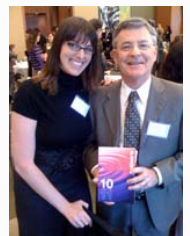
### What's in this Update

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InterfaithFamily.com [made it into the Slingshot guide](#) to the most innovative Jewish organizations for the sixth straight year, and received a third Slingshot Fund grant [with the following citation](#):

Between its website, referral services and ability to connect people, the Slingshot generation sees InterfaithFamily.com's existence as crucial to the future strength and vitality of the Jewish community.

In October our Board reaffirmed our strategic priorities and we have a new three year plan that we would be pleased to share with you. There is a huge opportunity to expand on our efforts to engage interfaith families in Jewish life and community. We welcome your interest and support to make that happen.



Mamie Kanfer Stewart  
and Ed Case at  
Slingshot Day

## Organizational Highlights



We are thrilled that [Karen Kushner](#) joined InterfaithFamily.com as our Chief Education Officer as of August 1. Karen will create a West Coast presence for IFF, oversee the development of our "how-to-do-Jewish" resources, and offer resources and trainings for Jewish organizations and professionals on how to attract and engage interfaith families.

We are pleased to announce our new Managing Editor, Benjamin Maron, who joined us in October. Benjamin has extensive experience as a Jewish educator, writer and editor – and the number of followers IFF has on Twitter has increased since he started from 5 to over 500!



Our [Advisory Board](#) held its third telephone meeting on July 22 and gave input on how to structure our General Assembly presentation.

We're in the process of applying our new messaging platform from Rabinowitz/Dorf Communications to new promotional materials that will be coming over the next few months.

## Education Activities

### Content

Karen Kushner has brought to InterfaithFamily.com [a series of wonderful downloadable booklets](#). We featured two of them this year on our [Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Resource Page](#). We also created a new booklet, [Good Night, Sleep Tight: Bedtime Rituals For Your Interfaith Family](#).

Our traffic jumped approaching the High Holidays. We had over 2,500 visits on September 8, when Rosh Hashanah was beginning; the only higher traffic in the past four months came the day after Chelsea Clinton's wedding. This year, in addition to many very popular articles on recipes, the most-read personal narrative was [Highs and Lows: A Non-Jewish Husband's Take on the Jewish New Year](#), by Birger Stamperdahl. Another popular twist on the holiday described an interesting Italian Jewish custom: [The Rosh Hashanah Seder: Who Knew?](#) by Rabbi Barbara Aiello.

The InterfaithFamily.com Network Blog is a great place to keep up on news and discussions happening in the media and on the web. In the past four months, we've had posts about:

- a [wonderful video](#) produced by our friends at [Mayyim Hayyim](#) showing the conversion of a child;
- [changes in Jewish behaviors](#) – including tattoos and weddings on Shabbat;
- [Mark Zuckerberg Is Not In Love With a Stereotype](#), about a reviewer's take on the movie *The Social Network*;
- [From Mormon to Jew](#) – about a blog post on the site of our new friend [Kveller](#), by Mayim Bialik, about her husband's conversion.

If you don't receive our biweekly email newsletter highlighting our newest content and would like to, [click here](#).

### Programs

For sixteen years, Dr. Marion Usher has offered Love and Religion, a four-session discussion group for new interfaith couples at the [Washington DC JCC](#). We have just completed our first pilot offering of [Love and Religion – Online!](#) using an online video conferencing system. The participating couples have been enthusiastic and we hope to offer more sessions of the workshop soon. To learn more about how you can offer the workshop in your local community, [click here](#).



## Connections Activities

### Jewish Clergy Officiation Referral Service



Interfaith couples have continued to ask IFF for help to find a rabbi or cantor for their weddings in growing numbers: through October 2010 we've responded to 1,370 requests, an average of 137 a month, compared to an average of 104 a month during 2009.

We don't just send names when we respond to couples; we also suggest resources to help their planning, and we send follow-up requests for feedback. On October 20, we got this email from Diana:

We found exactly what we were looking for. I really appreciate this website as it helped us find the right person.

On August 9, we got this email from Helaine:

I want to thank you for your good wishes and prompt response! I will pass along these referrals to my son and future daughter-in-law.

On July 27, we got this email from Kristen:

Rabbi J has been so great to work with thus far. Again - thanks for getting us in touch with someone great.

We now have over 400 rabbis and cantors to whom we make referrals. Interested clergy should take our [Jewish clergy survey](#).

People are starting to ask us in increasing numbers for rabbis to help with conversion, counseling, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, a bris, a funeral. We're modifying our intake form to clarify that we can help with those referrals, and hope to expand our list with clergy

willing to provide those services, whether or not they officiate at weddings of interfaith couples.

## **Network: Members, Organizations, Professionals and Events**

We celebrated the first anniversary of our growing Network at the end of August. In the past four months, 410 individuals and 54 professionals created personal pages and joined the Network; as of the end of October, we had 1,944 members (including 395 professionals), exceeding our goal for 2010! In addition, we've had a net gain of 20 organizations listed on the Network, bringing the current total to 700.

