

# Josh Lauder: Building on a Family Legacy

The great-grandson of the Estée Lauder Cos. founders is inspired by philanthropists with long-term visions and self-sustaining organizations

By **ABBY SCHULTZ**

children. It directly feeds kids, and also educates families on the importance of nutrition. It supports programs that help students stay on a path to earn a college degree. And it works to give kids, primarily from low-income communities, safe spaces to participate in youth sports, summer camps, and other physical activities. Eat. Learn. Play. has partnered both with national organizations, including No Kid Hungry and DonorsChoose, and local groups, such as the East Oakland Youth Development Center.

Even as they continue to fight hunger during the pandemic, the Currys are planning to expand the organization's two other pillars—learn and play—as more children are being home-schooled. Currently, many Oakland families lack the technology to do that well, providing an opening for Eat. Learn. Play.

"We've seen there's an enormous education achievement gap in students from low-income communities and their middle-and-upper-class peers that has lifelong, negative ramifications for children growing up in poverty," Ayesha says. "For many of these kids, they fall behind in key reading and math indicators before they even enter kindergarten, and by the fourth grade, a vast majority of kids from low-income communities, particularly minority students, are performing below the state and national averages for reading and math."

The long-term aim is to amplify what Eat. Learn. Play. does in the Bay Area nationwide, "so that we can ensure our next generation has the access to everything they need," Stephen says. "Beyond traditional grant-making, I think it's likely we'll become increasingly involved in advocacy activities around the issues we care about, whether that's at the local, state, or federal level—always in a kid-partisan way, of course... Children are our future, and we are deeply dedicated to empowering them and opening doors for their futures." **E**



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***Above: A year ago, Josh Lauder launched the Young Professionals Committee of the Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation.***

**J**osh Lauder isn't wasting time to follow in his family's footsteps and make philanthropy integral to his life.

A year ago, Lauder, 25, co-founded the Young Professionals Committee of the Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation (ADDF), the nonprofit created by his grandfather, Leonard, and his great-uncle, Ronald, billionaire heirs of the Estée Lauder Cos.

It's Laura, Lauder's mother, who he calls a "prolific philanthropist" and an inspiration to give back. Philanthropy "was a joy for her and she passed it on to be a joy for us," Lauder says.

One of several initiatives his mother participated in was the creation of the Jewish Teen Foundation Board in Palo Alto, Calif., in 2002, a program she eventually helped spread across the U.S. and overseas. For Lauder, who joined the teen board in high school and eventually became one of the group's leaders, being part of this organization taught him the value of consensus building, and the weight of responsibility in giving away other people's money.

The popularity of the teen foundation board at a time of life when people are apt to be more absorbed in just about anything other than philanthropy

informs how Lauder approaches recruiting for ADDF today. Lauder himself was drawn to the foundation to support the legacy of his family, but also because of "how much it takes from your soul to go through a neurodegenerative illness."

Also, as the founding members watch the 20-year mark go by, Lauder sees a purpose in helping to bring a younger generation into the organization. "Everyone is in agreement that we need more people involved, and we need younger people involved, and we need more liveliness at the events," he says.

Lauder's family reinforces the values of consensus through the Lauder Family Giving Circle, a family grant-giving vehicle. Each year, Josh and his sister Eliana alternate taking the lead to research nonprofits that fit within a mission agreed to by the family. Their initial selections are vetted by a philanthropic advisor, and then are reviewed by the family around Thanksgiving before they decide which groups will receive grants totaling about \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually, Lauder says.

Lauder says he's inspired by those who have created well-endowed, self-sustaining organizations designed to continue to have an impact beyond their founder's lifetimes, citing the work of Bill and Melinda Gates, Warren Buffett, and Stephen Schwarzman, among others.

Doing so would be in keeping with the Hebrew phrase *l'dor v'dor*, from generation to generation, passing on the values of philanthropy instilled by his mother, including *tikkun olam*—to repair the world, in Hebrew—and "the idea that people shouldn't just engage in philanthropy for the sake of their own status signaling," Lauder says.

"The most righteous way to give is to invest your time humbly and to invest your money humbly," he adds. And, "to take a leadership role in a humble way that can be of service and be inspirational to others." **E**