

# your CONNECTION

A Newsletter for Converse Alumni

Winter 2022



Dear Alumni,

We made it to 2022! I am proud of all that we have accomplished despite the 'unusual' circumstances we've been dealt these past two years. Our Converse alumni network is strong, we've mastered the 'pivot', and we will continue to succeed as we move forward into a new year together.

In the Fall of 2021, we eased back into hosting events and programming, safely and successfully. Our inaugural Family & Friends weekend was an exciting time to be on campus. We honored the Class of 2020 with an in-person ceremony and brunch on campus. As you read on, you will see photos highlighting these events. I look forward to being able to continue providing programming and more networking opportunities for our alumni in the coming months.

The Office of Alumni Relations and the Alumni Association Board remain dedicated to connecting you with your Converse family and are excited to welcome you all back to campus for this summer's Reunion! Be sure to mark your calendars for June 3-5, 2022 and make plans to come home to Converse.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica G. Eggimann '00".

Jessica G. Eggimann '00  
Director of Alumni Relations & Advisory Boards

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2021 Alumni Reception on the rooftop patio of the Marsha H. Gibbs Field House



# FALL 2021 Event Highlights

## Coming Soon to a Town Near You

The Office of Alumni Relations is hitting the road again and looking forward to hosting more in-person events. Visit [converse.edu/alumni](https://converse.edu/alumni) to view upcoming events to join fellow alumni in your area for food and fellowship!

## Hendersonville, NC Alumni Gathering

Lillian Montgomery Lilly and Rose Montgomery Johnston hosted a beautiful reception at the Lilly's home in Hendersonville. We ended the summer and kicked off the fall together with Dr. Boone J. Hopkins, Interim President and Dr. Chandra O. Hopkins, Dean of the Converse College for Women.





## Charlotte, NC Alumni Reception

Alumni gathered on the patio of Village Tavern and had a lovely evening getting to know Interim President Dr. Boone J. Hopkins and Dr. Chandra O. Hopkins, Dean of the Converse College for Women.



## Spartanburg Alumni Reception and Athletics Game

Alumni from the Upstate gathered together at the Marsha H. Gibbs Field House for a casual outdoor reception with Dr. Boone J. Hopkins, Interim President of Converse University, and Dr. Chandra O. Hopkins, Dean of the Converse College for Women. The group then stayed to cheer on the Valkyries' soccer teams!





# A LETTER

## from Alumni Association Board President



Dear Converse Alumni,

As I conclude my term as your Alumni Association Board (AAB) President, I am more encouraged by the state of our alma mater than ever before. Our future is bright and that is because our beloved institution is strong. A couple months ago, I had the privilege of speaking at the Class of 2020 in-person commencement. When I stepped onto campus that morning, it was a brisk fall morning similar to so many mornings I walked out of my dorm to trek to Gee Dining Hall for breakfast. I walked under Wilson Tower, into the lobby, and in front of the rows of Honor Code Pledges. Professors lined the hallway and there was a buzz in the air. That same excitement of a commencement, a year and a half after it was due. What thrilled me that morning was

the sameness of place. The same honor code, the same friendly faculty, and the same Converse we know and love. While many things are different at Converse, I am most encouraged that the college is not going anywhere. We are co-ed, we are a university, and most importantly, we are poised to weather any storm the future may bring.

I began my term June 6, 2020. COVID had entered our lives three months prior. The nation was protesting George Floyd's killing, and many of us began reflecting on systemic racism as well as the racism in our own hearts. After a period of listening and learning, our Alumni Association Board needed to move to action. We connected with alumni of color, and reached out to other colleges to see how they were supporting alumni. We kept circling back to the word "belonging." This was no revelation as all people want a place they belong. However, Converse was falling short on inclusivity. We then created the Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee (DEIC) as a permanent working group who are determined to create, support, and sustain alumni communities that reflect the diversity of our alumni population reinforcing a mutual respect for each other and a sense of belonging and purpose within our collective Converse community. Specifically, this group will spearhead mentorship with alumni and current students as well as special events focused on diversity.

Despite the challenges of COVID, I am proud to say we have continued to support the Admissions team as they achieved their highest year of undergraduate enrollment in 30 years. We awarded many deserving Alumni Achievement Awards with a virtual ceremony for recognition of an outstanding group



*It's all smiles and laughter as Samantha and Libby practice "passing the gavel" for the alumni newsletter photo.*

of accomplished alumni. Our Connecting Alumni to Converse Committee (CAC), formerly known as the TAPP committee, has been supporting events virtually and now in person to engage local chapters to reunite.

