

St. Charles Jewish network plans High Holiday and fall programs

Amidst the COVID-19 crisis, the St. Charles Jewish Family Network is trying to connect local young Jewish families.

St. Charles County represents nearly 10% of all Jews in the St. Louis region, including a strong representation of families with young children. (According to the most recent community study, 41% of Jewish households in St. Charles have at least one child living at home, and of all children in Jewish households in St. Charles, almost 21% are ages 0-5.)

In response to this need, the Chabad Jewish Center of St. Charles County obtained significant funding support from the Jewish Federation of St. Louis and launched the family network earlier this year.

"The goal is to create a warm and child-friendly community for young Jewish families living in the county," said Bassy Landa, 27, mother of two girls, ages 2 and 1, who is spearheading the network and directs the St. Charles Chabad with her husband, Rabbi Chaim Landa, 30. "By offering programs, networking opportunities and support for this important and growing demographic, we really hope to enhance Jewish life for these young families."

The Landas moved to St. Charles County in February. About a month later, the COVID-19 social distancing rules went into effect.

"As a startup community, it's definitely been a challenging time, though there has also been an extra need for



Rabbi Chaim and Bassy Landa direct the Chabad Jewish Center of St. Charles County.

community; young families are really looking for that connection," said Landa. "I also feel that this time has created more opportunities to virtually connect with so many young moms; it's been special."

Over the past months, the network has hosted a variety of ongoing weekly programs, including Shabbat-to-go care packages, the Driveway Schmooze initiative and a virtual Jewish Bedtime Story series, which they have featured on their Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/JewishStCharles>).

Additionally, they've brought some special programs to the young community, including a pre-Passover Bedtime Story as part of a partnership with the Jewish Federation's PJ Library; a virtual Model Matzah Bakery; and the distribution of Seder-to-go kits and Shavuot-to-go care packages.

After conducting an informal com-

munity survey, they have announced their programming, which will follow social distancing measures, for the High Holiday and fall season, including:

- **Pre-Rosh Hashanah Mommy & Me:** Sunday, Sept. 13 at 10 a.m. in a private residence and backyard, featuring a morning of holiday song and fun, followed by a light brunch.

- **Pre-Rosh Hashanah Shofar Factory:** Learn how a shofar is made and blown, Tuesday, Sept. 15 at 6:30 p.m., shown live via Facebook ([// Facebook.com/JewishStCharles.org](https://www.facebook.com/JewishStCharles.org))

- **Pre-Rosh Hashanah Bedtime Story:** Wednesday, Sept. 16 at 6:30 p.m. live via Facebook

- **Rosh Hashanah in the Park:** 30 minute outdoor service for families to celebrate safely and joyfully, Sunday, Sept. 20 at 11 a.m. at Veterans Tribute Park, Shelter #1, 1031 Kisker Road.

URJ's Intro to Judaism course begins Oct. 6

St. Louis-area Reform rabbis will teach the Union for Reform Judaism's "Intro to Judaism" course, starting in October.

Introduction to Judaism is an engaging multi-session course for anyone who wants to gain a deeper understanding of Jewish life. Discover what could be meaningful to you in liberal Judaism. All people, perspectives, and questions are welcome. The course will be hosted online and led by St. Louis-area Reform rabbis.

"Temple Israel is thrilled to partner with other Reform congregational clergy to teach the Introduction to Judaism class," said Rabbi Amy Feder, Temple Israel's senior rabbi and one of the course instructors. "This semester's class will be different than other years, in that it is both entirely virtual and there is no registration fee. We hope that it will encourage a wide range of people looking to either learn about Judaism for the first time or refresh their knowledge, and to connect with something bigger and meaningful during these strange times."

This class will be hosted online on Tuesday evenings from 7 to 9 p.m. from October through January 2021. The class Zoom link will be sent to registrants prior to the first class on Oct. 6.

There is no cost for the course, but students will be asked to purchase the book "Honoring Tradition, Embracing Modernity: A Reader for the Union for Reform Judaism's Introduction to Judaism Course."

This book can be purchased from the CCAR Press website (www.ccarpress.org) as a hard copy (\$34) or an eBook (\$28).

