

Linda's Column

A study done in the Boston area a couple of years ago concluded that outreach to intermarried couples increased the likelihood that these couples would choose to establish Jewish households. This finding was in contrast to statistics from the National Jewish Population Study of 2000-2001 which stated that 33-39% of intermarried households chose to raise their children as Jews. In the Boston area, which has actively focused on outreach to the unaffiliated, particularly intermarried couples for the past ten years, a very different statistic was revealed. The Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Boston began an effort in 1996 to directly fund programs of outreach to the intermarried, to "fulfill the Biblical imperative to welcome the stranger and newcomer." Since then, they have provided hundreds of thousands of dollars from their annual campaign to organizations providing outreach to interfaith families. The bulk of this funding has supported educational programming such as "Introduction to Judaism" and "A Taste of Judaism" provided by the URJ and multi-session workshops provided by their Jewish Family & Children's Service such as, "Raising Children in Interfaith Families," "The December Dilemma," "Parents of Interfaith Couples," and more. These programs provided information to intermarried couples and their families about Judaism as well as a safe forum to openly discuss these very important issues. The findings of this 2005 Greater Boston Study showed that a majority of children in interfaith households in Boston, almost 60%, are raising their children as Jews.

JFCS and a number of other local synagogues have been making efforts to reach out to unaffiliated and interfaith families in the Mercer County area. We are providing programs such as "A Taste of Judaism" and "Walking on Eggshells" (see programs link) to address questions that families touched by intermarriage often ask. We would also like to invite you to tell us what kinds of programs or resources would be helpful to you and your families.

Please contact me with any questions or suggestions you may have. If you would like to be added to our interfaith eNewsletter distribution list – please call or email me.

Thank you,
Linda Kanner, LCSW
609 987-8100
LindaK@jfcsonline.org