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Cincinnati's Rabbi Laura Baum is First Female Rabbi to Present at South by Southwest (SXSW) in Austin

Rabbi Laura Baum of Congregation Beth Adam in Cincinnati and COO of OurJewishCommunity.org, an online web portal that connects Jews around the globe, will be a featured presenter at SXSW Interactive, the iconic 22-year-old Austin, Tx event that has become America's breeding ground for new ideas and creative thinking.

Baum will be on the SXSW agenda with other luminaries including Rev. Jesse Jackson, bestselling author Malcom Gladwell and Twitter founder Biz Stone.

On Saturday March 14 at 3:30 PM., Baum will co-present a provocatively titled session "[Tech & Purpose...With a Dung Beetle, Prof. & Rabbi](#)" with University of Michigan Professor Vic Strecher, author of 'On Purpose' a book and accompanying app that helps people determine their life's purpose.

Baum and Strecher may seem like an unusual combo – a public health professor and rabbi – but they both care about helping people to lead lives of purpose. And they both see the value of using technology including apps, social media, and online streaming – to bring their message to a broader audience. Some of the topics to be covered in the one-hour session include:

- Can we build communities online around purpose? Around religion? Peoplehood? Faith? Values? And why should (or shouldn't) we?
- In a modernized world where organized religion is on the decline, can technology assist people in finding and monitoring their purpose in life (whether they consider themselves religious or not)?
- How can empathy lead us to healthier behaviors and to being more responsible citizens of our world?
- How can technology help us meet these challenges?

Baum will draw on her experiences since launching OurJewishCommunity.org in 2008 and growing it to connect tens of thousands of people around the world to Judaism, a religion that has been seeing a steady decline in participation for decades. She's the first female Rabbi to present at SXSW, one of the world's leading technology conferences.

"Using technology makes sense because people have voted with their feet – and the majority of Jews are unaffiliated," notes Baum. "An online community like OurJewishCommunity.org attracts people who can't afford a local synagogue membership, who are geographically isolated, who have physical limitations, and/or have busy schedules and need a synagogue that's accessible 24/7. Some participants prefer the anonymity of the screen. Many people feel more welcomed through the online community than they do in in person communities. It also lends itself to global conversations."

An accomplished speaker and writer, nationally recognized for her use of social media to engage online communities, speaking at SXSW is the latest recognition for Baum whose other accomplishments include becoming a religion columnist for The Huffington Post, appearing on “Face The Nation” and serving as Rabbi at Congregation Beth Adam in Cincinnati since 2008.

Editors: Both Baum and Strecher are available for media interviews about their presentation. A copy of their slides will be available [HERE](#) following their presentation.

About OurJewishCommunity.org:

[OurJewishCommunity.org](#) is the world’s first contemporary online synagogue. Launched on September 1, 2008, [OurJewishCommunity.org](#) reaches hundreds of thousands of individuals in all 50 states in the United States and more than 180 countries. The online community features blogs, audio podcasts through iTunes, video podcasts through YouTube, streaming holiday services, discussion boards, holiday eCards, recipes, educational materials for all ages and more. We have more than 3,000 followers on [Twitter](#) and [OurJewishCommunity.org](#) has almost 30,000 [Facebook fans](#).

About SXSW Interactive

The 22nd annual SXSW Interactive Festival returns to Austin from Friday, March 13 through Tuesday, March 17. An incubator of cutting-edge technologies and digital creativity, the 2015 event features five days of compelling [presentations and panels](#) from the brightest minds in emerging technology, scores of exciting networking events hosted by industry leaders and an unbeatable lineup of special programs showcasing the best new websites, video games and startup ideas the community has to offer. From hands-on training to big-picture analysis of the future, SXSW Interactive has become the place to preview the technology of tomorrow today. Join us in March 2015 for the [sessions](#), the [networking](#), the [evening events](#), the 18th Annual [SXSW Interactive Innovation Awards](#), [SXSW Accelerator](#), the [SXSW Gaming Expo](#), the [SXSW Trade Show](#), [SXSW Create](#), the [Digital Creative Job Market](#), cross-industry conversations with attendees from [SXSW Film](#) and [SXSW Music](#), and, most of all, the [unforgettable inspirational experiences](#) that only SXSW can deliver.