

# AEP

Sigma Eta Chapter—Lehigh University

Spring 2015



## Letter from the Master

Dear Alumni, Friends, and Family,

This past semester has truly been a pivotal time for our chapter. We hosted the largest tailgate in our chapter's history at Yankee Stadium, redesigned our website ([www.sigmaetaaeppi.com](http://www.sigmaetaaeppi.com)), implemented an alumni advisory board, and began transitioning into a new chapter house. Most importantly, we became a recognized member of the Lehigh University Interfraternity Council. Each of these milestones has redefined how we operate as an organization and function as a brotherhood.

On January 15, 2014, fourteen years after our chapter's re-founding, Lehigh University announced its recognition of the Sigma Eta chapter of Alpha Epsilon Pi. However, status as an officially recognized fraternity is contingent on a number of conditions. First, Sigma Eta is classified as a colony during the Spring 2015 semester while going through a transition period and will become a chapter pending a follow up, accreditation-like presentation on April 21, 2015. Attaining this status in the Lehigh community has allowed us to finally host and co-sponsor events on campus with other Greek, Jewish, and other organizations. We have already organized several events, including a Shabbat dinner at Hillel with a theme of sexual violence awareness and a Tu B'Shevat Seder, among others. Second, Lehigh conditioned our recognition on not recruiting new members until our colony status is upgraded to chapter status. Therefore, we are instead focusing on working with Lehigh University's Interfraternity Council and Greek Organizations, enhancing our own campus involvement, and furthering the greater Jewish community. The list of provisions can be found at <http://lehighgreeks.blogspot.com/2015/01/lehigh-fraternity-expansion.html>

I am very thankful for all of your support through this transition phase, and especially during the recognition process. I am also extremely proud of the brothers who have kept an optimistic attitude and worked tirelessly to promote the values of our incredible fraternity.

In recognition of your support and hard work building our chapter's foundation and success, both in the original founding and re-founding, we will be hosting a celebratory event on Saturday, March 28, 2015. This event will also act as a farewell to our current chapter house at 601 Laufer Street. I look forward to welcoming all of you on this date!

Fraternally,

Jonathan Cohen '15  
Master, Sigma Eta Chapter, AEPi



### In This Issue

- Meet Our Faculty Advisor
- Our New Chapter House
- Jewish Life
- Upcoming Alumni Event
- And More!

## Meet Our New Faculty Advisor

Shalom! I'm Rabbi Danielle Stillman, the Director of Jewish Student Life and Associate Chaplain at Lehigh. This is my first year on campus, and I am thrilled to have AEPI's official recognition come so early on in my time here. I have already seen this recognition benefit Jewish Life at Lehigh as well as the brothers themselves. And I am very honored that they asked me to be their advisor and I accepted!

A bit about me: I most recently worked as the Rabbi and Hillel director at Ursinus College. Before receiving my ordination from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College I worked at Harvard Hillel, and as an educator at various synagogues and Jewish organizations. I have lived and travelled extensively in Israel and India, and I have a Master in Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School. I currently live in Philadelphia with my husband, two daughters, and one cat.

Danielle Stillman



## This is Not the House I Joined

For over a decade, the Sigma Eta chapter has been headquartered at 601 Laufer Street and we did not take the decision to move into a new house lightly. We realized that we needed to be proactive and look for a more suitable chapter house that both meets our current needs and will allow us to grow further in the future. Since I came to Lehigh, land lords have consistently renovated their properties. Mazziotta Construction did almost all of their houses a few years back, Campus Hill and Fifth Street Capital Partners did virtually all of theirs over the past two years, while J&R Properties renovated theirs last year. Unfortunately 601 and 603 Laufer have not received these same upgrades. Whether it is the basement that always floods, the bathrooms that were never fully fixed, or even the pipe that leaked in the kitchen for two whole years, it is clear that our house was not the best that Bethlehem has to offer.

The chapter house in essence serves three roles. First, it should be the hub of chapter life and provide the necessary spaces to do so. Second, it must serve the needs of the alumni. More indoor and outdoor space will allow us to host more events at the house instead of some other venue. And after seeing the outpour of support at our last scheduled alumni event for the Lehigh-Lafayette game, our ever-expanding alumni base needs room to grow as our chapter does.