As I conclude my time on the AAB, I hope to leave a group of engaged alumni who are excited about this chapter in Converse's history. We usher in a new era, with new traditions, and with a long memory of all that came before us. There are so many opportunities to serve Converse both near Spartanburg or in your own hometown. I hope the work of this Board can inspire others to do something as easy as nominate a fellow alumnus for

an award or even consider serving alongside us on this Board. The many students following behind us at Converse today will soon join our ranks and I hope that we can welcome them with open arms into a community that is vibrant and active.

Thank you for entrusting me to serve you the past two years. It has been an honor and a pleasure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samantha N. Larkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Samantha Nicholson Larkins '12



# Meet **LIBBY CUTTINO TILSON '79** Incoming Alumni Association Board President

*Libby graduated from Converse in 1979 with a Bachelor of Music in music education. Following graduation, she went on to receive a Master's in Music with a concentration in Choral Conducting from Southern Seminary in Louisville, KY. As a legacy, Libby has purple and gold in her blood. Her mother, Molly Leatherwood Cuttino graduated from Converse in 1949 with a Bachelor of Music in piano performance. Libby is currently serving as 2021-2022 President-Elect for the Alumni Association Board and is the Performing Arts Chair and Choral Director at Providence Day School in Charlotte, NC. Read on to learn more about Libby and her unwavering commitment to Converse.*

## **Libby Cuttino Tilson '79**



### **Why did you decide to attend Converse, and what stands out about your experience?**

When it was time to choose a college, I knew I wanted to eventually teach music in some form, whether as a K-12 educator or as a church musician. Converse's excellent music school was a big consideration for me along with Furman and the University of South Carolina. My Dad, a Wofford grad who met my mother while she was at Converse, believed in the advantages of a small school and certainly believed in Converse! I found that to be true with not only the small class sizes but also with the professors who knew you by name and would even invite you into their homes. The camaraderie within the music school and the opportunity to dine together in Gee every evening were things I still treasure and would likely not have enjoyed at larger schools. As a music student at Converse, I realized my weaknesses and limitations but I was also able to embrace my strengths. I found a sense of belonging within the music school.

### **What aspect of volunteering for Converse do you find most rewarding?**

When my husband and I moved with our two children from Northeastern NC to the Charlotte area in 2002, the shorter distance to Spartanburg allowed me to become more engaged at Converse. I volunteered to be a member of the Alumnae Board after my mother's death in 2015 with the hope of representing the both

of us in giving back to our alma mater in meaningful ways. I have gladly served as the Giving Officer for the Board with the intention of reminding all alumni that our annual gifts strengthen our alma mater in so many ways that include helping ALL students who wish to attend Converse realize that opportunity, and in raising the status of our own education and diploma. Also, I am proud to serve on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) committee alongside other alumni hoping to create mentorship opportunities for fellow alumni and nurturing a sense of belonging within the alumni community. As President-Elect of the Alumni Board, I am excited to witness the changing status of Converse and the consequential growth in size, diversity, and opportunities.

***As the former Alumni Association Board Giving Officer, why do you feel it's important to give back to Converse?***

My husband has worked in college development for almost 40 years making it possible for many disadvantaged students to attend college without the burden of financial responsibilities. My daughter now works in admissions in a large state university hoping to make it possible for all students who wish for a college education to realize that dream despite economic status. Understanding the difference financial support can make to an institution and to individuals, we have always been faithful in giving what we can to our church and to higher education. The Converse Annual Fund is managed so well, distributing funds to programs and needs that make a difference. If we could all as alumni understand and embrace the power in giving (any amount) regularly to our alma mater, the possibilities would be endless.

***What does the Converse community mean to you as an alumna?***

I have never ceased to be proud of my Converse education. It was the right place for me at that time. Change is inevitable within any institution. The

changes proposed for and occurring at Converse are, in my opinion, changes in the right direction and for the right reasons. Our individual experiences while at Converse will always be a part of us. My hope is that all alumni, regardless of age or class year, will come together in the spirit of understanding and cheer each other on, creating a community of alumni who share the bond of the Converse experience.

***What excites you most about serving as the 2022-2023 President of the Alumni Association Board?***

It is a very exciting time for Converse University! I am honored and privileged to be involved in the Alumni Board during the search for a new president, as we launch into University status, and as we grow into a more diverse and inclusive community. I think the biggest challenge and yet one of the most important goals we will embrace as the Alumni Board is successfully bridging alumni of all ages, backgrounds, and disciplines into a community of alumni who proudly share the bond of a Converse education.

