

Dear Supporter,

Things have really been hopping at InterfaithFamily.com since our last Update!

- Our Board is becoming truly national, our Advisory Board is meeting regularly, and we've engaged leading marketing communications consultants to help improve our messaging.
- We continue to expand our "how-to-do-Jewish" content, and our personal narratives and Network Blog address a wide range of interfaith family issues.
- Our Jewish Clergy Officiation Referral Service has never been busier, our referral list is growing, and the numbers of individual and professional and organizational members of our Network already exceed our goal for 2010!
- Our Resource Center for Jewish Clergy has been active, with a workshop in Atlanta, an email newsletter and interesting discussions on our private discussion boards.

June 2010

**What's in this Update**

Organizational Highlights  
Education Activities  
Connections Activities  
Advocacy Activities  
Marketing  
Key Metrics and Testimonials  
Finance and Development

There is intense interest right now in Chelsea Clinton's upcoming wedding to a Jewish man, and we have been all over that story, as well as a flurry of other policy matters – do interfaith marriages fail fast, does intermarriage lead to distancing from Israel, is the Jewish community sufficiently welcoming -- leading to increased traffic and lively discussion boards.

We are working on two new initiatives for later this year -- a "localizing" option to enable communities and outreach programs to use our Network as their web presence, and pilots of online discussion groups and classes for interfaith couples.

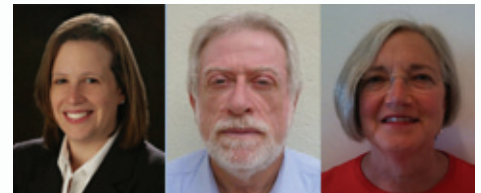
Finally, we are pleased to report that intermarriage will at last be on the agenda of the General Assembly of the Jewish Federations of North America. This most influential gathering, in November 2010 in New Orleans, will include a session we proposed: "Can We Encourage In-marriage and Welcome Interfaith Families?"

## Organizational Highlights

We are making progress toward building a truly national [Board of Directors](#). In June Paul Cohen and Nancy Gennet from the San Francisco Bay Area, and Rebecca Hoelting Short from Atlanta, joined our Board. We now have 15 Board members, with 7 from Boston, 3 from New York City, 2 from San Francisco, and 1 each from Atlanta, Chicago, and New Orleans.

Our re-vitalized [Advisory Board](#) held its second telephone meeting on March 18, focused on building relationships with site users.

We are working with [Rabinowitz/Dorf Communications](#), renowned marketing communications consultants in Washington DC, to improve our messaging. We should have a new brand brief, messaging platform and promotional materials by this fall. The consultants have conducted interviews and a focus group -- and an online survey that attracted over 630 responses!



Rebecca Short Paul Cohen Nancy Gennet

## Education Activities

We confirmed in a recent analysis that InterfaithFamily.com's most popular content is our "how-to" material -- how-to celebrate holidays and life cycle events, raise Jewish children, participate in Jewish religious life, etc.

- March 29, the day that Passover began this year, was our busiest day in recent history, with almost 3,000 visits. What were people reading? Our [Passover Resource Page](#), [Guide to Passover for Interfaith Families](#), [Passover 2010 Recipes](#) (submitted by our readers), [Passover Recipes](#), [Passover Rules & Regs](#), and [Was the Last Supper a Passover Seder?](#)
- We've published two more Resource Guides, one on [Jewish Spirituality](#), and [A Shabbat Experience For Your Group of Friends \(And Family\)](#). We're especially pleased to have produced the *Shabbat Experience* in partnership with the leading independent outreach program, [Stepping Stones](#), based in Denver.

In the last four months, we also published interesting personal narratives from many perspectives. Some of the most popular have been:

- [Hail to the Chiefs: How I Officiated at a Wedding in the Presence of Two Presidents](#), by Rabbi David Gruber
- [Our Jewish-Baha'i Interfaith Marriage](#), by Davida Steinberg
- [Vader Half-Jew](#), a comic by Eli Valley reprinted from [The Forward](#)

- [Dating Jewish Men: An Interview](#), reprinted from *Alef, the Next Conversation*
- [Speaking As A \(Non-\)Jewish Parent](#), an article by Debbie Burton about her daughter's Bat Mitzvah
- [Three Books About Jewish Diversity](#), a review of children's books by Vicky Streiff
- [Drake Graham, Black Jewish Hip Hop Star](#), reprinted from *Heeb*.



