

# your CONNECTION

A Newsletter for Converse Alumnae/i

WINTER 2020



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## HAPPY New Year



Can you believe it's 2020? Six-year-old Jessica would have sworn cars would be flying by now, and she definitely would not be approaching her 20th Class Reunion. But alas, I navigate the roads of I-85 each morning and this June, I will proudly celebrate the 20th anniversary of my graduation from Converse College. The latter fills my heart with nostalgia for the past but also excitement for what lies ahead. As Alumnae/i Director, I'm amazed with how much we've already accomplished together – 2019 is flooded with fond memories from the connections made and the visions, as well as hopes, we've shared for the future of our alma mater. This past year was also packed with fun-filled events, including Chapter functions and another successful on-campus Reunion Weekend. As you read this issue of *Your Connection*, I hope you share my enthusiasm for what the future holds and feel a sense of pride for being a member of the vibrant community that is the Converse Alumnae/i Association.

Jessica Eggmann '00  
Alumnae/i Director

Three Days.  
Thousands of Memories.

# Only ONE CONVERSE

REUNION WEEKEND 2020 SET FOR MAY 29-31



Remember back to how you felt the first time you stepped foot on Converse's beautiful campus as a student. Do you remember meeting your life-long friends for the first time and the memories made together participating in your favorite traditions? What about that one class that inspired you to follow a career path and your professor who empowered you to pursue it? Now think back to the day you graduated and how you wished your time at Converse didn't have to end. The good news is, while you can't go back in time, you can come back to Converse for the next best thing – Reunion Weekend.

"Reunion Weekend is a unique three-day experience that, once you start coming, you won't want to miss it ever again," said Austin Faulk '95, President, Converse College Alumnae/i Association Board. "I love that we can relive our college days by staying on campus in the dorms that we used to live in, reconnecting with old friends in a place that is so special to all of us."

Register now at

[converse.edu/reunion](https://converse.edu/reunion)

Over the course of the three-day Reunion Weekend, some of the multitude of events to participate in are:

- Enjoying dinner on the quad under the stars on a warm summer night
- Cheering on Golden Club inductees who are celebrating their 50th reunion
- Applauding your fellow alumnae/i for being honored with an Alumnae/i Achievement Award
- Dancing on the quad with your Converse sisters from all classes
- Sipping an adult beverage while strolling around campus to hear what's new
- Performing in the no-stress alumnae recital
- Roasting marshmallows at the Cabin
- Learning at "Summer School" with Converse's beloved professor, Dr. Jeff Willis
- Celebrating the sisterhood that will last forever in the Parade of Classes

From the moment of arrival, to dining and dancing on the back campus, to chatting in residence halls into the early hours of the morning, and to final hugs on the porch of Wilson Hall, the feelings you have during Reunion Weekend are something that can't be explained, just experienced.

Jessica Eggimann '00, Director of Alumnae/i Relations and Advisory Boards at Converse who is instrumental in leading the planning of the Reunion Weekend experience, says, "It's so important that we continue to strengthen our relationships with each other. Reunion Weekend is the perfect way to make that happen. No matter our differences, our shared experiences and beloved traditions are what bind us together – and that is very powerful."

Austin Faulk furthers, "The very foundations of my life now are the friendships I made while I was a Converse student and my complete academic experience fostered by our professors' dedication to helping us become successful. Coming back for Reunion Weekend builds on that momentum."



Krista Newkirk, President, Converse College said, "Reunion Weekend is one of our favorite Converse traditions. From recent graduates to those who will celebrate their 50th reunions, there is nothing like experiencing the love and loyalty our alumnae/i have for Converse. Dust off your pink panther or red devil memorabilia, register yourself and your friends, and get ready for one of your best weekends yet."

Don't miss the opportunity to reminisce and reconnect with your classmates during the exclusive three-day Reunion Weekend.

Register now at [converse.edu/reunion](https://converse.edu/reunion) or complete and submit the registration form found on page 22.

REGISTER TODAY! [converse.edu/reunion](http://converse.edu/reunion)



# REUNION WEEKEND

May 29-31, 2020



All Converse Alumnae/i are invited home to reunite with old friends and make new ones. We especially welcome the Class of 1970 who will be inducted into the Golden Club to mark their 50th Reunion. Other classes ending in '5 and '0 and the Class of 2019 will also be honored.

## Friday, May 29

### Registration

Begins at Noon, Wilson Hall Front Porch

### Snack Time

1:00 pm-5:00 pm, Lee Parlor, Wilson Hall  
Kick off the ultimate girls' weekend with a few refreshments!

