What would Reunion be without your presence?! This year Converse College extends a special welcome to classes ending in 0’s and 5’s, the Class of 2004, and the Golden Club (1930-1954) for Alumnae Reunion Weekend. Come join us for a fun-filled weekend at Converse.

It is time once again to come back and relive all the wonderful memories and traditions of Converse. You can reminisce, laugh, and visit until dawn. Bring your spouse or guest, lots of pictures, and all of your stories. It will be the best time you’ve had in a long time!

April 29–30, 2005

Converse Reunion 2005:
Paint the World Purple
A New Era
In Science

BY DR. SHARON LAMBERT,
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY AND CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

I came to Converse College in the fall of 1973. Thirty-one years is a long time to spend at any one institution, but the combination of my colleagues, the students, and the excitement of teaching have held me here for that long. When I arrived, the Departments of Science and Math were housed in Kuhn Science Hall—a building that seemed to me modern and up-to-date compared to what I had been exposed to in graduate school and in my first teaching position. The Converse biology faculty included Bob Powell, Joe Ann Lever, and Jerry Cromer; Jerry Howe was in chemistry; and Phil Highsmith, Andy Howard, and George Speed made up the math and physics faculty. All, except Jerry Howe, have retired from Converse during my stay.

As would be expected of any science field, the curriculum of the departments—as well as the methods we use to teach them—has evolved greatly over the last 31 years. As technology has advanced, our knowledge base has increased, and teaching methods have improved, we have adapted our courses and our labs to meet the needs of our science students.

Our students’ evolving perceptions of themselves and their abilities have greatly affected their approach to science as a career path. When I first came to Converse, only a few students thought of lifetime careers in the sciences. While some knew they would need to get a job after college, most did not think of these jobs as long-term careers. But the women’s movement helped our students realize that they could engage in science as a career as opposed to just a job, and we began to see greater interest in graduate schools, pharmacy schools, and medical schools. Today, our students know they can compete successfully with men in the science fields, and that women’s colleges give them an important edge in developing the confidence as well as the skills to do so.

The use of technology in the classroom and laboratory has also been a key part of the evolution of science at Converse. My definition of technology goes far beyond the bells and whistles of our courses. Teaching methods in chemistry and biology have become very high-tech, and the College has supported our efforts through the years to improve our technology. Yet another change has been in our curriculum and teaching methods. The explosion of science knowledge over the last 31 years has been incredible, and we have had to move with the times in our courses.

When I came to Converse in 1973, the Department of Chemistry offered only three courses with laboratories: general chemistry, organic chemistry, and analytical chemistry. The advancement of technology and the realization that laboratory in upper-level courses was necessary for the education of our students caused us to add laboratory components to all but a few of our courses. At the same time, we have become more aware of the need to integrate lecture and laboratory, and to provide opportunities for our students to work in group activities.

Without a doubt, it is the construction of Phifer Science Hall that has had the greatest impact upon the sciences during my tenure at Converse. We, the biology and chemistry faculty, were greatly involved in the design of the building from the beginning. This was significant because the blue prints for the building embraced the changes that have occurred in teaching our disciplines. We began moving into the building during the second week of January and began teaching in it on August 31. Even in this short time period we have come to appreciate so many features about the building. The soaring lobbies with their impressive art collection set the tone, emphasizing the grandeur of the space. The light that comes into the building through the external laboratory windows penetrates into the hallways through windows in the internal walls, and provides a bright and airy space that is very conducive to learning. The list of amenities is long and includes a greenhouse, prep rooms, instrument rooms that are no longer cramped and dark, soundproofing, and hoods in the organic lab. The open interiors of the laboratories provide a much-improved teaching space. The latest in technology and the design of the labs allow us to teach both classes and laboratories in our lab space—the way science should be taught.

When I was a high school senior looking at a variety of colleges, one of my father’s colleagues suggested that I look at Randolph-Macon Woman’s College in Virginia where his daughter was a student. All of the other colleges I was interested in were co-ed. I knew, even then, that chemistry was my field of choice, and as I visited colleges I would ask about their chemistry program. I ended up at Randolph-Macon because it was the only institution I visited that did not say to me, “We don’t have many girls who major in chemistry.” I found encouragement there at a time (the early 1960s) when most women did not go into non-traditional areas of study. I still believe deeply in the importance of women’s colleges today—not only because they provide an environment for women where they can build their self-confidence, but also because they are still encouraging women to succeed in the sciences. Even today in our enlightened world, more women major in the sciences at women’s colleges than at co-ed institutions, and these women continue their education at graduate and professional programs in larger numbers.

As I look to the future of the sciences at Converse, one that will see me here for only a short period longer, I see growth, excitement, quality education, and dedication to our students and our programs.
FOCUS: SCIENCE

Converse students are studying the natural sciences in a new $10.6 million technology-packed science building. The 36,000-square-foot Phifer Science Hall will help Converse gain a competitive edge in the niche market that women’s colleges have created in science. Although traditionally a male-dominated field, students at women’s colleges major in science, continue toward doctorates in science, and pursue careers in science at nearly twice the rate of women at coeducational institutions.

Converse teaches women that they can be and do anything they aspire to do. Phifer Science Hall gives them tools for educational training that will put them on the forefront of science careers in today’s competitive job market.

GATHERING TO CELEBRATE SCIENCE

Converse celebrated the dedication of Phifer Science Hall on September 14, 2004, with nearly 500 people in attendance. Guests toured the facility following the dedication ceremony, browsing through rooms hosted by Converse science students and faculty who explained how each room and its technology are used.

