



## 45 Amazing Alumni To Celebrate 45 Years Of Exceptional Epstein Education - #45at45

This year, The Epstein School is turning 45 years old. To celebrate this, we are highlighting 45 amazing alumni in honor of 45 years of Exceptional Education at Epstein. Our school has hundreds of wonderful and talented alumni and we love to share their successes!

### 45 at 45 - The Countdown Continues!

Throughout this year, we are recognizing 5 alumni via email, until we reach a total of 45 alumni. **View previously highlighted alumni:** [#1-5](#) [#6-10](#) [#11-15](#) [#16-20](#) [#21-25](#)

#### #26

**Heidi Cohen (Class of 1976)**- Heidi is the matriarch of the first, 3rd-generation Epstein family. She is not only an alumna herself, but also the proud mother of Epstein graduates Melissa Cohen Silver (2003), who is currently an Epstein English teacher, and Sydney Cohen (2006). In addition, Heidi is the doting grandmother of current ECP student, Maya Silver. Heidi has been highly involved in the Epstein community over the years; she co-chaired the Shachar Holocaust Survivor Project, started Leadership Epstein, was front-desk volunteer coordinator, and a room parent for many years.

Heidi's passion for community service is also reflected in her most notable career accomplishments, spanning 30 years in the non-profit sector. She helped start the [Jack & Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation \(JAJF\)](#) and served as their Executive Director for 10 years before retiring. During her tenure with JAJF, she was instrumental in operationalizing the Foundation's vision by planning trips and creating lasting memories for families with a parent facing terminal late-stage cancer. Before working with JAJF, Heidi served as the Executive Director of the Tourette's Syndrome Association of Georgia and South Carolina for 11 years and Executive Director of the Dekalb Volunteer Lawyers Foundation for 5 years prior to that. Heidi is an avid golfer and is actively involved with the Atlanta Women's Golf Association and the Standard Club. Now retired, Heidi is enjoying her favorite role yet, loving grandmother, and looks forward to continuing her long-lasting relationship with the Epstein School.



## #27

**Michelle Simon (Class of 1977)** – Michelle Stern Simon is passionate about her Judaism, her synagogue, Birthright Israel, the disabilities community and The Epstein School. Michelle attended college at Washington University in St. Louis where she majored in Finance and minored in Economics and Art History. She then received her law degree from Columbia Law School. During her employment career she worked for a NY law firm, an investment bank and then became general counsel and secretary for a public commercial real estate company. During this period, she also married her husband, Gary, and had three wonderful children, Aaron, Kyle and Michael (all of who attended The Epstein School). After the birth of her 3rd child, she decided to pursue her true passion, committing herself fulltime to being a volunteer leader in our Atlanta Jewish Community. Michelle has been the ultimate volunteer and lay leader.



Michelle has held many leadership roles and has chaired numerous community events. While her children were at Epstein, she was a member of the Epstein Board of Trustees, chaired the auction and was in one of the first Leadership Epstein classes. She currently serves on or has served on the Leadership Council for Birthright Israel, the Board of JFGA, the Board of the Auxiliary of the William Breman Jewish Home, the Board of the Atlanta Jewish Foundation, the Board of Women's Philanthropy at JFGA, the Board of Temple Sinai, and the Board of The American Jewish Committee. One of her deep passions is making a difference in the lives of people with disabilities. She was president of the AMIT Program in Atlanta for five years and has served on the [Jewish Abilities Alliance](#) since its inception. Michelle has been instrumental in raising awareness and advocating for people with disabilities and the importance of inclusion in our Jewish community. Five years ago, she helped establish the Power of One Event, which recognizes volunteers and professionals across our community who have made an impact on the inclusion of people with disabilities. Michelle loved her years at Epstein! Both of her parents were Holocaust survivors and she grew up in a traditional home regularly attending synagogue and Sunday school, but the teachers and leadership at Epstein were instrumental in solidifying her love of Judaism and sense of community. In her spare time, she loves music, reading and relaxing with her family.

## #28

**Joe Alterman (Class of 2003)** - Joe is a [professional jazz pianist and composer](#), who studied music at New York University, where he received both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Jazz Piano Performance. In addition to performances with Houston Person, Les McCann and his own trio at venues, including the Kennedy Center, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Birdland and the Blue Note, Alterman has opened, many times, for Ramsey Lewis. Joe has also opened for Dick Gregory, Norah Jones, John Pizzarelli and Philip Bailey (of Earth, Wind and Fire), among others. At 30 years old, Alterman has released five critically-acclaimed albums, his most recent being 2018's "More Cornbread". He was profiled three times by iconic journalist Nat Hentoff and was the subject of Hentoff's very last piece on music in March 2016. Dick Cavett has referred to Alterman as "one fine, first class



entertainer” and Ramsey Lewis has called Alterman “an inspiration to me” and his piano playing “a joy to behold”.

