



HOMESCHOOLING TEEN

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Homeschoolers are an extremely diverse group of individuals. They grow up to become artists, athletes, musicians, scientists, writers, politicians... whatever their dream or passion is in life. Given the freedom to fully develop their skills and talents, homeschooled teens and young adults can really make a difference!

Bethany Hamilton, an avid surfer since age 8, started homeschooling after sixth grade so she could devote more time to the sport. On October 31, 2003, while surfing near her home on the North Shore of Kauai, Hawaii, she was attacked by a tiger shark that severed her left arm. Less than a month later, the 13-year-old returned to surfing with an unbelievably positive attitude. Overcoming all odds, she went on to win several professional championships. The story of her tragedy and determination to rise above adversity has inspired millions worldwide. Hamilton launched her own foundation, Friends of Bethany, to support shark attack survivors and traumatic amputees. She is also active in other charities and in Christian groups dedicated to sharing the gospel with the surfing community. Her autobiography, *Soul Surfer*, was made into a movie.

Lila Rose, President of Live Action, has been rallying pro-life activists and rattling abortion industry advocates since 2004. Homeschooled through the end of high school while attending a Christian school and a junior college part-time, Rose was only 15 years old when she first started Live Action. After enrolling in UCLA, she founded a pro-life student magazine, *The Advocate*, now distributed nationwide. Rose's undercover campaigns at Planned Parenthood centers across the country have exposed staff members repeatedly breaking laws, covering up abuse, and giving inaccurate medical information.

Teresa Scanlan, Miss America 2011, is a mostly homeschooled Christian who lifted her eyes and hands heavenward when she was announced the winner. The pageant judges were awed by Teresa's confidence, saying she was quite poised for a 17-year-old. Homeschooled until her junior year in high school, she then graduated early by taking a double load of classes. Teresa plans to attend Patrick Henry College in Purcellville, Virginia. Although she has to defer enrollment until after her reign is over, Teresa will be able to utilize the

\$50,000 Miss America scholarship to pay for her college education. Scanlan wants to study American government and eventually pursue a career in law and politics. Her platform as Miss America is "Eating Disorders: a Generation at Risk."

Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA) is a young Latina Congresswoman listed by TIME Magazine as one of 40 "rising stars of American politics" under age 40. Jaime was homeschooled through ninth grade. "My parents taught me God first, family second, and service to community a close third," Jaime said. In 2001, she performed 2000 hours of service at Ground Zero in NY. As a college student, Jaime had the opportunity to intern in the Washington State Senate as well as in Washington DC. After graduating from the University of Washington with a degree in political science and communications, Jaime was hired as Senior Legislative Aide for Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers. By age 29, Jaime was serving in the Washington State Legislature. She was elected to the 112th Congress, notably the first homeschooled member of US Congress in recent history.

Tim Tebow, former All-American and Heisman Trophy winner at the University of Florida, led the Gators to national championships in 2007 and 2009. He was drafted by the Denver Broncos in 2010. Tim was born in the Philippines where his parents were Christian missionaries, but he spent most of his childhood in Florida where he was homeschooled along with his siblings. A Florida law allowing homeschoolers to play on public school sports teams enabled Tebow to play football in high school. He led his team to the state championship and was twice named Player of the Year. Asked how he felt about being the first homeschooler to win the Heisman Trophy, Tim replied, "That's really cool. A lot of times people have this stereotype of homeschoolers as not very athletic – it's like, go win a spelling bee or something like that – it's an honor for me to be the first one to do that."

Christopher Paolini was 15 years old when he began writing *Eragon*. Originally self-published, the book later became a bestseller and a major motion picture. "Everything I did was only possible because my parents were dedicated and loving enough to homeschool my sister and me," Paolini explained. "My mother took the time to instruct us every day. Aside from textbook lessons, she had us perform many exercises designed to stimulate our creativity." Paolini was able to pursue his passions and develop his talents to a higher level than is possible in an ordinary school setting. He took the initiative to educate himself on the art of writing. Paolini also learned that a little hard work and persistence pays off.