*The Class of 1970's Hospitality Suite on 1st Floor, Fleming Hall, will be stocked throughout the weekend and is exclusively for those celebrating their 50th Reunion.*

### Sip 'n Stroll Campus Tour

4:00 pm-5:30 pm, 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 President Newkirk

The Piedmont Club  
5:30 pm-6:30 pm, Cocktails  
6:30 pm-8:00 pm, Dinner  
Transportation will be provided to and from campus.

*\*Event exclusively for the Class of 1970*

### Dinner in Gee

6:30 pm-7:30 pm, Gee Dining Hall, Wilson Hall  
Share a sit down meal with classmates in Gee and politely ask your neighbor to "pass the potatoes."

### After Dinner Options:

#### 2020 Alumnae/i Recital

8:00 pm-9:00 pm, Daniel Recital Hall  
Alumnae/i Recital is a low pressure affair full of laughter, love and great music shared among friends in the warm acoustics of Daniel Recital Hall.  
To participate email [Mildred.Roche@Converse.edu](mailto:Mildred.Roche@Converse.edu) by April 26.

#### Girls Night Out!

9:00 pm-12:00 am, Departs from Wilson Hall Front Circle  
Hop on a free shuttle to Downtown Spartanburg.  
Shuttle departs every 30 minutes, with the last ride to campus departing from Downtown at 11:45 pm.

#### S'mores Before You Snore

9:30 pm-11:30 pm, The Cabin  
Maybe a cozy evening at the cabin is more your style.  
Grab your crew and catch up over roasted marshmallows & a nightcap.

## Saturday, May 30

### Breakfast Buffet

8:00 am-10:00 am, Gee Dining Hall, Wilson Hall  
Roll out of bed and walk to Gee for a leisurely feast.  
PJ's and slippers welcome!

### Alumnae/i Association Board Meeting (Board Members only)

9:00 am-10:00 am, Bain Room, Wilson Hall

### All Class Photos and Class Meetings (Meetings for Classes ending in '5s & '0s)

11:00 am-12:15 pm, Carmichael Hall  
11:30 am, Class of 1970 Meeting, Mickel Library

### Parade of Classes

12:15 pm, Mickel Library  
Hold that banner high, march with your classmates and celebrate the sisterhood that will live forever.  
Just look for the mimosa tent!

### 2020 Alumnae/i Award Ceremony and Luncheon

12:30 pm-2:00 pm, Gee Dining Hall, Wilson Hall  
Help us celebrate the Class of 1970 and our Alumnae/i Achievement Award recipients.

### After Lunch Options:

#### Color Your Cares Away

2:00 pm-5:00 pm, Lee Parlor, Wilson Hall  
Snacks and beverages will be available.

#### 2020 Alumnae/i Art Exhibit & Reception

2:00 pm-3:00 pm, Milliken Art Gallery  
Experience pieces created by fellow alumnae/i.  
The exhibit will run from May 25-June 26 with the reception taking place during Reunion Weekend.  
To participate email [Mary.Carlsle@converse.edu](mailto:Mary.Carlsle@converse.edu) by March 27.

#### Summer School with a Professor

3:00 pm-4:00 pm, Barnet Room, Montgomery  
Dr. Jeff Willis, Director of Archives and Special Collections  
Andrew Helmus, Professor of History Emeritus

#### Pinot's Palette Reunion Souvenir Workshop

4:15 pm-5:30 pm, Bain Room  
Pinot's Palette Greenville will host an on campus workshop where you'll paint a Converse take-home treat to commemorate the weekend. Pink Panthers and Red Devils alike won't want to miss this one! There is an additional \$30 charge to attend.  
Register here: [www.pinotpalette.com/greenville/event/395256](http://www.pinotpalette.com/greenville/event/395256)

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

6:30 pm, Open Bar & Photo Booth  
7:00 pm, Dinner on the Lawn  
7:30 pm, Class Act Awards & Dance the night away  
Dine with your classmates or mix and mingle with other generations under twinkling lights and tents with style.

## Sunday, May 31

**Grab 'N Go Breakfast**  
8:00 am-11:00 am, Dalton Lobby, Wilson Hall  
Grab a quick bite before you head out!

**Until the Next One!**  
8:00 am-11:00 am, Wilson Hall, Front Porch  
Memories and final hugs as you finish your weekend.



## At Your Leisure:

**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 first Floor of Fleming Hall.

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

**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.

**In Memoriam**  
Gibbs Chapel, Montgomery Student Center  
The chapel 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 till You Drop**  
Montgomery Student Center  
Don't forget to grab the coupon from your packet, Alumnae/i get discounts at the Valkyries Bookstore!

