



STC NOW

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Meet the Landas

Rabbi Chaim Landa and his wife, Bassy, spread goodwill and positivity throughout the Saint Charles community.



By Bill Motchan

Since they arrived as new Saint Charles residents in February, Rabbi Chaim Landa, his wife Bassy along with their daughters, Chaya and Mussia, have immersed themselves in the local community.

The Landas are co-directors of the Chabad Jewish Center of St. Charles County, and Rabbi Chaim—who grew up in St. Louis—is the only rabbi in the County. Their work revolves around education, outreach and creating a welcoming community for the County’s population of nearly 6,000 Jews.

Equally important for the Landas is improving the world around them. They follow a simple philosophy: it’s all about making the world a better place, with an emphasis on each person’s responsibility in doing so. “It’s important that we remember how even a small act of kindness can change the world for

the better,” Rabbi Chaim said. “And that every individual has a unique role in God’s world; there is no one superfluous, everyone has a purpose.”

Rabbi Chaim says he didn’t invent these ideas, they come from the teachings of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, the most influential rabbi in modern history. The Rebbe is the inspiration behind the Landas’ work in St. Charles County and today, some 5,000 couples, like the Landas, continue his work in all 50 U.S. states and more than 100 countries around the world.

The powerhouse couple-team maintain a busy pace. Here are some snapshots from a typical day in their lives. Many of these photos are from a Friday, so they are also preparing for Shabbat, the Jewish Sabbath. Shabbat is a day of rest and celebration that begins on Friday at sunset and ends on Saturday evening after nightfall.

Planning & Coordinating

From their home office Bassy and Rabbi Chaim plan upcoming socially-distanced and virtual programming, such as the Passover “Seder-to-Go” initiative, the Sukkot “Pizza in the Hut,” virtual classes and movie screenings, and more. Starting a non-profit and building a community during a pandemic has made for an interesting beginning and the couple rarely has time for themselves. “We never thought our first year in Saint Charles would look like this,” says Rabbi Chaim. “But it has its perks, and though I’m not sure working from home is one of them, the kids certainly love it.”

Chanukah on Main Street

This year’s program was a bit different than most with eight smaller, socially-distanced and shorter events taking place, one on each night of the eight-day festival (last year’s event brought together more than 300 people). Mayor Dan Borgmeyer kicked off the eight days of festivities by issuing a proclamation in honor of the holiday and lighting the center candle of the 9 foot menorah in Berthold Square. This year also saw the establishment of



a new tradition, “Chanukah Menorah Lighting at New Town” which received a strong showing on the eighth and final night of the holiday.

Morning Prayers

Rabbi Chaim prays three times daily: in the morning, in the afternoon and at nightfall. Here Rabbi Chaim begins his day by reciting the morning prayers. He hopes to open



a synagogue one day and currently hosts services from time-to-time (some 120 people gathered for a Rosh Hashanah service), though he says “that’s not on the top of people’s bucket lists, so we are working hard to address the more pressing needs first; we’re doing a lot of listening and note taking.”

Sharing Traditions & Providing Support

Each week Rabbi Chaim and Bassy hit the road with care packages, sharing the warmth and traditions of the Jewish Sabbath with fellow members of the tribe. Rabbi Chaim is also a volunteer chaplain at the St. Charles County Police Department, making himself available for local crises and offering support to law enforcement. He makes it his business to reach out to area hospitals and senior living facilities to provide spiritual aid to residents and patients.



Jewish Bedtime Story

With forty-one percent of Jewish households having at least one child living at home, the Landas have been putting a strong emphasis on young families, launching the St. Charles Jewish Family Network—a warm and child-friendly community for young Jewish families living in St. Charles County—in early 2020. “Kids love hearing stories and storytelling comes natural to me,” says Bassy. Here (above) she is seen preparing for her weekly bedtime story using Facebook Live ([Facebook.com/JewishStCharles](https://www.facebook.com/JewishStCharles)) for children to experience with their parents at the end of a busy day.

Lighting the Shabbat Candles (pictured right)

Bassy and her two daughters Chaya, 2, and Mussia, 1, light Shabbat candles on Friday, 18 minutes before sunset, ushering in the Jewish Sabbath. It is customarily that the women of the house kindle these

lights, including young girls, like Chaya, who can recite the blessing. “They love it,” says Bassy, “and I love it too; it’s special to involve the



girls in these traditions.” For more information on the Chabad Jewish Center of St. Charles County, programs available to the growing Jewish community in St. Charles, and to help support these efforts, visit:

www.JewishStCharles.org and/or [Facebook.com/JewishStCharles](https://www.facebook.com/JewishStCharles).