The InterfaithFamily.com [Network Blog](#) is also a great place to keep up on news and discussions happening in the media and on the web:

- We've had recent postings about [Gloria Steinem](#), [Lena Horne](#), and [Scarlett Johansson](#).
- We said that an [article in Tablet](#) about intermarried Jewish women hiding their Jewish engagement was sad but not typical and that an [article in the Huffington Post](#) about raising children in two religions was problematic and not typical; we wrote about [divorce in interfaith families](#), and about lessons about attending different worship services from *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*; and we questioned whether an ethics column in a Jewish newspaper should [post a question we considered unethical](#), and whether it's a "Jewish thing" for [children to call adults by their first names](#).

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

## Connections Activities



### 1. Jewish Clergy Officiation Referral Service

We've continued to experience a major uptick in the number of requests to help interfaith couples find a rabbi or cantor for their wedding: in the first half of 2010 we've responded to 819 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 March 18, we got this email from Jenn T.:

Thank you for your help! I found your website extremely helpful and informative.

On March 23, we received this message from Rachel T.:

I had a very hard time finding interfaith marrying rabbis. I really appreciate this.

And on April 23, we got this email from Laura C.:

We will be meeting with Cantor M this weekend.... we never would have found her without your website. I do have one question for you: what is considered a reasonable fee for a Rabbi or Cantor to perform a wedding ceremony and associated meetings/planning?

We now have 395 rabbis and cantors to whom we make referrals, a net increase of 32 in the past four months. Interested clergy should take our [Jewish clergy survey](#)

### 2. Network: Members, Organizations, Professionals and Events

We're very pleased with the growth in our Network since our re-design launched at the end of August 2009. In the past four months, 374 individuals and 115 professionals created personal pages and joined the Network; as of the end of June, we had 1,534 members (including 345 professionals), exceeding our goal for 2010! In addition, we've had a net gain of 30 organizations listed on the Network, bringing the total to 680 at the end of June.

## Advocacy Activities

### 1. Resource Center for Jewish Clergy



There continues to be intense interest in Chelsea Clinton's upcoming wedding to a Jewish man. In March, we were featured in a widely-republished Associated Press story by Rachel Zoll, [Is a Jewish Wedding Ahead for Chelsea Clinton](#), that was also picked up by the [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#). We decided to start a discussion board: [Should Chelsea Clinton have a Jewish wedding? What kind? Who should officiate?](#) That "lively discussion" was featured in a Politics Daily blog, [Will Chelsea Clinton Convert? Jews Wonder – and Ponder the Implications](#). You can follow it all on our blog: [Will Chelsea Clinton Have A Jewish Wedding... Part 3](#).

In the meantime our Resource Center for Jewish Clergy has been busy:

- Rabbi Lev Baesh conducted a workshop on officiation on March 15 for Atlanta-area rabbis and cantors. We were pleased with the turnout and the helpful and respectful discussion. Our next workshop will be in San Francisco in the fall.
- On June 29 we sent our third email newsletter to our Jewish clergy list, announcing six new articles recently published in our "for clergy only" section. One is by a Conservative rabbi, and several are announcements of changes in position on officiation.
- Recently three confidential discussion threads have begun, with clergy asking questions about policies for ritual participation by non-Jews, ketubah language, and how clergy handle requests to officiate shortly before Shabbat ends.

We remain the only Jewish organization providing a cross-denominational resource to help clergy address issues that arise with interfaith couples and families.

## 2. Surveys

Our sixth annual Passover/Easter survey was the subject of extensive coverage, including a JTA feature story, [The spring situation: Juggling matzah balls and Easter bunnies](#), a mention in a [USA Today Faith and Reason](#) blog post by Cathy Grossman, and mentions in the [Philadelphia Jewish Exponent](#) and [JWeekly](#).