**Explore Downtown Spartanburg**  
Sparkle City has grown in the past few years. Check out your old haunts or discover a new favorite place!

Three Days.  
Thousands of Memories.  
Only ONE **CONVERSE**

Register now at  
**converse.edu/reunion**

## Nominate an outstanding Alumnae/i for the Alumnae/i Achievement Award!



Do you know an Alumna/us who stands out and who clearly represents the "Voice, Value, Vision" that Converse offers? Do they demonstrate in an outstanding way one or more of the seven core values of the college: Excellence, Integrity, Exploration, Diversity, Respect, Community and Progress?

Nominate a deserving Alumna/us for an Alumnae/i Achievement Award by Monday, February 3rd at [converse.edu/alumni/serve/alumni-achievement-awards](http://converse.edu/alumni/serve/alumni-achievement-awards)

The awards will be presented at Reunion Weekend, which gives you yet another reason not to miss this great three-day weekend.

# after Converse

## We're shining the spotlight on a few outstanding graduates!

From marketing and education to architecture and law, these Converse alumnae/i are making a positive impact as leaders in their communities and throughout the Southeast.



### Mindy L. Barker '84

Jacksonville, FL

Founder and CEO, Barker Associates

**As the owner of Barker Associates, what do you find most rewarding about your work? And conversely, what are the most challenging aspects?**

In my role as a consulting financial strategist I have worked with entrepreneurs and ongoing businesses in a wide range of projects. My experience has allowed me to secure keynote speaking opportunities at conferences, which has become one of the most rewarding

aspects of my work. The enthusiasm and desire for information from these audiences energizes me and teaches me about the evolving demands for products and services in the marketplace.

The challenging aspects arise from working with entrepreneurs who have a great idea but are too busy developing that idea to put into place financial infrastructure. I help educate these bright, energetic individuals on how to effectively pitch to investors or potential buyers. By helping an entrepreneur understand, firsthand, what distinguishing factors make their company an attractive investment to private investors, we are able to develop a process to capture the value of their business.

**In 2018, you published *Pitching to Win: Strategies for Success*. What fueled your interest to write a book?**

After receiving calls from entrepreneurs and business owners who wanted to sell their business but didn't know where to start, I realized that these professionals didn't understand the financial basis and timeline when preparing for investors. *Pitching to Win* addresses the journey of preparing for the pitch in a holistic manner preparing yourself, the company and the team for the process. It is full of stories that help demonstrate the true cost of not having the right infrastructure. Feedback from a school teacher, my current clients, merger and acquisition attorneys and a commercial banker all contributed to the book's enthusiastic reviews.

**How did your time at Converse prepare you to succeed professionally?**

As a small-town Southern girl going to a private women's college, I was unprepared for the cultural shift that occurred when starting at Converse. During my time at Converse, in addition to acquiring a formal education, I learned to adapt to the new culture of women from all walks of life. As my career progressed I knew I could rely on the formal and informal aspects

of my Converse years to help me effectively lead the professional organizations in which I found myself.

**What advice would you offer new graduates trying to further their professional development?**

The best advice I have for new graduates is to learn to listen and manage your online reputation. There is so much information in social media, books and other resources out there that did not exist when I graduated from college. They are all great resources and when properly used, can help you grow and learn. You have to process that information and make sure you are honoring who you are and your own capabilities. This requires you to be self-aware and emotionally intelligent. One of the best attributes of a small liberal arts college is that you receive a well-rounded education and have the foundation to think critically through a variety of topics. Converse prepares you with the skills and behaviors to stay true to yourself.

**What is your fondest Converse memory?**

My fondest memories all relate to the interactions we had in the dorm and on campus. The late-night study groups when we were all cramming for an exam, the times we all got in the hallway and did Jane Fonda exercise tapes and the crazy times we ran around dressed in pink panther and red devil attire: those memories are precious to me and I feel so blessed to still have friendships with women today I met at Converse.

**What is something people may not know about you?**

As a teenager I worked part-time inspecting the silver eggs for L'eggs Sheer Energy pantyhose. My father started a company when I was in high school to take the white L'Eggs eggs and make them silver. I got to work with him in the warehouse during my high school years. It was hard work and it taught me a lot about business.



## Nina Markette Baker '94

LaGrange, GA

Judge, Coweta Circuit of Georgia

### What fueled your interest to study law?

The order, structure and predictability of law appealed to me. I interned with a District Attorney's office in Georgia during college and that experience cemented my desire to go to law school. I strongly encourage internships. They give you a sense of the real working world and you know whether that field is a good fit for your talents and passion.