On the Network you can easily find people in interfaith relationships, programs, and welcoming organizations and professionals in any local community, because you can search within mileage ranges of a zip code.

In September we introduced a revised "Community Page" – we modified our Network functionality to make it even easier to centralize and find everything of interest in a local community. Take a look at our [San Francisco Community Page](#). If you are a local federation or funder and are interested in sponsoring a Community Page for your community, please contact me.

## **Advocacy Activities**

### **Resource Center for Jewish Clergy**

We will be conducting our fourth workshop on officiation, for clergy in the East Bay area of San Francisco, in mid-December.

The intense interest leading up to Chelsea Clinton's July 31 wedding to Marc Mezvinsky grew even stronger with comment about the Jewish nature of the wedding afterwards. I became a Huffington Post blogger with my first post: [Interfaith Weddings: What Chelsea Clinton's Ceremony Might Look Like](#). I also contributed a piece to Sally Quinn's blog on the *Washington Post*: [Mazel Tov! A Viewer's Guide to the Clinton/Mezvinsky Wedding](#).



InterfaithFamily.com had very high traffic to our blog posts before the ceremony:

- [Will Chelsea Clinton Have a Jewish Wedding... Part 3](#);
- [Hillary Clinton on the Upcoming Wedding](#);
- [What the Wedding Might Look Like](#);
- [Mazel Tov in Advance to Chelsea and Marc](#).

We reported early on August 1 that a rabbi had co-officiated with a minister, and that photos showed the groom in a tallis next to a ketubah near a chuppah: [The News Is Out: Co-officiation for Chelsea and Marc](#). I also put up another post on *Huffington Post*: [Chelsea Clinton's Interfaith Marriage: What Comes Next?](#)

[The Jewish World Reacts to the Clinton-Mezvinsky Wedding – And It Isn't Pretty](#) describes my reaction to reported comments by denominational leaders that the wedding was "not a Jewish event." This prompted me to write [one of the most important op-eds](#) I've ever had published, [The Missing 'Mazel Tov:'](#)

Because of their celebrity, the way Chelsea Clinton and Marc Mezvinsky conducted their wedding could inspire many other interfaith couples to seriously consider incorporating Jewish practices in their weddings – like Chelsea and Marc did so prominently – and hopefully in their lives together after their weddings. In addition, I think it was very fortunate that Chelsea and Marc were able to find a rabbi of the stature of James Ponet, the long-term director of Yale Hillel, to co-officiate the wedding with a minister.

Instead of an enthusiastic, hearty "Mazel tov," the reported reaction of Jewish leaders was to pronounce the wedding as "not a Jewish event." This was the worst possible response to express, because it can only serve to discourage and push away not just Chelsea Clinton and Marc Mezvinsky, but the thousands of other interfaith couples who are watching.

## Appearances

I recently returned from the General Assembly of the Jewish Federations of North America where a program I proposed, "Can We Encourage In-marriage *and* Welcome Interfaith Families?" provided an opportunity to present InterfaithFamily.com's message about a positive response to intermarriage to the federation world. After presentations by me and Steven M. Cohen, a leading proponent of encouraging in-marriage, Alisa Doctoroff, the Chair of the UJA-Federation of New York, moderated responses by three top federation executives: Steve Rakitt from Atlanta, Jay Sanderson from Los Angeles, and Barry Shrage from Boston. I [solicited input from IFF users](#) for help formulating my answer to the question:



InterfaithFamily.com at the GA

Promoting in-marriage doesn't stop people from intermarrying – but it risks leaving them feeling rejected and alienated from the Jewish community and its institutions. When we indicate that in-marriage is preferable, if we are not very, very careful not to demean intermarriage in any way, then we will communicate a message that you are bad if you marry out, and your partner is second-class. And when that happens it's not just interfaith couples who are pushed away from Judaism – their parents and Jewish relatives are, too.

Our children's partners do not have to be Jewish themselves to support our children and our grandchildren being Jews and living Jewishly. That's the lesson I've learned at InterfaithFamily.com. When we talk to our young people about marriage, we should not promote in-marriage, we should promote engagement in Jewish life, with a supportive partner, whether or not that partner is a Jew.

[Shalom TV](#) filmed the session and I understand it will be available on their website. You can read my complete remarks [here](#), an edited version for the *Huffington Post* [here](#), and Julie Wiener's early reaction [here](#).

At the beginning of the program I recommended that local communities extend explicit welcoming messages to interfaith families and offer four kinds of services and programs for them: help for interfaith couples to find Jewish clergy for their weddings; discussion groups to help them work out how to have religion in their lives; introductory classes on Judaism; and more extensive classes to help them raise Jewish children and to provide religious education for those who are not ready to join a synagogue. If you would like the handout I distributed describing these approaches, please contact me.

Karen Kushner also participated on a panel at the General Assembly lead by our friends at [Keshet](#) on ways to strengthen the federation system by investing in marginalized groups including interfaith families and GLBT Jews.