We found two connected houses: 702 - 704 Hillside Avenue. Simply put, these houses are beautiful. They have hardwood floors, working fireplaces, and newly renovated kitchens and bathrooms. Additionally, these houses are approximately 45% larger than our current ones. Then came the promise of a more flexible layout. By deliberately not scrambling to fill bedrooms and treating them as one joined house instead of two separate ones, we will be able to repurpose and leave them open in order to increase common room space. Like other chapters at Lehigh, we will have a house with a large formal living room, a library and study room and a chapter room to conduct committee meetings in. Additionally, we will have the opportunity to create television room and a recreational room with a pool table and foosball table. One thing I am particularly excited for is the brother lounge complete with a projector and screen, surround sound, and, of course, more seating than we have ever had for brothers.

Lastly, the chapter house is an important recruiting tool as we transition into the future. It seems there are two main reasons cited by first year students on why they would choose another fraternity over ours. The first was our status as a fraternity not recognized by the university. The second was a lack of a "traditional" house. We want for our house to be a showpiece for the chapter. It is something brothers and alumni can truly be proud of, something that forms a unique part of our identity. Its impressive nature is a testament to all that has been done up to this point in Sigma Eta's history. Our chapter's narrative can be divided up into four ever improving quarters. The first quarter was on West Packer. The second was on Laufer. Now, a new third quarter can begin on Hillside. I cannot wait for the day when I, and all of you, can read in our newsletter that our fourth quarter is beginning as an on campus residential fraternity. These things unfortunately do not happen overnight. While this new chapter house may not be the final destination, it is important part of our development. We need your help to make it there. Please consider donating towards what can truly cement the Sigma Eta chapter's future at Lehigh. I am well aware of the transformative experience the fraternity has had on others and myself. It always seemed to be common during chapter meeting my freshman year to hear the seniors utter the ubiquitous phrase, "This is not the house I joined." And as a senior, I believe I can finally appreciate what they were saying. This is not the house I joined; this is better than the house I joined.



Zachary Cahn '15, '16G  
Lieutenant Master

Interested in making a tax-deductible donation to our Chapter? Well, here is your chance! Now that our chapter has gained recognition, Lehigh has set up a Programming and Education (P and E) account to allow our chapter to collect tax-deductible donations. To donate, visit the following link: [mylehigh.lehigh.edu/makeagift](http://mylehigh.lehigh.edu/makeagift), select make a donation to an "Area of Your Choice" and then choose Alpha Epsilon Pi under fraternities. Thank you in advance for your support!



Brothers coming together to complete a minyon during a M'ariv service so that a fellow brother can say Mourner's Kaddish.



Members of Break the Silence educating brothers on the topic of gender violence.

## Alumni News

**Chad Efaw '14** recently made the move down to Washington, D.C. to accept a job as a Performance Associate with the U.S. Department of Labor.

**Jake Epstein '14** is continuing his rotational program with Stanley Black & Decker. Next stop: Towson, Maryland!

**Asher von Stein '12** joined **Michael Butensky '10** as a consultant with HRC Advisory North America.

**Jason Katz '12** also moved jobs. He is now a Senior Research Manager at Ipsos Healthcare.

**Dr. Micah Susman '09 '10G** had an eventful 2014! Micah graduated from McGill University with his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering and he and his wife, Amanda, welcomed their first child, Jonathan.

Congratulations to **Corey Derdiger '05, '06G**, who married Rebecca Landis this past January.

Félicitations to **Scott Van Pelt '06**, Director of Engineering, and his team at UGE International, a green energy company, for recently installing two wind turbines on the Eiffel Tower. Bien joué!



Brothers Allon Vitenson, Drew Berger, and Sam Cassell setting up for our Tu B'Shevat Event.



## An Upcoming Pinning

Being involved with the chapter for almost four years, I have seen and heard so much about AEPi. My journey has taken me from the Sigma Eta chapter past and present, to the formation of Steven Daitzman's Mu Lambda chapter at West Virginia University, to attending the Centennial Convention in New York and beyond! AEPi to me is friendship, somewhere I can go and always feel comfortable. But most of all, it means brotherhood. I've seen the brothers help each other through good times and bad and overcome any and every obstacle. It's been awesome to watch the chapter evolve over the past four years to the strongest I have ever seen it! Although I already consider the brothers family, I'm excited to be pinned in April. I know I bother all of you about girls and other things like a sister would, and you guys play pranks on me and drive me crazy like brothers do; it's about time we made it official!