In 2018, Joe was named the new Director of the [Atlanta Jewish Music Festival](#). Also a budding journalist, Joe is proud that journalist Nat Hentoff called one of his columns on jazz "one of the very best pieces on the essence of jazz, the spirit of jazz, that I've ever read, and I'm not exaggerating." Joe co-chaired the 2018 Fran Eizenstat and Eizenstat Family Lecture at Ahavath Achim Synagogue in November. In 2009, Joseph was recognized and inducted as a member of Epstein's Alumni Hall of Fame. In 2015, he wanted to give back to the school and one of the ways he chose to do that was by performing for and speaking to members of Epstein's Concert Band! Joe credits The Epstein School with instilling a positive, optimistic outlook on life that helped form his belief that through hard work, dreams are accomplishable!

## #29

**Jonah Jacobson (Class of 2009)** - When Jonah was a small boy, he was fascinated with the unusual and unfamiliar fruits, vegetables, and fish at the local Asian markets he'd visit with his mom. Occasionally, Jonah hung out in his home kitchen, learning the family's recipes and committing them to memory. He loved how food looked, how it felt, and how it tasted. Soup days at Epstein were the highlight of his week, especially since he had figured out how to finagle seconds. Following high school graduation, Jonah worked in the music industry at Terminal West, a local music venue. After some time, he was employed in hospitality at Room to Board, a surfing hostel, owned by a former Epstein family, in Costa Rica, on the beach. He began a cooking and recipe blog for young travelers like himself, who were short on money but big on adventure. It was at that time that Jonah decided he wanted to become a chef.



He returned to Atlanta and worked his way up to [sous chef at Kyma, a high-end Greek/Mediterranean restaurant](#) in Buckhead and one of 12 Buckhead Life restaurants in the U.S. As second-in-command of the restaurant, he supervises everything that takes place in the kitchen at Kyma and is responsible for ordering the fish and other products from around the world. Jonah has won many awards for Kyma, including first place at the Atlanta Ice Cream Competition, Afternoon in the Countryside and at the Attack of the Killer Tomatoes Festival. Jonah aims to have his own restaurant one day. In the meantime, he is available to cook for Pop-Ups and private parties as his Kyma schedule will allow.

## #30

**Jonathan Merlin and Gabriel Kadoori (Class of 2018)** - This dynamic duo are recent Epstein graduates, who are now freshmen at Pace Academy and are already demonstrating their leadership skills. These young men are [leading the only freshmen team accepted into a 7-week fundraising competition focused on helping to cure blood](#)



[cancer](#). To accomplish this, they are working with the The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Georgia Chapter, one of the nation's largest organizations trying to cure the disease. Their goal is to raise \$100,000 for this cause and organization that is close to both of the boys and their families.

We are very proud of their advocacy in this effort and it is evident that leadership is an integral part of who these young men are.

Jonathan is also currently involved in an organization called Young Men's Service League. YMSL is an organization that allows high school students to give back to their communities in collaboration with their mothers. He stated, *"Through my Jewish studies at Epstein, I have learned that it is incredibly important to give back to those who are less fortunate than we are. One way Epstein taught me to do that is by taking the initiative and being a leader in organizations that seeks to do good work for those around us."* Last year, Gabriel was the President of the Knesset (in 8th grade) and is currently a part of the Creating Connected Communities Leadership Program (CCC LDP), where participants learn about issues surrounding poverty/homelessness and discuss ways to help, as well as assist in planning events for inner-city children. Gabriel stated, *"The Epstein School taught me many lessons about the importance of community and helping others and really shaped my personal values."*



## Developing Future Leaders

Today's Epstein students, like these [19 Technology Champions, who took 1st place honors at the 2019 Georgia Independent and Home School Regional Technology Competition](#) are fortunate to continue to receive the value of a high-quality Epstein education. We prepare our students for success in high school, college and beyond. This is [evidenced by the caliber of the colleges our alumni attend](#) and the fact that our recent graduating classes have had a 100% acceptance rate to Atlanta's premier private high schools, public school magnets and honors programs. Many enter high school with advanced standing in mathematics and foreign language as well as eligibility for honors classes. Epstein graduates are academic lauded by high school administrators and faculty as academic stars, peer leaders and successful student athletes.



## Do You Have An Exciting Story/Accomplishment To Share?

**We Want To Hear From You!** We are very proud of our alumni and enjoy sharing alumni success stories with our community. If you have any personal news (marriage, baby, engagement etc) or a story you would like to share, please let us know and [update your information](#). Or, perhaps you or an alumnus you know is deserving of being nominated for the Alumni Hall of Fame or Alumni Spotlight. If so, please fill out the appropriate nomination form ([Alumni Hall of Fame](#)) and send to Alumni Relations Coordinator [Marni Bekerman](#) or 404-250-5649. And, don't forget to join our [alumni association on Facebook](#).



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