The day-long celebration of the arts and sciences continued with the College’s Formal Opening Convocation. The afternoon featured a presentation on art and sculpture by Elliot Offner, past president of the National Sculpture Society, followed by the dedication of his statue of the first professional woman astronomer in the United States, Maria Mitchell, which stands beside Phifer Hall. A panel discussion on women in science was presented by Dr. Tara Sturdivant ’85, a biology major who is now a family physician and president of the Knoxville Academy of Medicine; Sandra Beason Watson ’79, a chemistry major who is manager of environmental affairs for Southern Wood Piedmont; Dr. Nancy Phifer ’72, an English major who is clinical assistant professor of medicine for the Internal Medicine Residency Program of the UNC School of Medicine; and Dr. Karen Abele DeVore ’84, a chemistry major who now has her own dermatology practice and was named 2002 Spartanburg Career Woman of the Year.

George Dean Johnson challenges students and faculty to make the most of Phifer Science Hall during the building’s dedication ceremony.
THE DESIGN OF SCIENCE

The process of building Phifer Science Hall began in 2000 as Converse officials visited science buildings at colleges across the country to gather ideas. A national call for architectural proposals was initiated, and the job was awarded to Jenkins-Peer Architects in Charlotte, NC. The firm has designed science buildings for North Carolina State University, Davidson College, Appalachian State University, and Elon University. Architects at Jenkins-Peer teamed with laboratory designers at Earl Walls Associates in San Diego, CA.

“Science education is moving away from the traditional notion of individual experiments towards a team approach,” said Benjamin Benson, senior associate with Jenkins-Peer. “In the professional world, most scientists work in a collaborative setting, and that’s an environment we’ve mirrored for Converse students in Phifer Science Hall. Each lab table is designed to accommodate four people, and we also incorporated gathering spaces in hallways and lobbies so that students and faculty can brainstorm together in a comfortable setting.”

Dr. David Moody, president of Milliken Research at Milliken & Company in Spartanburg, also emphasized the importance of collaboration in scientific research. “Today, very few scientists work by themselves,” he said. “If students are taught to work in a collaborative environment during college, they will be better prepared to enter the professional world upon graduation. We are excited to see that Converse is taking this approach to science education.”

While the interior of Phifer Science Hall was designed to house the latest in laboratory and audio-visual equipment, the exterior was designed to blend with the traditional look of the Converse campus. “Before we began our designs,” said Benson, “we spent a great deal of time in Wilson Hall studying the lobby and the stairwells. Our goal was to build the most modern science building we could while still reinforcing the classic look that is Converse.”

PHIFER WINS DESIGN AWARD

The intense design process led to a beautiful facility that has already been recognized for its architectural excellence. The Spartanburg City Planning Commission selected Phifer Science Hall as a recipient of their 2005 Excellence in Design Awards for the category of Architecture/New Construction (Institutional). The award was presented during the annual awards ceremony in February.
As Kuhn laboratories were dismantled, Converse found excellent use for the old lab furnishings. Dr. Jerry Howe, professor of chemistry, suggested that Converse send the equipment to the Christian Center of Education for Development (CCED) in San Juan de la Maguana, Dominican Republic, where he helped construct a four-classroom addition in 2002.

The K-12 school is a concrete block building built in 1995 by church volunteers, many of whom are from Spartanburg. It serves just over 1,000 from the barrios (slums) of San Juan. The school does not always have electricity because the town’s power supply is primitive. Converse’s lab equipment will be placed in a large classroom that currently houses the small amount of science equipment that the school has. Once complete, the room will be the best-equipped science lab in the region.

“Our mission is to change lives,” said José Ramon Rodriguez, director of the school. “In order to do so, it is very important to teach science in a proper laboratory. When I took biology in high school, all that the teacher had was a laminated poster of the human body. The first time I saw a microscope was my second year at the university. Imagine what we will be able to teach the students with this new equipment!”

Students from the city’s three universities will be able to come to the school in the afternoons to use the facilities. Science is not widely known there, and none of the universities offer a degree in science. It is expected that 700 students will study there each week.

KUHN HALL LAB FURNISHINGS
GO TO CENTRAL AMERICA

Phifer Science Hall features “Smart Classrooms,” which create new opportunities in teaching and learning by the integration of networking, digital, and audio-visual technologies. Lecture rooms have large-screen projectors with DVD players, VCRs, and inputs to support laptop computers and other audio-visual devices that professors bring to the classroom. Each student workstation also has inputs to support laptop computers. Digital document cameras display printed materials, slides or transparencies, and small objects. The document cameras also support image capture for incorporation into computer presentations. To make all of this technology easier to use, integrated touch-screen control systems handle operating procedures for the faculty.

Dalton Auditorium contains a Hitachi StarBoard tablet. The interactive LCD panel allows documents to be pulled from a computer and written directly to a graph that is projected on the overhead screen. The panel also doubles as a whiteboard when no applications are running.

The “Smart Classrooms” were designed and installed by SCI Electronics Inc. of Greenville, SC. “Our goal was to make sophisticated teaching technology as accessible, reliable, and useful to the instructor as a chalkboard,” said Scott Daniel, president of SCI Electronics. “It is imperative for these systems to be easy for instructors to use and for information technology staff to maintain.”

Network-based management software provides remote operation and monitoring of equipment so technicians can provide assistance to instructors from their desks and receive automatic E-mail notification for maintenance issues such as projector lamp replacement.
Through The Years: Science at Converse

COMPILED BY DR. JEFFREY WILLIS, ANDREW HELMUS DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

St. John’s Chapel. In 1889, when the Founders acquired the St. John’s Seminary property that was to be the site for Converse College, a little chapel was the only completed building. Since an ample chapel was constructed on the second floor of Main Hall, St. John’s Chapel was used as a science laboratory. From the beginning of the College, it was a priority that women be taught science. Physics and botany were required in the sophomore year; chemistry and zoology in the junior year; astronomy, geology, and mineralogy in the senior year.