I met Robbie at an AEPi party at the beginning of my freshmen year so you all have been a large part of my college experience. Some of my best memories at Lehigh have been with you, from formal and date parties to rush events to just hanging out. Even though Robbie and I are graduating and we both will miss you all, I'm sure AEPi will continue to be a part of our lives: AEPi 'til I die, right?

Lauren Walker '15



**Brother Robbie Daitzman with girlfriend Lauren Walker.**



**Brothers and friends at Rodizio Brazilian Steakhouse.**

## Jewish Life in the Fraternity

It has truly been an exciting first half of the semester for Jewish life at Lehigh. Of course, the most momentous news came when Lehigh announced its decision to recognize Alpha Epsilon Pi as Lehigh's official Jewish fraternity. We proceeded to celebrate this huge accomplishment with two Shabbat dinners at both Hillel and Chabad to share our excitement with the entire community. The AEPi-Hillel Shabbat was an "It's On Us" Shabbat, co-sponsored by Break the Silence (BTS), a club at Lehigh dedicated to spreading awareness of and educating others about sexual assault. This Shabbat was our first official event in recognition of AEPi's nationwide partnership with Hillel International and the White House campaign to end campus sexual violence. In addition, this strengthens the brothers' personal commitment to eliminate sexual violence on campus. In preparation for our second Shabbat celebration, we helped bake Challah and cook meals at Chabad. We facilitated services, as well as set the dinner table draped in blue and gold tableware to emphasize AEPi's commitment to enriching Jewish Life on Lehigh's campus.

Another momentous event was Lehigh's first ever Tu B'Shevat Seder. AEPi partnered with Hillel and Lehigh's Office of Sustainability to organize a beautiful Seder during which we learned about, among other things, the significance of certain fruits and nuts commonly eaten on Tu B'Shevat. We also took time to reflect and consider our sustainability habits and the role that the environment plays in our lives. This event was a great time to step back from our otherwise busy lives to discuss the importance to Tikkun Olam and preserving the environment.

We look forward to the rest of the semester, which will include Purim and Passover celebrations as well as commemorations of Yom Ha'Zikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's Memorial Day and Independence Day.

Allon Vitenson '17  
Jewish Leadership Chair



**Brothers Shane Wolfe and Roger Blumin volunteering during Super Sunday.**

## Sinai Scholars

Like most children, I was quite difficult. I was closed minded, stubborn, and for lack of a better word, childish. These ugly traits of mine were never more evident than on Monday and Wednesday afternoons when my parents would try to take me to the Anna and Lewis Sherriff Religious School. I would cry, stomp my feet and make a scene that was more fitting for a trip to the dentist than for Hebrew school.

After taking the Sinai Scholars program, I realize I did myself a great disservice by being close-minded in the past. I was never able to build a true Jewish identity nor did I focus on doing so. Of course I was culturally Jewish and I affiliated myself with Judaism, but I did not know much about the religion. I thought that the teachings were archaic, old, mundane and distant from modern societal issues.

Every Wednesday for eight weeks last semester I attended an hour long lecture by Chabad Rabbi Zalman Greenberg on the Ten Commandments and other foundational Jewish laws. I realized how much I admire the Jewish values we discussed in these lectures, among which are a true respect for parents and the willingness to unplug for Shabbat every week. First, I understood that we should never overlook the immense sacrifice made by a parent. Sinai Scholars forced me to reflect on how amazing my parents are. Almost immediately following that class I wrote both my mother and father long letters expressing my gratitude for all that they had done for me over the years. Second, we have all noticed that many people in our generation are constantly working, attached to technology, and thus fail to simply reflect on their lives. Withdrawing from the outside world away for 25 hours, on Shabbat, so that we may refocus on the important parts of life is something that I have decided truly admire. Although it is difficult, I resonate strongly with the purpose of remembering and observing Shabbat; thus, it is something I've decided to commit myself to.