***Do you have a favorite Converse memory?***

As a member of the Converse Chorale all four years of my time at Converse, the Festival of Lessons and Carols service was an annual highlight. My parents always attended and we all looked forward to that time on campus when luminaries lined the entrance drive and Wilson was decorated so beautifully. We had an incredible chorus of voices at that time and it was a thrill for me to be even a small part of such a group. As a future choral director, I learned so much from the directors, Perry Daniels and Larry Smith.

***Are there any fun facts we should know about you?***

I guess it's somewhat ironic that I have always loved college football even though I chose to attend a college with neither a football team nor males.



# WE'RE BACK ON CAMPUS

and can't wait to welcome you home

Learn more and register!  
[www.converse.edu/reunion](http://www.converse.edu/reunion)







## REUNION WEEKEND

June 3-5, 2022

### SCHEDULE

#### Friday, June 3

##### Check-In

12:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m., Wilson Hall Front Porch

##### Snack Time\*

1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m., Lee Parlor, Wilson Hall

Kick off the ultimate girls' weekend with a few refreshments! *\*The Golden Club's Hospitality Suite, exclusively for the Classes of 1970, 1971, and 1972, is located on the 1st floor of Fleming Hall and will be stocked throughout the weekend.*

##### Sip 'n Stroll Campus Tour

4:00 p.m.-5:30 p.m.,

Departs from Dalton Lobby, Wilson Hall

Enjoy the beauty of campus in summer bloom as you learn a bit of history as well as the latest developments at Converse. Adult beverages served.

##### Golden Club Dinner with the President

The Piedmont Club

5:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m., Cocktails

6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m., Dinner

An exclusive event for the Classes of 1970, 1971, & 1972. Transportation will be provided to and from campus.

##### Dinner in Gee

6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m., Gee Dining Room, Wilson Hall

Share a sit down 'family style' meal with classmates in Gee.

#### After Dinner Options:

##### Alumni Recital

8:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m., Daniel Recital Hall, Blackman Music Building

Alumni Recital is a low-pressure affair full of laughter, love and great music shared among friends in the warm acoustics of Daniel Recital Hall.

*\*In order to participate in the performance, please email Mildred.Roche@Converse.edu by April 22, 2022.*

##### S'mores Before You Snore

9:30 p.m.-11:00 p.m., The Cabin

Grab your crew and catch up over roasted marshmallows & a nightcap by the fireplace.

#### Saturday, June 4

##### Breakfast Buffet

8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.,

Gee Dining Room, Wilson Hall

Roll out of bed and walk to Gee for a leisurely feast. PJ's and slippers welcome!

##### Alumni Association Board Meeting

9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m., Bain Room, Wilson Hall

(2021-2022 AAB Members Only)

##### All Class Photos and Class Meetings\*

(Classes ending in '2 & '7)

11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m., Carmichael Hall

\*11:30 a.m. 50th Reunion Class Meetings, Mickel Library

##### Parade of Classes

12:15 p.m.,

Departs from Mickel Library and

Arrives at Wilson Hall

Hold that banner high, march with your classmates and celebrate the sisterhood that will live forever. Look for the purple mimosa tent for line-up!

##### Alumni Award Ceremony & Luncheon

12:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m., Gee Dining Room, Wilson Hall

Enjoy lunch and celebrate the Classes of 1970, 1971 & 1972 as well as our 2022 Alumni Achievement Award recipients.

**After Lunch Options:****Color Your Cares Away**

2:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m., Lee Parlor, Wilson Hall

Participate in some carefree coloring with snacks and beverages.

**Alumni Art Exhibition & Milliken Tour**

2:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m., Milliken Art Gallery

Head down the hill, wander the Milliken Gallery filled with Alumni works, and take a tour of the Milliken Fine Arts Building.

*\*Want to participate in the show? Submit your entry here:  
<https://airtable.com/shrd7s59AoH6CuSHg>*

**Converse College for Women**

3:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m., Hazel B. Abbott Theater, Wilson Hall

Come hear Dean Chandra Owenby Hopkins provide an update on the fabulous things the Converse College for Women has to offer students and how your alma mater's traditions are here to stay!

**Tie-Dye Your Tee!**

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., Barnet Commons  
(Behind Pell/Wilson Hall)

We're taking it back to the 70's! Whether you're a Pink Panther, a Red Devil, or a classic purple & gold Valkyrie, we'll have all the supplies to bring color to your Converse Reunion 2022 t-shirts.

