

Sherry and Alan Leventhal Family Foundation CENTER FOR INTERFAITH FAMILIES



OVERVIEW

Who:

The Sherry and Alan Leventhal Center for Interfaith Families is an in-house initiative of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans, with an Advisory Committee consisting of two lay Chairs, Alex Gershanik and Teri Hunter, and several members to be determined. The Interfaith Center will be professionally led by one full-time staffer, with programming support to be offered by Federation staff.

What:

The Interfaith Center's programs will address what it means to live Jewishly by focusing on Jewish values rather than on biblical stories or attending services. Education programs will focus on topics such as navigating holidays and life cycle events, and community programs will bring local interfaith families together through interfaith circles, programming for grandparents, and similar events. The center will accept interfaith families wherever they are on the Jewish spectrum, ensuring that they feel comfortable enough to ask questions, will not be judged, and are open to discussing Judaism.

Why:

According to the Pew Research Center, the rate of intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews is 58%, with that number being higher for those raised in non-Orthodox homes. We estimate that the local number may be higher, as this is a predominantly non-Orthodox community that prides itself on its offbeat, culturally diverse lifestyle. Based upon our research of both national and local trends, there is a demonstrated need to better serve interfaith couples and families in Greater New Orleans. The Federation, as the umbrella organization for the area's Jewish community, is the logical vehicle for creating the Interfaith Center to serve this population. We hope to accomplish four goals with the Interfaith Center: ensuring children in interfaith families feel a connection to Judaism, creating a community built on acceptance, increasing the Federation's visibility, and strengthening relationships with community partners. We are looking forward to coordinating with area synagogues and Jewish communal organizations to achieve these objectives.

When:

The Center will be formally launched on July 1, 2020.