Thanks to Sinai Scholars I am no longer impeded by my childish behavior years ago. I finally started to learn about a big part of who I am and I look forward to continuing this Jewish education.

Shane Wolfe '17  
Social Chair

## Super Sunday!

On Sunday, January 25th, several brothers partnered with Hillel, the Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley and Jewish Family Service to participate in Super Sunday, a day spent giving back to the Jewish community. The day began with a visit to a local nursing home, where brothers spent time with senior citizens. Residents of the home shared past experiences with volunteers and had enjoyable conversations with brothers. Brothers concluded the day at the Jewish Community Center in Allentown, where they participated in a fundraising campaign for the Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley. They spent several hours calling individuals as part of a phone-a-thon, and met several Jewish students from nearby colleges. Although our brothers were exhausted from the long day, they were glad to give back to the local Jewish Community and hope to continue to do so through future events like Super Sunday.

Mitch Biller '15  
Philanthropy Chair



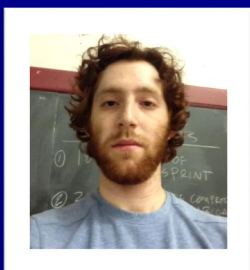


## Featured Newly Initiated Brother

Becoming a brother of the Sigma Eta chapter of Alpha Epsilon Pi has been truly rewarding. As a newly initiated brother, most of my experiences have been related to new member education, which was a unique experience. This is because I am a junior and was the sole member of my pledge class. The rewards of being a brother of AEPi have shown to be greater than I ever expected. As such, I resonate strongly with the organization's ideals: perseverance, humility, faith, honesty, and mutual helpfulness.

I am an architecture student with the hopes of attending graduate school upon graduating from Lehigh. Architecture has always been a passion of mine. Whether building Legos in my adolescence or designing structures in my notebooks at school, the thought bring my ideas to fruition has always enticed me. Listening to music and playing guitar have always been hobbies of mine, so naturally I took up playing in the Lehigh funk band as an extracurricular activity. My interests define who I am and thus I'm excited to bring a fresh perspective into the diverse brotherhood of Alpha Epsilon Pi.

Josh Chavkin '16



**Brothers with members of Hillel and the Office of Sustainability during Lehigh's first Tu B'Shevat Seder.**



**AEPi and Hillel volunteering together at the Jewish Relief Agency.**



**Brothers, members of Hillel, and the Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley during Super Sunday.**

## Alumni Event: March 28 - Save the Date

Dear Alumni,

After the success of our Lehigh-Lafayette tailgate in New York City this past November, the brothers of our chapter have been working exceptionally hard to plan this semester's alumni event. The event will take place on **Saturday, March 28th** so save the date! We are still finalizing the plans, but be sure to look out for an email in the next few weeks with more information, as well as registration instructions.

We truly value your support in expanding AEPi! Donations will help us tremendously during our house transition process and we hope you can play a part in the continuing success of our fraternity. Donations can be made via PayPal by clicking on the donations link on our [website](#). If you would like to earmark a donation through Lehigh University, please use the following link: [mylehigh.lehigh.edu/makeagift](http://mylehigh.lehigh.edu/makeagift). Select the option to make a donation to an area of your choice and then choose Alpha Epsilon Pi under fraternities. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Lastly, your support in ways beyond a donation is also greatly appreciated. We want to keep our alumni as involved as possible, so if you are looking for ways to get more involved, feel free to send an email to our alumni advisor, Josh Greenberg '13, and we will connect you based on your interests. If you would like to help with fundraising, networking, strengthening alumni relations, planning events, or anything else, please reach out.

Roger Blumin '17  
Scribe

## Contact Us

### Lehigh AEPi

601 Laufer Street  
Bethlehem, PA 18015

### General Questions:

[info@sigmaetaepi.com](mailto:info@sigmaetaepi.com)

### Alumni Involvement Questions:

[JoshGreenberg@alum.lehigh.edu](mailto:JoshGreenberg@alum.lehigh.edu)

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**Editor in Chief:** Roger Blumin '17, Scribe

**Assistant Editors:** Jonathan Cohen '15; Alec Rudin '15;  
Josh Greenberg '13, Alumni Advisor