### How did your time at Converse prepare you to succeed professionally?

I am grateful for the smaller class sizes Converse offered. Professors take the time to get to know you and they take an interest in your success. I also performed with the dance ensemble during my time at Converse. It sounds cliché, but discipline and time management are necessary throughout life and Converse helped me realize that early on.

### You recently became the first female superior court judge to be appointed to the Coweta Judicial Circuit — what has that experience been like?

Interesting! Many times, parties respond with "Yes, Sir" and it usually gets a quiet chuckle in the courtroom. My strong hope is that, regardless of gender, I am considered a judge who brings fairness, justice and compassion to the bench.

### What do you find most enjoyable or rewarding about your work as a judge? And conversely, what are the most challenging aspects?

I am cognizant that when I'm presiding over domestic cases it is the children who are too often caught in the middle. I have witnessed grace in the courtroom

when parties put aside their difference of opinion to put children first. I feel privileged to watch it unfold. One of the hardest things to do is to take someone's freedom away.

### What advice would you offer new graduates trying to further their professional development?

Don't be afraid of hard work. You must be patient; a good employer will notice and reward your effort. It can take years to accomplish something worthwhile. Keep going and give it all you've got. Don't forget to enjoy time with your friends and family and recognize when you need a rest. Keeping yourself healthy and happy is a fundamental key to overall success.

### What is your fondest Converse memory?

I couldn't name just one! I was fortunate to be in the Converse Dance Ensemble. It was a great group of women who all supported each other and pushed each other to be better. Surround yourself with a group of women like that and you can accomplish anything.

### What is something people may not know about you?

I graduated from Mississippi College School of Law exactly 100 years after my great-grandfather, Benjamin Thaddeus Markette, graduated from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

## Cary Perkins '96

Greenville, SC

Architect and Associate Principal at  
McMillan Pazdan Smith

### What fueled your interest to become an architect and how did your time as a Studio Art major play a role?

I've wanted to be an architect for as long as I can remember. When I was growing up, our neighbor was an architect as well as our priest. I was obsessed with his drafting table, swivel chair and all of his pens and templates. He gave me some great advice as a teenager: "...even if architecture is not offered as a major, choose a college that feels right when visiting the campus. Pick a college where you can feel at home and make lifelong friends." He also suggested that I study any creative field as an undergraduate and then pursue architecture in graduate school. Going that route lengthens the time in school by one or two years, but it diversifies one's experience. It was great advice and I'm so thankful that I followed it. As soon as I visited Converse as a senior in high school, I knew I belonged there. I then pursued my graduate studies at Clemson.

As an art major at Converse, I found my voice in the creative process and learned how to present and receive criticism on my work. Doug Whittle, who taught printmaking, told me in the days before my senior gallery exhibit that if you're not just a little bit terrified when you're about to share your work, then you don't care enough. I still remind myself of that nearly every time I get nervous before a big presentation.

### As Architect and Associate Principal at McMillan Pazdan Smith, what do you find most enjoyable or rewarding about your work? And conversely, what are the most challenging aspects?

Working as a commercial architect means that every day is completely different. I love that. My favorite

aspect of life in architecture is working with really interesting people – other architects, engineers, interior designers, builders and consultants specializing in landscape design and acoustics. I also enjoy working with clients, who are all different and work in fascinating industries. Serving as someone's architect allows me to glimpse into their world for a little while, learning as much as I possibly can about what's important to their business or organization and then solving problems through design.

On the flip side, it's stressful work because everyone I work with is spending a lot of money and typically under pressure from others within their organization. Part of my role is helping to manage the process alongside them, to set expectations correctly and to keep everyone in sync and communicating clearly. Architecture is about the creative process, but it's also a service industry involving service leadership opportunities.

### You have overseen several projects that contribute significantly to the presence of the arts and arts education in the community, including the recent renovations to Twichell Auditorium and the Zimmerli Performance Center. How have your experiences at Converse prepared you for projects such as these?

There's not a theatre project I work on when I don't remember my days sitting in the dark just off-stage in Hazel B. Abbott calling light and sound cues. It's amazing to build a big empty space that not only is ready and waiting for someone to completely transform it with their own artwork or vision, but also welcomes the community to experience the arts. That type of building has a great responsibility. It's a full circle process.

### What advice would you give students who are about to graduate from Converse?

I would encourage graduates to spend their last days on campus thinking through and celebrating what they



have loved most about their last years at Converse. Then, take those values into the profession they choose. For me, that was friendship, diversity and respect. Look for a place of work with people who are just as passionate about what they do as you are. You're going to spend a lot of time with them. And, go into your role respecting your coworkers and expecting the same in return.