Judd Science Hall. As Converse grew, the need for a purpose-built science hall increased. St. John’s Chapel was demolished in order to construct a new science building on the same site in 1915. Judd Hall had an observatory in the top of the central tower.

By the 1940s, the stringent science requirements of the 1890s had been reduced. For graduation, students had to take two sciences and two math courses. In the 1950s, the two areas were joined together and students were required to choose four courses from science and math.

Aline Saunders West. Converse’s science program has benefited from the long tenure of many dedicated faculty members. One of these was Aline Saunders West, who taught from 1930 to 1967. Although her primary area was chemistry, she sometimes taught physics as well.

Robert Powell. Another long-term member of the science faculty, who taught in both Judd and Kuhn Halls, was Robert W. Powell. A member of the Department of Biology from 1963 to 1988, he was known by the students as “Botany Bob.” Anyone contemplating cutting down a tree on campus found it wise to check with him first.

Kuhn Science Hall. Enrollment at Converse grew rapidly in the 1960s. While the number of students was increasing, Judd Science Hall was becoming outdated. In October 1967, Kuhn Science Hall opened for occupancy. The new building was named in honor of Willis E. Kuhn and Jacquelyn Montague Kuhn, benefactors of the College and members of the Board of Trustees. Judd Hall was demolished in 1981. Today, there is a statue of Emily Dickinson on the site.

Phifer Science Hall. Thirty-five years after the dedication of Kuhn Hall, rapid advances in technology and computer science created a need, once again, to update Converse’s science facilities. Phifer Science Hall was constructed in response to this need, ensuring that Converse students will continue to excel in the sciences.
Today, a blood sample can sometimes forecast a person’s risk of heart disease. Once forewarned, the person may simply need to take cholesterol-lowering drugs or a daily baby aspirin to curb the threat. In the future, a simple fingerprick may be all that is needed to identify individuals who are in high risk of cancers.

Cancer is a deadly disease, but it is a disease that requires accumulation of multiple changes in the body during a long period of time before reaching an often irreversible stage when chemotherapy is the only medicine that can help. In recent years, more and more research effort has been shifted to finding ways to stop or even reverse the disease process before it enters this irreversible stage. Taking preventive measures or “chemoprevention” is considered launching a preemptive war on cancer.

Cancer is a complex syndrome caused by multiple factors. Because of its complex nature, the causes are still elusive, which present challenges to designing effective preventive strategies. At the moment, a complete “chemoprevention” strategy—the use of a natural or synthetic substance to reduce the risk of developing cancer—is one goal that researchers are following.

According to the National Cancer Institute, at least four classes of chemopreventive agents have been designed and have yielded encouraging clinical figures. These agents include selective estrogen receptor modulators (SERMs), retinoids (derivatives of vitamin A), nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), and calcium compounds. For breast cancer, SERMs are especially effective.

Tamoxifen, an estrogen blocker or a representative of SERM, is currently the front-line drug to prevent breast cancer. Scientists believe that tamoxifen can enter cells, encounter an estrogen receptor, and block estrogen’s effects. This is because, according to a current estimate, approximately 50% of human breast cancers are estrogen-receptor negative.

For the patients who are estrogen-receptor negative, human prolactin (a lactating hormone) may play an important role in triggering breast cancer. A recently investigated prolactin antagonist (blocker) has shown promising therapeutic/preventive effects in experimental animals when combined with tamoxifen.

Although cancer is currently a deadly disease, with better understanding of its mechanisms, it will eventually become a curable and even preventable disease.
At one time, the Texas cattle industry suffered substantial loss because of the liver fluke. In high-density locations, flukes are easily introduced into new areas when deer and other animals share the same pasture.

To date, my students have examined 567 deer livers (from 2002-2004) in the state of South Carolina and found the prevalence (percent of deer infected) to be 11%, and the intensity of infection (average number in infected livers) is 7.5 flukes. There is no significant correlation with the age and sex of deer. We found infection in 19 counties (Aiken, Barnwell, Calhoun, Cherokee, Chester, Clarendon, Greenville, Greenwood, Georgetown, Hampton, Lancaster, Laurens, Marion, McCormick, Newberry, Richland, Saluda, Spartanburg, and Union). Our reports of infection in Calhoun, Greenville, Greenwood, Lancaster, Marion, Richland, and Saluda were the first for these counties.

According to Charles Ruth, deer project supervisor of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, the effects of deer liver flukes in cattle and sheep are... of deer liver flukes in the southeast may be one of several reasons that relatively few sheep are raised in the region.”

Our continued research here at Converse will provide valuable information for future studies that evaluate the regulation of deer population in South Carolina, and identify prevention of potential diseases that can be spread by deer to other animals.

Deer are an important resource in South Carolina, but their abundance causes problems in certain areas. They can become garden pests and are commonly involved in deer-vehicle collisions. More significantly, deer often serve as natural hosts for many parasites such as Fascioloides magna, which is referred to as the giant liver fluke and reaches nearly 9 cm in length and 3 cm in width.

Since 2002, my parasitology and zoology students have been studying the prevalence of deer liver fluke infection in Spartanburg, Union, and Cherokee counties in South Carolina. It was through this research that Converse biology major Grethen Williams ‘04 was named as outstanding undergraduate female science student by the South Carolina Academy of Science. In 2003, we extended our study to other counties in coordination with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

The liver flukes can cause considerable damage to the host and, when farm animals such as sheep and cattle become infected from sharing a pasture with infected deer, it can cause serious medical problems. While the parasite is usually not lethal to cows, it can cause weight loss and loss of milk production that translates into millions of dollars lost by the cattle industry. And for sheep, infection is deadly.