## 3. Appearances

Our proposal for a session at the General Assembly of the Jewish Federations of North America, to be held in New Orleans in November, has been selected. The program title is "Can We Encourage In-marriage and Welcome Interfaith Families" and will include presentations by me and Steven M. Cohen. Intermarriage has not been a major topic of discussion on the program of the General Assembly in the past; we are thrilled to have this opportunity to present InterfaithFamily.com's positive message to this important audience.

## 4. Advocacy Writing

Our [Network Blog](#) has been buzzing in the past four months with posts on the following topics:

- [Are Interfaith Marriages Really Failing Fast?](#) (a response to a Washington Post article suggesting that they are, without any persuasive data)
- [Young American Jews, Israel, and Intermarriage](#) (a response to the mistaken contention that young American Jews are distanced from Israel because of intermarriage)
- [Why Intermarrieds Stay Away](#) (a response to the mistaken contention that interfaith couples feel completely welcomed in Jewish communities)
- [More Bad Attitude from Israel](#) (commenting on Israeli officials continuing to wrongly equate intermarriage with assimilation)
- [Memo to Elena Kagan: Not All Jews Spend Christmas at Chinese Restaurants](#)
- [Reflections On Rabbi Eric Yoffie Retirement](#)
- [Reform Movement Task Force on Intermarriage Reports](#)



Despite all the contentiousness about intermarriage, there is positive news on the Network Blog too:

- [Edgar Bronfman In The News](#)
- [A Jewish Leader Who "Gets It"](#) (Barry Shrage)
- [Are Attitudes Towards Intermarriage Changing?](#) (about JJ Goldberg's experience at a cousin's bar mitzvah at a Conservative synagogue)

My personal favorite blog post is [Something Positive About Intermarriage, For a Change](#). A Sunday *New York Times Magazine* article in April, *All the Obama 20-Somethings*, highlighted David Axelrod's special assistant, Eric Lesser, who wrote one of the best articles ever on our site: [How My Italian-American Catholic Mother Strengthened My Jewish Identity](#). Now he's leading his housemates in Shabbat dinner.

## Marketing

According to [Hubspot's Website Grader](#), we score higher than 93% of other websites in terms of the marketing effectiveness of our search engine optimization.

In the first half of 2010, 47% of our traffic came from Google and Yahoo natural searches; 20% came from paid search results on Google; .7% came from links on Facebook; .2% came from Twitter.

Our Facebook page now has 446 "fans" – just [click here](#) to join.

We were quoted in a FoxNews.com [article on the Reyes divorce case](#), and participated in a web chat about interfaith marriage on the [Detroit Free Press](#). We've also been highlighted regularly in Julie Wiener's column in the *New York Jewish Week*, [In the Mix](#).

## Key Metrics and Testimonials

- **Website traffic:** In the twelve months ended June 30, 2010, we had 394,607 unique visitors, and 1,138,008 page views. (In 2009 we had 381,294 unique visitors.)
- **Bi-weekly email newsletter:** Our email newsletters in the first half of 2010 have gone to as many as 7,918 mailable email addresses
- **Organizations and professionals listed on our Network:** We had a net gain of 145 organizations and professionals added to our Network between March 1 and June 30, bringing the total to 1,025
- **Requests for Jewish clergy officiation referrals:** In the first half of 2010, we responded to 819 referral requests, an average of 137 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:

- InterfaithFamily.com is exactly the kind of website that a family like mine needs, and I only wish I had known about it earlier. Jamie O., March 23
- Thank you for this information. Our grandchildren are Jewish and we are Christians. We want to be involved and celebrate with them. Judy F., June 8
- I suggested that a friend take a look at the IFF website and she seemed so relieved that there was some resource that might help her better understand her situation and how other people navigate the issues that come up. Debbie B., June 22

## Finance and Development



Under our current 2010 operating plan we have a “core activities” budget of about \$740,000. Since our last Update we have received renewed, and renewed and increased, funding from several of our foundation supporters, including two grants of \$100,000. In order to do what we need to do, we would have to nearly double our staff and our funding, to \$1.5 million. We would be pleased to share our expansion plans with you, upon request.

We are working on two new initiatives for later this year -- a "localizing" option to enable communities and outreach programs to use our Network as their web presence, and pilots of online discussion groups and classes for interfaith couples.

## 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