For more information and link to register at: www.ti-stl.org/Intro

The course is supported by the National Center to Encourage Judaism, which funds programs that welcome people new to Judaism.

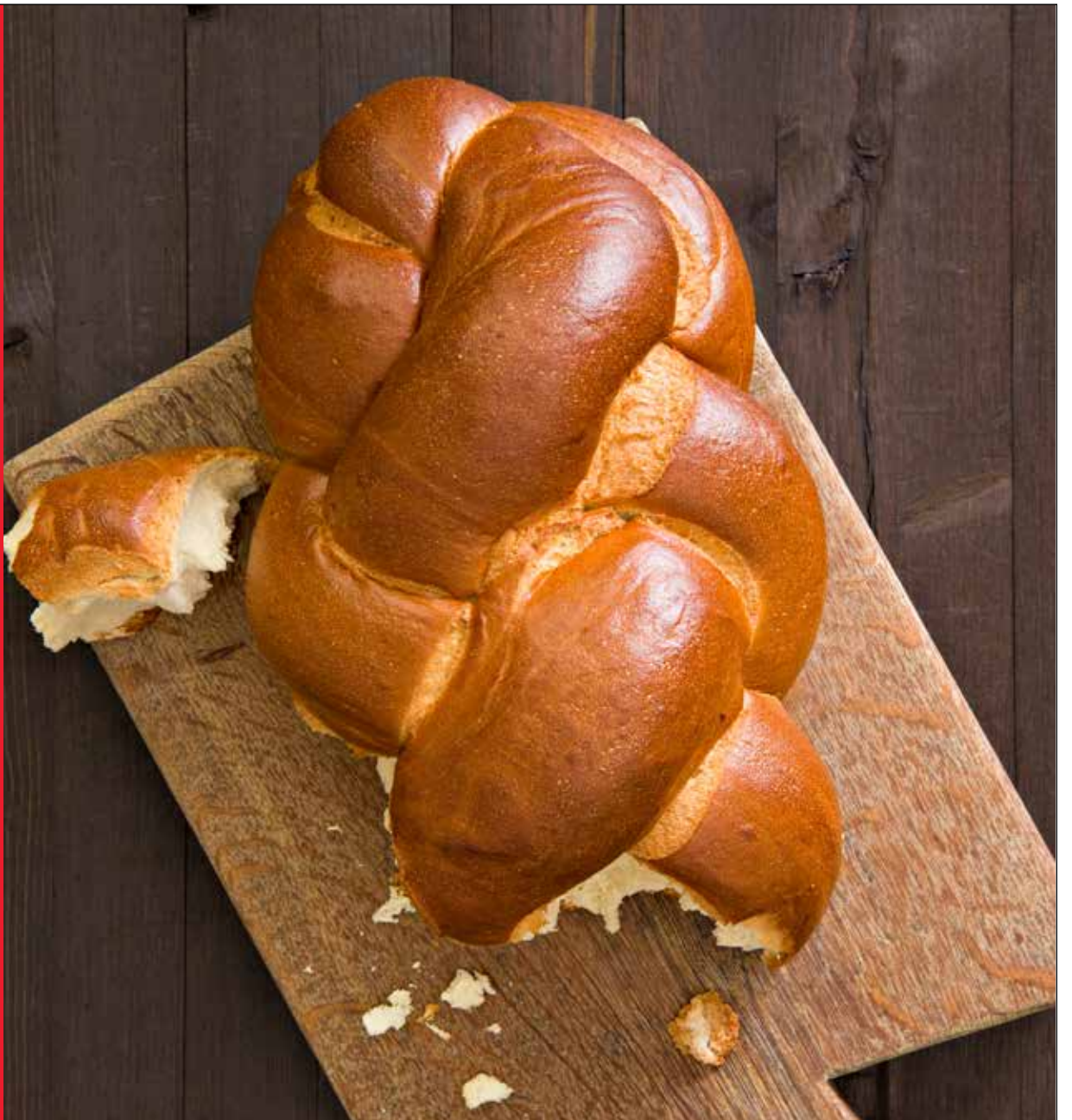
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Here's to a healthy and happy new year!

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