The potential for infection increases rapidly in animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, and moose, which are not normal hosts. These animals often graze wet slough-like areas together with deer. Infection of sheep may cause death within six months since they do not have the same defense mechanism as the deer. Cattle are affected less severely, but those with infected livers are condemned at slaughter.

The life cycle of the giant fluke begins when mature flukes shed eggs that are passed through the intestine of the host animal and leave the body as waste. These eggs hatch in water, penetrate the soft tissue of a suitable snail host, transform into free-swimming, tail larvae, and develop into infective cysts in water vegetation. Deer and other animals become infected with the flukes by eating the vegetation.

McCormick, Newberry, Richland, Saluda, Spartanburg, and Union). Our reports of infection in Calhoun, Greenville, Greenwood, Lancaster, Marion, Richland, and Saluda were the first for these counties.

When Kathy graduated from Converse she knew that she wanted to apply her education on a broad level. "I started out in the Process Improvement Department at Milliken, which involved tracking for the Environmental Department,” she explains. “As I interacted with this area, I became very interested in it and felt it was not only a way to apply my knowledge but also a way to make a difference. We often talk about the need for environmental protection and our efforts fill up my time... I felt that was a way for me to take an active part in preventing this from happening. Plus, Milliken and Company is a strong supporter of the environment and takes protecting the environment and promoting awareness seriously.”

While environmental chemistry is not exactly a new field, there are aspects of it which are receiving increased emphasis. "I think environmental awareness grows every day," said Kathy. “Areas such as water and waste have fairly established regulations. The changes can mostly be seen in the area of air regulations, the area with which I have the most experience. The federal government is promulgating new regulations that apply to different types of industry. There is always something new to learn.”

Dr. Edna Steele

"ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS GROWS EVERY DAY...THERE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW TO LEARN"

FOCUS: SCIENCE
As a rising junior at Converse, I made one of several commitments that would direct my future towards a career in healthcare: the monumental step of declaring a major in biology, a decision I made under some duress as the time had arrived beyond which I would have to begin upper level courses in something.

After an exciting summer in Washington working for Senator Strom Thurmond, an experience I credit to the late Dr. Sanford Newell (my former French professor and a ... and challenging, so a career as a scientist who studies and researches human living things sounded even more compelling.

By Winter Term of my senior year I was in the throes of serious decision-making about my career path. Encouraged by my faculty advisor, JoeAnn Lever, I visited several hospitals that were located within a one-hour drive of campus, and was excited to learn about the different types of careers and settings available to me as a scientist.

Our patient population was 95 percent TennCare, or Medicaid. Appalachian culture is quite distinct and just as rich as that of the Deep South, where I was raised. The fact that I was the first female physician in this small town was really lost on me until I hired my nurse practitioner. Michael was a former emergency department nurse manager with over 20 years of experience in a busy urban hospital in Florida. He and his wife had moved to Tennessee after he completed a master’s program in nursing. He had a Yankee accent that made folks a little wary at first. But his kindness and warmth always won people over. Patients affectionately referred to him as “Dr. Mike,” and me as “Miss Tara.” This didn’t disturb me, really. Women were nurses and men were doctors, everybody knew that, except on TV, of course.

Our patients were very respectful and always seemed to really value the experience of seeing us. Patients would frequently bring in some of their produce as a gesture of gratefulness. This could include fresh turnips, onions, tomatoes, squash, rams, or pokeweed. These sincere expressions of gratitude were endearing, and memories of those days continue to warm my heart when I reflect on them.

I was troubled to learn of the pervasiveness of incest that occurs back in the hollows and mountains, where people still live a very isolated existence. I was also dismayed at the number of patients I served who were my age and illiterate. It was not unusual for a young person to have quit school after the 8th or 9th grade. I could never figure out how they stayed in school that long without being able to read or write.

For the two years I worked there, I lived alone in a small stone house in the country. Although Cocke County has quite a reputation as a dangerous place, I never felt threatened or afraid. I believe the locals knew my mission and were appreciative, if not protective. After some time, however, I began to feel socially isolated and began to re-examine my priorities. Although committed in my heart to treating the underserved, I truly believed that a move to a larger town would be a better long-term match for me where my personal development was concerned.

I had kept in touch with a former medical school classmate who had moved to Knoxville, TN, after completing a pediatric residency to establish a pediatric clinic at the Knox County Health Department. Upon learning that there was an opening, I interviewed and was hired as director of the adult primary care clinic at the health department. The move back to the city felt liberating in so many ways. I was able to shop at the grocery store without being approached for medical advice or a prescription refill. Anonymity has its advantages.

As director of the adult clinic, I had administrative responsibility for two other physicians and four nurse practitioners. Our patient population included the homeless and indigent according to federal poverty guidelines. Roughly two out of three patients had a substance abuse issue and/or a mood disorder that caused a significant degree of impairment. This population, for the most part, simply is not able to navigate the obstacles encountered on a daily basis, such as holding down a job or paying bills.

As my experience working within the county’s health system grew, I took on more responsibilities. I became administrative director of primary care services which included the health department’s pharmacy, family planning, prenatal program, pediatric clinic, clinical laboratory, and X-ray facility, as well as the adult clinic. As public health officer for the county, my responsibilities included conducting disciplinary hearings for the restaurant industry after failed inspections, quarantining or prosecuting citizens who posed an immediate health threat to the community (such as someone with active tuberculosis who refuses to take the recommended medical regimen, or someone with the HIV virus who knowingly engages in unprotected intercourse with a partner who is unaware of their HIV status). Other responsibilities included disease outbreak management (i.e. formulating policies to manage an outbreak of shigellosis among daycare workers).

