

# Honoring Rabbi Levy

*Remarks by Susan Milne, president of the Board of Family Promise of Beaufort County, at the dedication of the Rabbi Theodore S. Levy Family Center*

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Photo by Jay Karr, reprinted with permission of The Island Packet

We made it! FPBC has been in operation for six months now, and we continue to learn and grow. We have finally named our Family Center....after an incredible man who was committed to his neighbors in Beaufort County and was committed to making a difference in the lives of those around him.

What is in a name? What I have heard, read, and experienced is that Rabbi Levy was a leader in the true sense of the word – he was a person that others followed. He had a life long commitment to family, community, social justice, education and peace.

In 1976, while serving as a Rabbi in Syracuse, NY, Rabbi Levy founded the Peace Day Care Center – housed in his Temple – for underprivileged children – providing meals, education, and clothing. Also, he was one of the faith leaders who founded the InterReligious Center of Central New York. In fact, he was designated “Founding President” of the Center, which was established by an interfaith group of leaders with a belief that engagement among different faiths would lead to understanding, friendships, and a collaborative strength to address community issues.

The IRC flourished and is now known as InterFaith Works. IFW offers social service programs that serve people in need: families; children; homeless; aging, and the disabled. Rabbi Levy didn't just talk about collaboration; he made it happen. He didn't just talk about service; he did service. His belief and commitment (helped make us) stronger together than alone.

When Rabbi Levy moved to Beaufort County in 1991, he quickly became involved in areas where he could have an impact on services to families and others who were disenfranchised or marginalized. He became a member of the Hilton Head Hospital's Institutional Review Board and Ethics Committee, the Hilton Head Island Foundation Board, the Target 2010 Healthy Communities Task Force for Beaufort County, the People Working Together Project, and the campaign that helped residents obtain access to clean water and septic tanks. Rabbi Levy was also the leader in making the Alliance for Human Services a reality. The operating principle of the Alliance is that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." Family Promise and Family Success both grew out of the Alliance. On a personal note, Rabbi Levy was on the search committee that interviewed and hired me. I knew from the beginning that he was not only a leader, but a champion for those who struggle.

Rabbi Levy was active in many national and international endeavors, but his local community was always primary for him. While he met with, talked with, and walked with many national and international leaders, he worked with and for those in his locality who needed a helping hand so they could support their families and improve the quality of their lives....

The Rabbi Theodore Levy Family Center reminds us that we are called to action. Talking about doing what is right, talking about homeless families, saying that something needs to be done, is not enough. We must have the courage and wisdom to act. Remember the phrase "actions speak louder than words"? We will be judged by what we do, not what we say.

We are proud to name our Family Center after a man whose life and legacy inspire us all to share hope and hospitality with our neighbors. Together, we continue in Rabbi Levy's footsteps -- *eradicating family homelessness one family at a time.*