**All Class BBQ & Dance Party on the Quad**

6:30 p.m. Open Bar & Photo Booth; 7:00 p.m. Dinner on the Lawn; 7:30 p.m. Class Act Awards & Dancing  
Join your classmates or mix and mingle with other generations under twinkling lights and tents with style.

**Sunday, June 5****Grab 'N Go Breakfast**

8:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m., Dalton Lobby, Wilson Hall

Grab a quick coffee & snack for the road as you check-out.

**Until the Next One!**

8:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m., Wilson Hall, Front Porch

Memories and final hugs as you finish your weekend.

**At Your Leisure****Decorate Your Room**

Pack your posters, brush off your album covers, and dig out those scrapbooks... you get to relive the residence hall life with your college pals all weekend long.

Celebrating your 50th Converse Reunion? There will be a special 'Golden Club' Hospitality Suite set up for you and your Golden Girl Classmates on the 1st Floor of Fleming Hall.

**Hospitality Room**

Need a pick-me-up? Swing by Lee Parlor for refreshments, a fun Converse activity or just to take a load off.

**In Memoriam**

The Gibbs Chapel in the Montgomery Student Center will be open throughout the weekend with a memorial to those classmates we've lost over the past year. Come by at your convenience to pay your respects and observe a moment of silent reflection.

**Montgomery Fitness Facilities**

Whether you enjoy hitting the elliptical, TRX training, or spreading out your yoga mat, Montgomery Student Center has you covered.

**Shop 'Til You Drop**

Enjoy an alumni discount at the Valkyries Bookstore, located in the Montgomery Student Center!

**Explore Downtown Spartanburg**

Head to Fr8yard, play a round of miniature golf, tour the Johnson Collection, grab a beverage at RJ Rockers, or grab a bite at the NuWay!

**REGISTER TODAY!**

[www.converse.edu/reunion](http://www.converse.edu/reunion)





# #ROCKTHETOWER

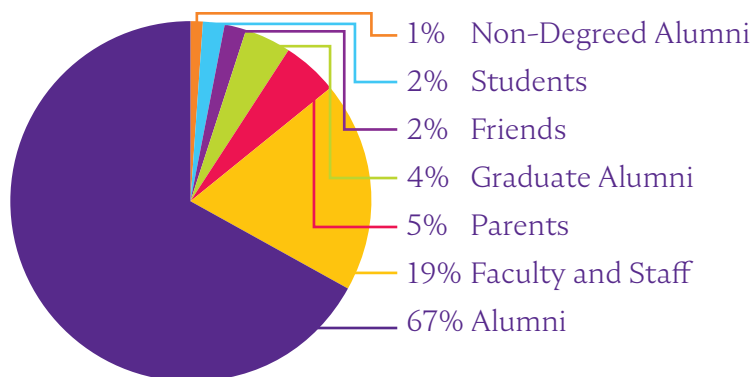


At the stroke of midnight on November 4th, Rock the Tower took over the Converse website and social media, raising campus-wide support and awareness for the Converse Annual Fund. The Converse community continued to rally support all the way up to the final moments before the campaign ended at midnight. The gifts that were received will benefit scholarships, academic enhancements, athletics programs, and departments around campus that strengthen the student experience.

*“Having a goal of 675 gifts in 24 hours was a big jump from last year, but the Converse community came together to deliver financial support that will empower and transform our students. These gifts will support the entire campus providing opportunities that positively impact students, support faculty, and so much more.” explains Kristina Pisano, Director of Annual Giving.*

## By the Numbers

- Total Amounts Raised: \$140,164
- Total Number of Gifts: 688
- Total Number of Donors: 618
- Number of new donors: 75
- Types of Donor:



## Superlatives

- **Early Bird Award** for First Gift of the Day: Janessa Daniels '16
- **Night Owl Award** for Last Gift of the Day: Stacey Mulligan '01
- **All Aboard Award** for the Class with Highest Participation: Class of 1999
- **Altruistic Award** for the Class with Highest Amount Raised: Class of 1975

Even though Rock the Tower is over, you can still support the area at Converse that matters to you. Gifts of any size can make a big impact!

[www.converse.edu/give](http://www.converse.edu/give)

# UPDATE Converse College for Women



This fall, the Converse College for Women (CCW) officially launched its empowering living-learning community with meaningful traditions, new programming and events, and community service.

Big Sis/Little Sis week was a dynamic opportunity to welcome new students into the sisterhood and kick-off the new term. Thanks to Converse's powerful alumni connection, the Women's College received many Big Sis/Little Sis donations that enhanced this time-honored tradition.