Erik Demaine was 20 years old when he joined the faculty at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, becoming MIT's youngest professor ever. In 2003 he was named "one of the most brilliant scientists in America" by *Popular Science* magazine. Demaine is the leading theoretician of "origami mathematics," which uses paper origami models to demonstrate math concepts and applies them to disciplines like architecture, robotics, and molecular biology. Erik was raised by his father, a silversmith and glassblower whose only degree was from high school. Father and son lived a nomadic life, traveling to art shows in Canada and the US where they sold handmade crafts and puzzles to support their journey. As part of his unconventional upbringing, Erik was taught by his dad for as little as an hour each day, leaving the young student free to pursue his own interests in local libraries and museums. Erik started college at 12 years of age. He finished his bachelor's degree at age 14, his master's degree at age 15, and his Ph.D. at age 20. Erik humbly shies away from the term "genius," saying that a lot of other people could do what he did if they had the same encouragement he received from his dad. Erik and his father continue to work closely together, collaborating on many projects.

Zac Sunderland set off on a quest at age 16, not only to have the adventure of a lifetime and see the world, but also to become the youngest person to sail all the way around it. A homeschooled straight-A student, Zac brought his books aboard so he could finish his high school education during the 40,000-mile journey. Thirteen months later he returned, the first person under 18 to sail alone around the world. Soon after, his 16-year-old sister Abby attempted to become the youngest female solo circumnavigator. She took her home-school books along, too. Although Abby's trip ended abruptly when her boat was dismantled in a storm, she became the youngest person to sail single-handedly around Cape Horn. Zac and Abby grew up in a seafaring family and spent their whole lives around boats. A 56-ft. sailboat was their first home, and they also lived on a sailboat during a 3-year family cruise.

BarlowGirl is a popular contemporary Christian group made up of three talented sisters – Alyssa, Rebecca, and Lauren. The girls were raised in a highly musical environment, their dad being a worship music leader at Willow Creek Church. Their own music is a refreshing blend of melodic voices and positive messages. The sisters pattern their lifestyle around Romans 12:2. Parents Vince and MaryAnn Barlow stated, "We decided early on when we homeschooled the children that it's about character, not knowledge, and so that's what we tried to instill in them."

The Jonas Brothers – Kevin, Joe and Nick – are a rock 'n' roll band known for their wholesome image. The trio of homeschooled brothers are committed Christians who wear purity rings and abstain from alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. Their father is an ordained minister and co-founder of Christ for the Nations Music ministry. Despite their background, the Jonas Brothers decided not to play Contemporary Christian music so they could reach a wider audience. The Jonas Brothers are aware of the positive influence they can have on millions of kids, and it's a responsibility they take seriously. "We want to be a Christian influence in the pop music world," said Nick. "It's definitely a mission field." The Jonas Brothers donate 10% of earnings to their non-profit Change for the Children Foundation. After Nick was diagnosed with Type I diabetes at age 13, he teamed up with Bayer Diabetes Care as a diabetes ambassador for young people.

The 5 Browns – Ryan, Melody, Greg, Deondra and Desirae – are breathing new life into the classical music genre with their youthful exuberance and dynamic stage presence, awakening the joy of classical music among audiences of all ages. While many teens think classical music is old and boring, The 5 Browns consider it to be current and relevant. These piano virtuosos are adept at performing individually or together in various combinations from duets to complex five-piano arrangements. The homeschooled siblings became the first family of five ever accepted simultaneously to the Juilliard School of Music.

Akiane Kramarik has seen her artwork exhibited in museums since she was ten. The homeschooler taught herself to draw at age four, began painting at age six, and started writing poetry when she was seven. She also speaks four languages: Lithuanian, Russian, English, and sign language. From an early age, Akiane showed a high degree of technical skill in making strikingly realistic paintings that appear to have been made by the steady hand and experienced eye of a much older professional artist. The fine quality of Akiane's art led her to be labeled as a child prodigy. According to Akiane, God taught her how to paint and write, and has been communicating with her since she was three years old. Akiane's mom, a Lithuanian immigrant, was an atheist and her American father was a non-practicing Catholic. They, along with Akiane's four brothers, are now devout Christians as a result of her influence. Akiane's paintings have sold for as much as \$1,000,000, making her one of the world's wealthiest teens. Kramarik gives a substantial portion of her sales to charities helping disadvantaged children around the world.

Alex and Brett Harris are homeschooled twin brothers who started "The Rebelution" – a teenage rebellion against low expectations, inspiring young people to "Do Hard Things" while still in their teens. First launched in August 2005 as a blog, the Rebelution movement has since grown to include a website, books, and speaking tour. Besides serving as the main speakers for The Rebelution Tour, Alex and Brett are frequent contributors to Focus on the Family's *Boundless* webzine as well as other publications. Their work has gained widespread media attention, and they are among the most popular writers and speakers for Christian teens.

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