With each added administrative responsibility I became further removed from what had originally drawn me to my training and profession—direct patient care and personal relationships with the people whose lives I was impacting. Ultimately, this factor weighed the heaviest in my decision to leave the public health arena and accept my current position as medical director of a non-profit agency that provides primary health care for the low income, working uninsured of our area. Many of our patients work in the fast food industry or landscaping. They work for small business owners who are unable to afford health insurance coverage for their employees. We provide dental, behavioral health, and medical services in addition to primary medical care on site, seeing approximately 50-60 patients a week at a time when, with costs so high, there is always more need than resources.

But my days are full, and gratifying, mostly. I am thankful to have found my niche. It’s a blessing, really, to help someone out, if I can. It feels good.
Converse All-Stars Seek the Highest Bidder

Sports memorabilia, vacations, dinners, and much more will go to the highest bidders during the upcoming Converse All-Stars Silent Auction during the annual Thank Donor Gala on April 21 and during Reunion Weekend on April 29. All proceeds raised through the auction will support the All-Stars athletic program.

“The auction is our major athletic fundraiser for the year,” said Margaret Moore, director of intercollegiate athletics, chair of physical education, and associate professor of physical education. “Last year, we raised approximately $10,000 which enabled our players to compete against teams in more distant places. Our volleyball team traveled to San Juan, Puerto Rico, in October to play against some of their top teams—a trip that was made possible solely by funds raised through the auction.”

Among the items auctioned last year were a football signed by Carolina Panthers running back Stephen Davis, a football autographed by the entire Atlanta Falcons football team, various vacation packages including a trip to Universal Studios in Florida and a trip to Myrtle Beach, and items from the Department of Art and Design.

Items to be auctioned will be on display in Wilson Hall on April 21st during the donor gala as well as the morning of the 22nd, and the auction will continue in the main gym of The Weisiger Center on April 29th during the Reunion All-Class Cocktail Party and BBQ.

“Last year, alumni supported our auction fabulously; not only in bidding on items but also in donating items to be auctioned,” said Margaret. Alumni willing to donate items for the auction should contact the athletic office at (864) 596-2050 or margaret.moore@converse.edu.

As of Fall Term 2005, the long-awaited renovation of Montgomery Student Activities Building will make it the place for Converse students to be. The $5.5 million project, part of Converse’s campus master plan, began in fall 2004.

Built in 1960, Montgomery needed an overhaul in order to meet the needs of today’s students. “A student center should help build community on campus. It should be a hub for activity and student life, with amenities that draw students and make them feel that this is ‘their’ place,” said Haven Hart, dean of students.

The renovated Montgomery will house a cyber café, an improved bookstore, a fitness center, the new Marsha Gibbs Chapel, and inviting spaces for students to gather and socialize.

Dr. Carol Epps

issues our students have revolve around relationships,” said Dr. Carol Epps, director of counseling services. “The relationships can involve family members, boyfriends, and roommates. It is important to remember that many students are going through immense changes in their lives because they are living away from home for the first time, their family situations are changing, and they see family situations of other students up close. It’s a big eye-opener for them.” Also, the philosophy of the staff is to provide programs such as the Stress Fest, the Women of Worth group, and Depression screening that help students identify issues before they become serious.

Dr. Epps and counselor Heidi Moss offer a wide variety of services, including depression assistance, academic course management, stress issues, and adjustment counseling. “Adjustment counseling is especially important for our freshmen and seniors,” said Epps. “While freshmen need assistance with their new home away from home, seniors need assistance preparing to leave their Converse family.”

A Nurturing Environment Helps Converse Students Succeed

There are many pivotal time periods in life, and living on a college campus is one of them. For most first-year students, the familiar comforts of home are suddenly miles away as students experience independent living for the first time in their lives.

Through the counseling services staff, Converse students have access to an on-campus program with the sole purpose of providing them with guidance. “The majority of

Montgomery Renovation: Creating A Hub for Activity and Life

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The renovated Montgomery will house a cyber café, an improved bookstore, a fitness center, the new Marsha Gibbs Chapel, and inviting spaces for students to gather and socialize.

The building has already generated significant support from the Montgomery family and others who believe strongly in the need for newly-designed student space. Donors who wish to support the renovation effort may name rooms or areas in the building in honor of their loved ones. For more information, contact Heather Patchett, vice president for institutional advancement, at (864) 596-0018 or heather.patchett@converse.edu.
With Dr. Thomas Reeves in place as interim president at Converse College, the search for the College’s ninth president continues. A search committee comprised of Converse trustees, faculty and administrators, and a representative of the Converse SGA is leading the search, and has retained the services of Korn/Ferry International, the world’s largest executive search firm.

“We have received interest from a number of truly outstanding candidates throughout the country,” said Susan “Susu” Phifer Johnson ’65, chairman of the search committee. Trustees serving on the committee include Dr. Barbara Mary Belser ’69, Bill Barnet, Tom Hannah, Jane McColl ’61, Betty Montgomery ’72, Marian Nisbet ’62, and Jane Schwab ’77. Representing the faculty, students, and administration are Dr. Jeff Barker, vice president for academic affairs; Nikki Castle ’06; Haven Hart, dean of students; John Hegman, vice president for finance and administration; Dr. Ann Fletcher, associate professor of accounting; and Dr. Scott Robbins, chair of music history, theory, and composition.

The appointment of Dr. Reeves as interim president marks a homecoming of sorts. He served as a member of the Converse faculty from 1966-1985, first as assistant professor and father and husband, and Converse College’s most dedicated volunteer fundraiser. This is particularly remarkable given that Bill has no family ties to Converse alumnae or faculty. Very simply, he is committed to Converse because of the value it brings to the Spartanburg community.

