



## Sara Wagner

**SARA WAGNER** was born in Louisville, KY in 1965 where she spent her childhood rooted in Jewish community life. Her parents were both active in the pharmaceutical Jewish fraternity, AZO, and B'nai B'rith as well as congregation Keneseth Israel (KI), founded by her grandmother's side of the family. Sara attended Hebrew school two days a week at the Jewish Community Center (JCC) and Sunday school at KI. She also participated in Jewish day camps and the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization (BBYO), affording her opportunities to attend conferences, visit Israel, and realize her passion to help others connect with their Jewish heritage.

It was her experiences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Brandeis University, however, that taught her the value of the breadth of Jewish identity. At Madison, she experienced a larger and more diverse Jewish community through Hillel, BBYO, and her sorority Sigma Delta Tau (SDT). Through her soon-to-be husband Howard, she came to know more about Reform Judaism. She recalls that in Madison she began to

"understand and appreciate that all streams of Judaism had value to them."

She interned at Harvard Hillel during her studies at Brandeis, sitting in on interfaith marriage counseling sessions. She did not realize the value of this experience until later when she began working with the Jewish Outreach Institute to create an inclusive environment for interfaith families.

After leaving Boston, she returned to Louisville with her husband to accept a job as the Community Relations Director of the Jewish Federation of Louisville. During this period, she strove to foster a more meaningful relationship with the African American community, worked with the Women's Campaign and Philanthropy division, and facilitated the merger of the JCC and the Federation. Sara then became the first female CEO of the Jewish Federation of Louisville. Although she recognizes the challenges facing her community, such as a lack of funding for the JCC day school, she credits the incredible people both native and from outside Louisville who recognize

"there's always something new and exciting around the corner."



Sara for Camp Livingstone's Alumni Spotlight.  
Photo by Patti Hartog