### What is your fondest Converse memory?

I'm not sure how to narrow down to only one. Converse was an awesome time in my life and there are so many hilarious and special memories. Looking back, dinners together are way up on the list and definitely

something I took for granted at the time. Having a family dinner with your friends every night (that we didn't have to cook!) is pretty hard to beat. In between dinners, there was a lot of mischief with some of the best and funniest people I've ever known!

### What is something people may not know about you?

I performed as a Tarpon Shark at Converse. First of all, it's hard! I took synchronized swimming as a PE class and we joined the performance at the end of the semester. I have never had that much gel in my hair, but it was awesome.

{ CLASS Notes }



*Brooks Smith '00*

Evans, GA  
Director of Career, Technical and Agricultural  
Education with Columbia County Schools

**What drew you to choose Converse for your graduate studies?**

Initially, I was drawn to Converse in part because of the school's proximity to where I worked and lived. However, it was the college's personal and family atmosphere approach to advisement, support and coursework that made it the perfect place to complete my graduate program.

**What were some of the most meaningful aspects of your education at Converse?**

Being able to take courses with longtime professor, Dr. Thomas McDaniel, was amazing. As a school administrator, I keep his books close by and still refer to them often. His leadership and instruction helped to shape the administrative strategies I use every day.

**You recently became the Director of Career, Technical and Agricultural Education – what has that experience been like?**

Columbia County Schools is one of the fastest growing areas in our country. We are continually adding additional schools and programs as our population and community grows. Our district has a very collaborative approach with our community and workforce leaders. The Chamber of Commerce actively supports all of our educational programs but is very connected to our CTAE efforts. When a community works as collaboratively as Columbia County does with its educational system, great things happen for students – and great things ARE happening for our students!

**What is the most rewarding aspect of working in your field? Most challenging?**

Helping students connect their interests and skills to career pathways is very rewarding. The flip side to that is trying to offer classes and work-based learning that matches an everchanging career and workforce landscape.

**What advice do have for someone who is interested in pursuing a graduate degree at Converse?**

Do it!

**What is something people may not know about you?**

I wish I would have taken advantage of Converse's amazing music program so I possibly could have achieved my true career hope of being a country music star!

CLASS Notes are an important part of the Converse connection and we want to make it even easier to stay engaged with your classmates.

*Finding Class Notes:*

Visit: [converse.edu/ClassNotes](https://converse.edu/ClassNotes)

Password: **Converse188**

*Viewing Class Notes:*

After submitting your password, you will arrive at the online CLASS Notes page, where you can scroll through all posts, and sort by category or class year.

*Submitting Class Notes:*

You'll see a purple button labeled "Tell Your Story" near the top of the page, and we hope you'll take a few minutes to share your news with us!

HAVE QUESTIONS?

Check out our helpful user guide at [converse.edu/ClassNotes](https://converse.edu/ClassNotes) or send an email to [classnotes@converse.edu](mailto:classnotes@converse.edu).



**Rachel Ng Hansen '08**

Spartanburg, SC  
Digital Marketing and Communications  
Manager, Polydeck

**What led you to a career in Marketing?**

My career has definitely not been a direct path. I said yes to every opportunity that came my way as a new graduate and I think my risk-taking paid off. I have the best job! I'm involved in digital marketing and communications, even though I am a Music and Religion major. In my job, I communicate stories in compelling ways to a wide variety of audiences. When the right message is said to the right people at the right time, I know we've connected our products that will help others to succeed in their own jobs.

**How did your studies at Converse influence where you are in your career today?**

A few years back, I had the pleasure of working with Sally Jeter Gregg '81. One day we had an interesting conversation about majors and careers. I had always wondered why I was drawn to a major in Music and Religion but ended up in a career involving marketing and strategic thinking. Sally told me that often we pick majors because they lend themselves as vehicles to how we understand the world. However, our majors should not limit us on how we impact the world.

I understand the world through Music and Religion and I use storytelling, which is marketing, to influence and help others or change their way of thinking. Learning the discipline, research and practice of condensing information into bite-sized chunks with my Music and Religion major has helped me become successful and adapt easily to different situations at my current job.

**What does the future look like for you?**

I struggle with the age-old question, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" This isn't because I'm not ambitious, but rather because I try to practice living my life with my hands open. I don't want to hold on so tightly to a dream that I'm not open to adventures that may lead me down different paths. This mindset is what got me to where I am today and allows me to trust that I will end up where I'm meant to be in the future.