Barnet’s unwavering focus on goals has been invaluable in advancing fundraising at Converse. His extensive business and personal relationships, his willingness to spend the time getting to know prospective donors, his sense of timing, and his ability to bring the right people together for a solicitation have created a successful track record and high expectations for the future. The Board of Trustees honored Barnet in September 2003 by naming the institutional advancement office as “The Barnet Development Center” in honor of his tremendous impact.

Barnet was nominated for the award by former Converse College President Nancy Gray. “Bill is a remarkable volunteer in every respect,” she said. “He is a successful businessman, the mayor of Spartanburg, a committed father and husband, and Converse College’s most dedicated volunteer fundraiser. This is particularly remarkable given that Bill has no family ties to Converse alumnae or faculty. Very simply, he is committed to Converse because of the value it brings to the Spartanburg community.”

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Even though they are a world away from their native land of Sri Lanka, Converse College students Tharanga and Eranga Goonetilleke are determined to do what they can to help their tsunami-ravaged homeland.

The sisters have spearheaded a fundraising effort that will last throughout Spring Term. As of January 31st, the effort had raised nearly $13,000.

Tharanga and Eranga were enjoying their Christmas break with friends in Spartanburg and preparing to travel to a Christian conference in North Carolina when a friend called to ask if they had heard about the tsunami. “We immediately turned on the television, saw the initial death-toll estimates, and began trying to reach our parents back home,” recalls Tharanga, a senior majoring in vocal performance. It took nearly four hours for the sisters to confirm the safety of their parents and their 11 first cousins.

The Goonetillekes hail from the Sri Lankan west coast city of Ratmalana (population 153,000), and although most of the damage occurred on the east coast, their house was not far from the devastation. “It is extremely difficult to imagine the destruction,” said Eranga, a freshman also majoring in vocal performance. “Roads and houses that were within easy walking distance from our home are now gone, and moragues are actually stacking bodies because there simply is not enough room for them.”

Tharanga received a vivid e-mail from a childhood friend back in Sri Lanka. “My friend told me how helpless she felt in consoling a grieving mother who lost her little boy in the tsunami, and how empty she felt walking the streets seeing people beg for food and water,” said Tharanga.

Converse students, faculty, and staff who were also on vacation for the holidays, flooded the office of Converse Chaplain Christine Henchar Reed with e-mails and telephone calls in an effort to make sure the Goonetilleke family was safe. “The Converse community loves Tharanga and Eranga,” Henchar Reed said. “Once everyone found out that both women were safe and in the US, they wanted to help with relief efforts.”

Tharanga and Eranga asked attendees of the January 3rd Converse All-Star basketball game for donations, and the Department of Athletics donated all proceeds from the game. In addition, a donation table was set up in Gee Dining Room. The efforts continued during the last weekend in January when Converse and the Music Foundation of Spartanburg presented Puccini’s La Bohème, in which Tharanga performed the lead role of “Mimi” and Eranga sang in the chorus.

“All of the money is being sent to The Church of St. Mary’s in Ratmalana, and will be used to buy supplies and clothes,” said Tharanga. “The church is doing all that they can to provide shelter and food for people who have no other way of surviving.”

Tharanga and Eranga call their parents as often as possible, speaking in their native Sinhalese, for the latest information about the relief efforts. “Our father, who is a banker, has seen buildings and businesses totally destroyed and washed away,” said Eranga. “And mother helps with lunch packets for the tsunami victims who are housed in the church. While it would be nice to be together as a family to know what is going on, we are doing everything we can on this end, including thinking positively and praying.”

The Converse relief effort will continue through the end of Spring Term (May 19). For information on how you can help, contact Christine Henchar Reed at (864) 596-9079 or christine.reed@converse.edu.

$15 Million Gift Raises Bar for Academic Excellence at Converse College

In January, Converse received a transformative gift of $15 million in support of academic excellence from Susan “Susu” Phifer ’65 and George Dean Johnson Jr. This marks the second $15 million gift the Johnsons have given to the College in the last seven years and the largest outright gift in the College’s history. The gift will build Converse’s endowment, bringing the College’s total funds under management to nearly $80 million.

A portion of the gift is designated to fund a faculty evaluation and compensation plan in support of academic excellence, and the remainder will be allocated to other areas within the College’s endowment, including scholarships. The gift aligns with Converse’s strategic plan, delivering on the plan’s goal of enhancing the institution’s academic program.

Jeff Barker, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, collaborated with faculty for 15 months to formulate a plan for faculty evaluation and compensation, that raises the bar for academics. The Academic Excellence Endowment and Faculty Salary Improvement Plan were endorsed by faculty and the Board of Trustees last year, and since that time the College has been working to secure endowed funding. Converse raised $606,000 toward the endowment prior to the Johnson’s gift.

“Our goal is to secure and retain the best faculty so that academics at Converse are rigorous, thorough, and offer the best possible preparation for life and careers,” said Barker. “This gift is distinctive on a national level in higher education because it provides permanent substantial support to recognize and reward faculty excellence.”

Having served as a college faculty member early in her career, Susu Johnson gained firsthand understanding of the importance for an institution to dedicate a significant and continuous flow of resources for faculty excellence. “We have responded to a defined need of Converse with this gift and are happy to be able to do so,” said Johnson, who is vice chairman of the Board of Trustees and chair of the presidential search committee.

Last year, the Johnsons gave $2 million to Converse for scholarships. The gift created five scholarship endowments that will generate approximately $62,500 each year for Converse to award directly to students.
Are You Painting Yet?