## Advocacy Writing

In addition to our advocacy around the reaction to the Clinton-Mezvinsky wedding, and our program at the General Assembly, I was very pleased to join in an op-ed with Rabbi Kerry Olitzky, the executive director of the [Jewish Outreach Institute](#). We were reacting to another study by Steven M. Cohen suggesting that [the Jewish community is plenty welcoming of interfaith families already](#). Our joint op-ed, [There Is Still Work To Be Done On Welcoming Intermarried Families](#), was published on eJewish Philanthropy. Benjamin Maron also blogged about another new study that found [Young Jewish Leaders Less Concerned About Intermarriage](#).

## Jewish Community Hero

In August I learned that I had been nominated for the [Jewish Community Hero award](#), given by the Jewish Federations of North America. Although I wasn't selected as one of five honorees, I'm pleased that I ended up at #18 in the voting contest, bringing attention to the cause of engaging interfaith families in Jewish life and community.

## Marketing

In the twelve months ended October 31, 2010, we had 425,332 unique visitors, an increase of 17% over the comparable period last year. We measure our traffic using Google Analytics, which we understand produces conservative results.

According to [Hubspot's Website Grader](#), we now score higher than 97% of other websites in terms of the marketing effectiveness of our search engine optimization.

We are seeing a higher percentage of our traffic coming from paid search results on Google and from links on Facebook, and less from natural searches. In the last four months, 40% of our traffic came from Google and Yahoo natural searches, 31% from paid

search results on Google, and 2.5% from links on Facebook.

Our Facebook page now has 464 "fans" – just [click here to join](#).

We were pleased to have several of our articles appear when MyJewishLearning.com's new parenting website, [Kveller](#), launched in September.

We were mentioned numerous times about the Clinton-Mezvinsky wedding in the secular and Jewish press, including in the [Forward](#), [ABCNews.com](#), [USA Today](#), and [JTA](#).

## Key Metrics and Testimonials

- **Website traffic:** We had 425,332 unique visitors in the 12 months ending October 31.
- **Bi-weekly email newsletter:** Our November 2 email newsletter was successfully delivered to 8,643 recipients. At the end of October we changed our contact relationship management system and improved our delivery to email addresses that had been blacklisted on our previous CRM provider.
- **Organizations and professionals listed on our Network:** We had a net gain of 74 organizations and professionals added to our Network between July 1 and October 31, bringing the total to 1,099.
- **Requests for Jewish clergy officiation referrals:** In 2010 through October 31 we responded to 1,370 referral requests, an average of 137 a month; in all of 2009, we responded to 1,250, an average of 104 a month.



We are gratified by the expressions of thanks we regularly receive in emails and on our discussion boards. Here are some of the actual messages from the past four months:

- Thank you for this article ([Because Their Children Are Jewish](#))! As always, InterfaithFamily provides insightful articles... My husband and I have talked about this issue exactly. I told him I'm not raising my children Jewish just so they can say they are Jews, but because I want them to be religiously and spiritually Jewish. He knows that I expect him to take the lead on this and I will support him in any way I can. I have learned how to make challah, how to prepare for Passover, what Jewish holidays mean so I can be his support system. Cassie, July 14
- Kol hakavod l'cha for providing this important service to the Jewish world. Rabbi Stacy, July 21
- Thank you for your help! Interfaith Family has already been a wonderful resource as we begin our lives together. Emily, August 31
- I greatly enjoy the resources found on InterfaithFamily.com... [and] gain inspiration for program ideas and discussions from the site. Greg (Temple outreach committee co-chair), September 21.

## Finance and Development



We are grateful to the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, and the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, for providing the support that enabled us to add Karen Kushner to our staff. We now project total spending of \$790,000 in 2010. If we continue with level staffing our 2011 "core" budget would be \$860,000.

Our [Board of Directors](#) held a mini-retreat on October 3 that resulted in affirmation of our strategic priorities that are now expressed in a new three year plan, which calls for increasing our 2011 spending to \$1,190,000. We would be pleased to share the plan with you, upon request.

To achieve the first priority of the new plan, Lippman Kanfer Family Foundation has awarded IFF a matching grant that will enable us to hire a Chief Advancement Officer and provide a major assist to our fundraising efforts.

We were thrilled to be included in the [Slingshot guide for the sixth straight year](#), and to receive our third Slingshot Fund grant. We were very gratified by [Melissa Brown Eisenberg's words](#) in announcing our grant:

Our generation, the Slingshot generation, salutes the effort by interfaith families to see themselves as part of the Jewish community. We believe in the significance of the work InterfaithFamily.com does to keep Judaism in the lives of those who could easily not identify as Jewish. Between its website, referral services and ability to connect people, we see InterfaithFamily.com's existence as crucial to the future strength and vitality of the Jewish community.

On October 28 we had an invitation only program to celebrate our new West Coast "presence." Several prominent Bay Area leaders spoke about their experiences of intermarriage in their families. We are hoping a new InterfaithFamily.com Bay Area Advisory Committee will develop from the evening's participants.



Board member Paul Cohen at  
October 28 Bay Area celebration

## Thank You for Your Interest!

We appreciate your support and interest very much, and welcome your feedback.

Please help us by forwarding this Update to anyone who might be interested in our work.

[Send to a Friend](#)

With best regards,



*Edmund C Case*

Edmund C. Case, CEO