**As an alumna, former Converse Admissions Counselor and current member of the Alumnae/i Association Board, you definitely are engaged with your alma mater. What inspires you to give back and be connected to Converse?**

When I left Converse for the first time as a student, I used to go out of my way to drive by Converse on my way home. Fun and meaningful memories would play in my head and I would whisper, "Thank you God, for those memories." When a job opened up in

Admissions, I wasn't really sure what I was getting into, but recruiting ended up being a way I could tell others about my memories. Now as an Alumnae/i Association Board member, I share my memories and encourage students to contribute so that Converse continues to be an incredible place where memories are made.

**What one piece of advice do you have for Converse students?**

Be open to opportunities that come your way! Learn Excel (thoroughly), take a Finance class (especially Personal Finance), intern (contact me if you need an internship in marketing) and treat every paper you have as an opportunity to express yourself because one day you may present those thoughts at a conference or on a TED Talk or even in your own book. Use your college years as your practice ground to refine and define your talents and passions.

**Did you have a favorite professor, mentor, or class that really impacted your life or career path?**

There were so many people whom I met and who impacted me at Converse: Dr. Doug Weeks, Professor Andrew Blanchard, Dr. Kyle Keefer, and the list goes on. One thing these individuals had in common was that they gave me time. They gave me time to talk through my problems, my insecurities, and my dreams. They gave me wisdom when needed, encouragement when I was down and pushed me to think hard.

**What is something people may not know about you?**

I was born and raised in Malaysia and moved to the United States when I was 16. English is also my second language.

## Melissa Brock Erkens '18

Atlanta, GA

Graduate student, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University



### Can you tell me a little about your career and what motivated you to pursue a degree in the sciences?

I had always had a “goal” of pursuing a degree in nursing so I sought out Converse’s Biology program because of its pathway to the field. However during my freshman year, I quickly realized that Biology itself wasn’t my passion. My advisor at the time, Dr. Jeff Brotherton, encouraged me to study Biochemistry and I discovered that I thoroughly enjoyed my Chemistry classes. After a few more classes and working as medical scribe at the Emergency Room at Mary Black Hospital, it was clear that a patient care-centered career wasn’t the best fit for me. Thanks to personalized attention that Converse faculty and staff provide to their students, I was able to redefine my dreams and discover the field of public health. The foundation of my undergraduate degree, partnered with my studies at Rollins School of Public Health, has opened my eyes to limitless job opportunities. I will graduate in May with a Master’s in Public Health in Epidemiology, and I will leave Rollins with a passion for emergency preparedness, response and infectious disease outbreak control.

### How did your education at Converse prepare you for what you are doing today?

I took full advantage of my Converse experience! I was a double major in Biochemistry and German Studies, was very involved in Model Programs and participated in three study-travel opportunities. From learning that detailed cellular processes make understanding the infection process easier, to writing my capstone project on the integration of refugees into Germany’s health care system, to considering how to develop solutions to world

problems — Converse taught me lifelong skills that I use in my Masters program and will continue to use throughout my professional career.

### What is the most rewarding aspect of working in your field? Most challenging?

The most rewarding parts of public health are also the most challenging. It’s great to see a problem and recognize how it can be fixed, but it can be hard to accomplish change. In my coursework, we have looked at immense public health successes (i.e., the eradication of smallpox), but we also consider failures and ongoing challenges (i.e., rises in preventable childhood diseases). It is rewarding to be in a field that is active and ever-changing, but it is equally as challenging to know that we may not achieve or know how to achieve the desired outcome.

### What does the future look like for you?

At this point, I would like to work in emergency preparedness and response after I graduate, preferably working in the Middle East and North Africa region. I intend to go back to school to earn a PhD, but I first plan to get a few years of experience in the field.

### What advice do you have for current students wanting to make the most out of their experience at Converse?

1. Build a relationship with your advisors and professors. I had an army of Converse professors encouraging me throughout my four years, and they continue to support me now. They all have unique experiences and words of wisdom to offer their students.
2. Take extra classes you don’t need. I took

- Immunology and can easily say the knowledge I gained from that class has been one of the most helpful throughout my Masters program.
3. Do something you’re unfamiliar with. If that’s getting involved with an organization on campus, taking a foreign language, or studying abroad for Jan Term – do it! You’ll gain so much from it!
  4. Value the Converse campus and community. Converse is such a special place! It’s where I met some of my best friends and built a lifelong support system.

### What is something people may not know about you?

I took fencing in high school and still have a love for the sport!