The “Paint the World Purple” campaign is off to a great start, thanks to the excitement of Converse alumnae and friends who have taken up their brushes to paint. Our goal is to spread the Converse PURPLE around the world!

You can “Paint the World Purple” in all sorts of ways:

- **SUPPORT** the Converse Fund—make your gift for 2004-05.
- **JOIN** the CARE network (Converse Alumnae Recruitment Effort)—sign up on the Converse Web site at www.converse.edu or contact the Alumnae Office.
- **TELL** capable high school students and their parents about your Converse experience and encourage them to take a closer look. Send their names to the Converse Admissions Office.
- **REACH OUT** to alumnae from your class or in your city and encourage them to reach out to others. Take time to reminisce about your Converse days.
- **ATTEND** alumnae events in your area and the annual Reunion Weekend (this year’s theme is Paint the World Purple!) at Converse.
- **PROVIDE** Converse students with internship opportunities in your city and become a career mentor by joining the Converse Alumnae Network (visit the alumnae section of the Converse Web site for information).
- **CONNECT** with Converse. Serve as a class representative or a Converse Fund Class Chair, keep Converse up-to-date about you via the Web site or the Alumnae Office.

Dip into the PURPLE and start painting today!

Preserving Cudd Hall as a Home Away from Home

Recent estate gifts from Mary Sue Cudd ’27 and Perrin Cudd Eidson ’31 will help Converse maintain Cudd Residence Hall for years to come. In their wills, both sisters specified a percentage of their estates be given to Converse for the building, a combined gift of more than $275,000. The gifts continue the Cudd family legacy at Converse that began early in the College’s history.

The Gwyn School, a preparatory school for girls, was purchased in the early 1900s and transformed into a residence hall for Converse. It was named Cudd Memorial Hall in memory of Allene Cudd Cantrell ’12, who was the daughter of Converse Trustee John N. Cudd and the cousin of Mary Sue and Perrin. After graduating from Converse, Mary Sue and Perrin Cudd became teachers in their hometown of Spartanburg. Mary Sue never married, and at one time operated the Cudd Coal Company. Perrin became the wife of Dr. John Olin Eidson, the former dean of arts and sciences at the University of Georgia, former president of Georgia Southern University, and vice chancellor of the university system in Georgia. Perrin later authored *The President’s Wife Entertains*, which sold several thousand copies.

“The Cudd sisters’ gifts are excellent examples of how an alumna can sustain her commitment to Converse long after graduation,” said Dianne Ansley, director of planned giving at Converse. “Estate planning gives donors peace of mind from knowing that their gift will be used exactly as they intend at their passing.”

Estate planning is important for many reasons: to name your beneficiaries and determine their appropriate shares, to select your executor, to establish trusts, and to benefit charitable organizations like Converse College that are close to your heart. For more information, contact Dianne at (864) 596-9018 or dianne.ansley@converse.edu.

Converse Students Are Calling YOU!

The Converse phonathon is off to an incredible start this year, thanks to a diverse group of student callers who are enthusiastically pursuing their goal to raise $100,000. Gifts and pledges received by phonathon callers go toward the 2005 Converse Fund goal of $2.6 million. “We were aiming to raise $60,000 from the phonathon by Christmas break this year, and 964 alumnae helped us to exceed that goal by almost $11,000,” said Anne Marie Harnett ’05. “It’s exciting to talk with alumnae who love Converse and want to help us,” she said.

Student callers are a diverse group this year, including many international students who have interesting stories to share. In addition to raising money for Converse, callers also aim to help alumnae reconnect with the College by answering questions about Converse and talking about their college experiences. Students will continue calling alumnae throughout Spring Term. Please look for their call and enjoy reminiscing about your Converse days.
2004-05
Granddaughters Club
Sponsored by the Alumnae Office, the Granddaughters Club is a student organization that works to promote contact between students and alumnae through special events and projects.

ALUMNAE EVENTS
November 4, 2004
Montgomery, AL
Luncheon at Nancy Paterson's Bistro
2 to 6 p.m.

Megan Barlow, daughter of Mary Ann Lancaster Barlow '81
Melissa Harley, granddaughter of Mary Curtis Ramsay Harley '46

Sarah J. Jones, daughter of Nancy Home Vetter '81

Sarah Marion, daughter of Susan Secord Marion '80 and granddaughter of Ann Davidson Marion '47

Sarah "Sally" Stevens Williams, granddaughter of Susan Simrill Manning '45

GRANDDAUGHTERS NOT PICTURED:
Megan Barlow, daughter of Mary Ann Lancaster Barlow '81
Melissa Harley, granddaughter of Mary Curtis Ramsay Harley '46

Sarah J. Jones, daughter of Nancy Home Vetter '81

Sarah Marion, daughter of Susan Secord Marion '80 and granddaughter of Ann Davidson Marion '47

Sarah "Sally" Stevens Williams, granddaughter of Susan Simrill Manning '45

ALUMNAE EVENTS
November 4, 2004
Mobile, AL
Cocktail Party at the home of David and Kay Watt Clark '78

Elizabeth "Kamala" Nunn, great granddaughter of the late Barbara Jacobs Nunn '10

Katherine A. F. Strothers, daughter of Carol Walton Stevens '70

Autumn Tate, daughter of Becky Dulan 2000 Converse 'II

Sarah "Sally" Stevens Williams, granddaughter of Susan Simrill Manning '45

GRANDDAUGHTERS NOT PICTURED:
Megan Barlow, daughter of Mary Ann Lancaster Barlow '81
Melissa Harley, granddaughter of Mary Curtis Ramsay Harley '46

Sarah J. Jones, daughter of Nancy Home Vetter '81
You'll journey north along the scenic shores of Lake George to Fort Ticonderoga, then bask in the glory of your beautiful surroundings in the Berkshire Mountains. Enjoy a visit to the famed Norman Rockwell Museum and Old Sturbridge Village, a living museum of a 19th century New England town. Contact Melissa Jolly, director of alumnae, at (864) 596-9055 or melissa.jolly@converse.edu for more information.