In September, students in the Women's College watched and discussed the National Women's History Museum's live-streamed symposium "The Missing Waves of Feminism: The Third Wave" as part of

the organization's 25th anniversary. Following the symposium, CCW students engaged in a conversation on women changemakers beyond the "canonical" 1980-2010 period that is often referred to as the "third wave of feminism." This discussion was led by Assistant Dean of Diversity & Inclusion, Danielle Stone, and Assistant Professor of English, Dr. Emily Harbin.

The Women's College hosted its first annual Fall Retreat in October that included sessions on women's wellness and yoga, personal statements and professionalism, and the power of goal-setting and personal journaling. The day-long retreat was led by four alumni who shared their passion and talents with current Women's College students, illuminating once again the strength of the Converse network.





Focusing on service for the month of November, students joined the Period Project's Spartanburg Chapter, led by alumna Kerry Easler '96, to benefit girls at Spartanburg High School in need of support. Students donated the items and then gathered on a Sunday evening to stuff more than 375 period packs, and to discuss the importance of access and healthcare for all women and girls in our on and off-campus communities.

Along with the College's focus on service, traditions, and leadership, is the intentional study of the

representation and experiences of women. Dynamic new programs have been added to the growing list of CCW courses including Dr. Erin Templeton's English course, Women Writing, Women Talking, and the upcoming January Term course, Disney's America: History & Performance team-taught by Dr. Angela Elder and Dr. Chandra Owenby Hopkins. These courses deepen the connections between the academic and personal growth of students enrolled in the Converse College for Women and offer all Converse University students the opportunity to learn more deeply about the contributions of women writers, artists, and thinkers.

As the first half of the academic year was warmly wrapped up with a Cookies and Connections social at the Log Cabin, Converse celebrated the tremendous launch of the Women's College. With more than 135 years of sisterhood fueling the College's momentum, it's clear that the Converse College for Women will continue to be a transformative experience for its students as it looks excitedly towards the future.

**DISCOVER MORE!**  
[converse.edu/ccwvideo](https://converse.edu/ccwvideo)





# ODDS & ENDS

## from Around Campus



### ***Fun Flashback!***

Did you know that Cudd Hall was formerly the Gwyn School, a preparatory school for girls? The building was purchased by Converse in the early 1900s and transformed into a residence hall. It was named Cudd Memorial Hall in memory of Allene Cudd Cantrell '12, who was the daughter of Converse Trustee John Cudd, cousin of Mary Sue Cudd '27 and Perrin Cudd Eidson '31.

Once the beloved site of the annual senior class photo, Cudd is quintessential Converse. Its distinctive Southern architecture has made for a cozy home-away-from-home for generations of Converse's upperclassmen. Cudd Hall is currently unable to operate at full capacity until further critical renovations are made. Stay tuned for ways you can help bring Cudd Hall back to her former glory!



The Spirit Rock has been moved to the heart of campus. The almost 14,000 pound rock now resides between the entrances of Montgomery Student Center and Dexter Hall. This bubbly boulder will soon be flanked by two trees in recognition of past Spirit of Converse Award recipients. Be on the lookout for some artistic opportunities for a rockin' good time during Reunion Weekend 2022.





### Awards and Recognition

On Thursday, September 23, 2021 former and current Board of Trustees joined together for an intimate evening celebrating and envisioning Converse's vibrant future. During the event, Jane Boatwright Schwab '77 was recognized as the 2021 Dexter Edgar Converse Award recipient, and Walter Montgomery and Ken Howard were presented as newly appointed Lifetime Trustees.

Jane was officially presented with the Dexter Edgar Converse Award the following day during Opening Convocation, which took place as part of Converse's inaugural Family and Friends Weekend.

## BE A PART OF OUR NETWORK!

The Converse Alumni Association loves being social and we want to connect with you! Be sure to like and follow our social media pages!

 @ConverseAlumni

 @ConverseAlumni

 @ConverseUniversityAlumni

And, don't forget you can keep in touch with your fellow alums through ClassNotes. Visit [converse.edu/classnotes](https://converse.edu/classnotes) to share exciting news and catch up with your classmates.

## 2020 IN-PERSON COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY AND CELEBRATION



Converse honored the Class of 2020 with an in-person Commencement Ceremony on September 25, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. The event offered graduates the opportunity to walk across the Twichell stage, experience photo ops on campus, and enjoy other social activities that were missed due to the pandemic. Following the ceremony, graduates and their guests were invited to a brunch on the front lawn.

*To watch a video of the ceremony and view photos from the event, visit [converse.edu/classof2020](https://converse.edu/classof2020).*



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