## Rock the Tower Superlatives

**First Gift of the Day:**  
Rachel Kennerty '99

**Last Gift of the Day:**  
Chelsey Boggs '09

**Class with the Highest Participation:**  
Class of 1999 with  
30 Alumnae

**Class with Highest Amount:**  
Class of 1978 with  
\$11,825 in gifts

## It Was A Record-Breaking Rock the Tower

The 4th annual Rock the Tower day of giving raised more than \$136,000 benefitting scholarships, academic enhancements, athletics programs and campus initiatives that enhance the student experience. This year's campaign saw a nearly 25 percent increase in funds raised over last year, making it the single-largest day of giving in the school's history.

"We are so humbled by the support of our donors who made achieving this record possible," said Krista Newkirk, President of Converse College. "The Converse community is incredibly tight-knit and supportive. The success of this year's Rock the Tower demonstrates our continued dedication to the achievement of Converse's students, as well as our faculty and staff who work hard every day to create such an impactful and distinctive experience."

642 gifts were made by 582 donors with the average gift being \$130. This is a testament to the collective impact that can be made by gifts of any amount. Donors said they liked making a greater impact to the places on campus that they were most connected to because they had the ability to choose what their gift supported. Overall, the success of the day helps to create the unique Converse student experience that is unlike any other.

“

*As a Converse alumna, I am thrilled to see the level of participation in this year's Rock the Tower campaign. Being able to see the immediate impact our gifts make to help enhance the Converse student experience is huge. Knowing that we are collectively helping to build the next generation of Converse graduates is very exciting.*

**Austin Faulk '95**

President, Converse College Alumnae Association Board

”

## Take Your Gift to the Next Level

This year, consider making a recurring gift and watch as your generosity provides increased campus-wide support.

For example, only  
**\$83.34**  
a month  
could provide a scholarship  
to a Converse student.

Begin your recurring gift today at:  
**converse.edu/give**

## Converse Giving Societies

*The Leadership Society*

\$1,000 or greater annually

*The Purple and Gold Society*

Gifts for three or more consecutive fiscal years

## IT ALL ADDS UP

When you give this <b>MONTHLY</b>	<b>\$83.34</b>	<b>\$50</b>	<b>\$25</b>	<b>\$10</b>
You're giving this <b>ANNUALLY</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>\$600</b>	<b>\$300</b>	<b>\$120</b>

For more information on the Converse Annual Fund or monthly giving, please contact our Philanthropy Office at 864.577.2045 or [Philanthropy@converse.edu](mailto:Philanthropy@converse.edu).

**CONVERSE**  
Annual Fund

# ALUMNAE & DONOR Scene



**Alumnae/i Board Weekend** It was a productive weekend filled with fun and a lot of laughs! In addition to the Board meeting, the Alumnae Board hosted a 'Welcome Back Seniors' pizza party at the cabin with President Newkirk. It was the perfect way to help Seniors kick-off their year with love, support, and a lot of pizza – courtesy of the Alumnae/i Association!



**Move-In Day** The Alumnae Association hosted a successful 'Hydration Station' during Move-In Day 2019 for incoming students and their families. Pictured with President Newkirk: Sandy Hartnett '75, Betty Snell Wells '86, Susan Billings '74, and Jessica Egglmann '00.



**Winston-Salem, NC** The Class of 1973 came together for a wonderful evening at the Jeffery Adams downtown celebrating Converse Sisters and sharing memories.



**Washington, DC** An amazing group of women in the greater Washington DC Area gathered for a special brunch hosted by Debbie Keefe '78 and Martha Marks '78.



**Greenville, SC** Harriett Goldsmith '69 brought Greenville Alumnae together for an elegant evening that included reconnecting with each other and Converse.



**Columbia, SC - Chapter Event** Thank you Briana Bateman '14 for inviting Converse to the Midlands Alumnae Chapter 'Paint Nite' and for the alumnae in attendance who helped to bring out our inner artists.



**Hendersonville, NC** Trustees Lillian Montgomery Lilly and Dr. Rose Montgomery Johnston hosted a gorgeous reception in the mountains filled with fun and lots of reminiscing.



**Augusta, GA** Donna Mason Burnside '87, Cindy Kuhlke '87 and Lynn Dye Smith '87 hosted a fun evening in Augusta with President Newkirk at the home of Donna Burnside.

# ALUMNAE & DONOR Scene



**'A Thousand Thanks' Donor Event** Converse welcomed donors and its Board of Trustees to a cocktail reception honoring Leadership Society donors who give \$1,000 or more to the College annually. This year, 'A Thousand Thanks' partnered with the Petrie School of Music for the Converse Symphony Orchestra season opening featuring the 2019 Young Artist Competition winners.