SICILY—THE CULTURAL SEASON

December 3-12, 2005

In 1787, the poet Goethe described Palermo as “the most beautiful promontory in the world.” Cradled in a wide bay, Sicily’s bustling capital, Palermo, is an enthralling city and a place of enchantment. Delve into Sicilian culture and tradition with a hands-on lesson in ceramics, antiques restoration, or cooking.

FALL FOLIAGE OF THE NORTHEAST

October 12-19, 2005

VOYAGE ON THE QUEEN MARY 2

June 26 - July 2, 2005

No doubt you have heard about this new luxury ocean liner! Furman University and Converse College have teamed up to offer this once-in-a-lifetime trip for the summer of 2005. Participants will fly to London and have the option of spending a few days sightseeing or perhaps going to Wimbledon. They will then go by train to Southampton to board the Queen Mary 2 for a seven-day voyage to New York. Travelers will have the option of remaining in New York for a few extra days to include the 4th of July!

The Queen Mary 2 is a perfect marriage of form and function. She is four city blocks long, stands taller than the Statue of Liberty, and is a veritable city at sea. Carund’s ocean liner boasts a planetarium, the Canyon Ranch SpaClub, virtual reality golf, shops, art gallery, cultural programs, ten restaurants, and much more!

Contact Melissa Jolly, director of alumnae, at (864) 596-9055 or melissa.jolly@converse.edu if you are interested in receiving a brochure.

FALL FOLIAGE OF THE NORTHEAST

October 12-19, 2005

New this year: • Friday afternoon “classes without quizzes” on Refurbishing Main Hall, Breast Cancer Research, and The History of Converse World Purple • Friday night All-Stars Silent Auction • Saturday afternoon alumnae panel discussion: “Entrepreneurism” • Saturday afternoon tours of Phifer Science Hall, Cudd Hall, and residence hall lobbies

See you April 29-30, 2005, during Reunion Weekend!

Carole Clancy

Welcome to the glorious beauty of the New England states just as the leaves are turning! Experience the historic sights of Boston, the scenic back roads of Vermont, and historical Saratoga Springs nestled in the Adirondack Mountains.

In 1787, the poet Goethe described Palermo as “the most beautiful promontory in the world.” Cradled in a wide bay, Sicily’s bustling capital, Palermo, is an extrabordinary cultural crossroad and a living reflection of its rich history. Explore the island’s cultural riches from the ancient archeological site of the Valley of Temples, to the Allied landing beaches; from medieval Cefalù to charming Corleone; from beautiful Bagheria to the magnificent mosaics of Monreale. Dive into Sicilian culture and tradition with a hands-on lesson in ceramics, antiques restoration, or cooking.

Converse College and Wellesley College are jointly planning this trip through AHI.

No matter how much exciting growth takes place, I am constantly reminded that our College is the same wonderful Converse we fondly remember from our own college days. With every Converse student I meet, I grow prouder that these amazingly talented young women are following in our footsteps. It warms my heart to see that so many of the traditions we held dear are valued and enjoyed just as much by the women attending Converse today. The heart and soul of Converse—the part of her that transforms young women into dynamic contributors to society—is what we all work to preserve and enhance. While we celebrate the phenomenal growth and progress that is apparent everywhere you look on campus, we also celebrate the continuum of honor, tradition, and excellence that remains the same.

It sometimes amazes me that no matter how much things change, they also seem to stay the same. Our beloved Converse is in the midst of an exciting time of growth and progress. Our brand new—and quite spectacular—science building is a testament to Converse College! Our greatly updated science curriculum usher in a new era in science. The construction and renovation that has taken place on campus over the past few years and the current renovation of Montgomery Student Center provide Converse students with wonderful facilities in which to live and learn. New programs such as the music therapy major, creative and professional writing major, dance minor, and The Nickel Honor Program have raised the bar for academic excellence and help attract the most talented students to our College. Our fabulously successful Campaign for Converse made much of these changes possible. Thanks to VOCI, our alumnae, who were key to our success in raising $82.5 million!

We have bid a sad farewell to President Nancy Gray, and I know that each of you joins me in wishing her the very best and thanking her for the wonderful progress that Converse made under her leadership. She leaves Converse in a position of strength to attract another extremely competent president who will perpetuate the momentum of our progress.

Converse Reunion 2005:

Paint the World Purple

April 29-30, 2005

This year Converse College welcomes classes ending in 0’s and 5’s, the Class of 2004, and the Golden Club (1930-1954). For more information, call (864) 596-9011 or 800-584-9098, or E-mail elizabeth.simons@converse.edu.

ALUMNAAEVENTS

November 30, 2004

Columbia, SC

Party honoring President Nancy Gray given by Mary Rainey Belser ’69 in her home.

(Left to right) Mary Rainey Belser ’69, President Nancy Gay, Sally Harms, Caughman ’67, Smuda Sherard, Bethea ’67.

ALUMNAEVENTS

November 30, 2004

Lynchburg, VA

Cocktail Party for alumnae hosted by Kent and Kay Hightower Van Allen ’70 (pictured) in their home.

ALUMNAEVENTS

A Special Halloween May Court

The alumnae office staff entertained the Converse community at a Halloween costume breakfast. Melissa Daves Jolly ’69, director of alumnae, as Queen of the May; Bobbie Daniel ’71, alumnae information coordinator, as Miss Gee; and Elizabeth Simons, associate director of alumnae, as Maid of the Honor.