**Spartanburg, SC - Chapter Event** The Spartanburg Alumnae kicked off fall with pumpkin picking and hay rides! Alumnae Pictured: Jackie Bielevicz '15, Ash Smith '08, Julie Padgett Jones '99, and Sandy Hartnett '75.

**Spartanburg, SC - Chapter Event** The Spartanburg Alumnae Chapter and the Converse College Alumnae Association Board cheered on the Valkyries Soccer team with a VIP Tailgate. Alumnae Pictured: Sandy Hartnett '75, Brooke Rowell '13, Samantha Nicholson Larkins '12, Jackie Bielevicz '15, Austin Faulk '95, Shannon Gosnell Bishop '97, Katy Kline '13, and Rachel Bishop '99.

# COMING to a town near you

**Converse is hitting the road again this spring!** Join President Newkirk and fellow alumnae in your area for fun and fellowship.

Check out the itinerary and additional details: [converse.edu/alumni/gather](http://converse.edu/alumni/gather)

*Willing to host a Converse event near you? Let us know! [alumnaeevent@converse.edu](mailto:alumnaeevent@converse.edu)*

Orlando, FL February 11  
Columbia, SC February 26  
Birmingham, AL March 10  
Houston, TX April 16  
Johnson City, TN TBD  
Asheville, NC TBD

# REUNION 2020 registration

Registration deadline is April 24.

Return registration by mail or register online at [www.converse.edu/reunion](http://www.converse.edu/reunion).

## YOUR INFORMATION

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Preferred name (for name tag): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Class Year: \_\_\_\_\_ My Converse Majors: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

## REGISTRATION

**All-Inclusive Two Night Stay:** Includes two nights in a residence hall, five meals, adult beverages, reunion events (excluding Wine & Paint workshop) and reunion swag bag.

Fleming Hall: \$300 (limit six people per suite)  Pell: \$250 Shirt Size:  SM  MED  L  XL  2XL  3XL

**All Inclusive One Night Stay (Pell Only):** Includes one night in a residence hall, four meals, adult beverages, reunion events (excluding Wine & Paint workshop) and a reunion swag bag.

Pell: \$250 Shirt Size:  SM  MED  L  XL  2XL  3XL

**Bedding Rental Kit:** Includes sheets, blanket, pillow (with case), bath towel and washcloth. At check-out, your bedding rental kit can be donated to a Converse student on campus. You can also donate any personal bedding that you brought with you.  Bedding: \$35

**Roommate Selection:** You may have up to two roommates in Pell and up to five roommates in Fleming Hall.

1. Name (First, Last, Maiden) \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. Name (First, Last, Maiden) \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. Name (First, Last, Maiden) \_\_\_\_\_  
 4. Name (First, Last, Maiden) \_\_\_\_\_  
 5. Name (First, Last, Maiden) \_\_\_\_\_

**A La Carte Selections** Available for alumnae/i who did not select an all inclusive package. Event descriptions located in schedule.

Sip'n Stroll Tour: \$25  Dinner in Gee: \$25  
 Saturday Breakfast in Gee: \$10  Alumnae Award Ceremony & Luncheon: \$50  
 All Class BBQ & Dance Party: \$75  Souvenir Workshop: \$30  
 Swag Bag (Reunion T-shirt and Souvenir Cup): \$20 Register Here: [pinotspalette.com/greenville/event/395256](http://pinotspalette.com/greenville/event/395256)

**Exclusive 50th Reunion Event** (Class of 1970 Only) Shirt Size:  SM  MED  L  XL  2XL  3XL

Golden Club Dinner with President Newkirk (not included in all inclusive package): \$50

**Meal Preference**  Vegan  Vegetarian  Poultry **Dessert Preference**  Fruit Sorbet  Chocolate Cake

## PAYMENT INFORMATION

Add \$\_\_\_\_\_ as a donation to support my class gift. **Total Amount:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Type of Card:  Visa  MasterCard  Discover  American Express  
 Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ CVC Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Or make your check payable to Converse College and mail to 580 East Main Street, Spartanburg, SC 29302. You can also register online at [converse.edu/reunion](http://converse.edu/reunion).

*If you have additional questions, please contact the Office of Alumnae Relations at 864.596.9011 or [alumnae@converse.edu](mailto:alumnae@converse.edu).*



Office of Alumnae Relations  
580 East Main Street  
Spartanburg, SC 29302

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# WHY HELLO THERE

No matter where life takes you, let's stay connected.

Share your updated email address with Converse  
to receive the latest news and events from across campus.

[Converse.edu/KeepUsCurrent](https://converse.edu/KeepUsCurrent)

# CONVERSE