

your CONNECTION

A Newsletter for Converse Alumni

August 2024

*2024 Class Act
Participation Award
Winners - Class of 1999!*



**A LOOK AT
WHAT'S INSIDE**

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LETTER

From Outgoing Alumni Association Board President



I am typing these words on June 30, my last official day as President of the Converse Alumni Association. The last two years have been a whirlwind of opportunities for me. I have delighted in meeting with so many incredible alumni, I have seen many reasons to celebrate the necessary and good change that has been a part of Converse over the last few years, and I have delighted in sharing Converse traditions with present students and young alums.

I have also come to understand that a sense of belonging has not always been a part of every alum’s experience and that our work with inclusion and belonging has only just begun. As I reflect on all of these valuable opportunities, the greatest gift has been serving on the Alumni Board. With each memory of our Alumni Board work over the last two years, no matter how joyful or how challenging, I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude.

To the 20 members of the Alumni Board who served from July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2024, I am grateful for your unwavering dedication to the work at hand, for your creative, curious, and open minds, for your awareness and sensibility, and for your empathy toward our fellow alumni as we discussed and put into action the opportunities we have through our committee work.

I feel very fortunate to have worked under the leadership of three incredible trailblazers over the course of my two-year tenure. The valuable skills and qualities of each, coupled with their common bond of dedication to all things Converse, provided me with a master class in leadership. Thank you, Jessica Eggmann Johnson, Laura Bauknight, and Andrea Weatherman Kikkert, for your incredible expertise, guidance, and support.

I will remain on the Alumni Board for one more year in an ex-officio status as Past-President. Valerie Dowling is now the President of the Alumni Association Board. I cannot say enough good things about Valerie. She is a visionary with a heart of gold. Her brilliance and effective leadership experience, accompanied by her innate grace, will be appreciated by all.

Fellow alumni, Converse is on solid ground. It is a remarkable institution with excellent direction from great leaders and with an impressive alumni community. I cherish the education I received at Converse, the friends I made as a Converse student, and the “welcome back” I will always feel when I return to campus.

“With love and loyalty,”

Libby Cuttino Tilson '79
Outgoing Alumni Association Board President



Read it online & share

Meet

VALERIE DOWLING '07

Incoming Alumni Association Board President

Valerie graduated from Converse in 2007 with a degree in History and Politics. While a student at Converse, Valerie was a member of the 2003 Converse delegation to the South Carolina Student Legislature that was named Best Small Delegation. Since then, Valerie has worked in the political process from grassroots campaigns to the White House. In 2016, she joined the International Republican Institute as Director of the Women's Democracy Network where she continues to follow her passion for engaging women in civil and political life.

Previously, she worked at the Republican National Committee as the Director of Women's Programs and served as Political Director at the National Federation of Republican Women. She also served as the Pennsylvania Coalitions Director with the Romney for President Campaign. Prior to that, she worked in the Bush Administration in Mrs. Bush's Projects and Policy Office, Presidential Correspondence and Intergovernmental Affairs.



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

Converse was not really on my radar when I started my college search. After an invitation to join the Converse Scholars Day, Converse moved up on my list and, the rest is history! It just took being on campus and seeing how a strong academic environment was complemented by a tight-knit sisterhood for me to feel at home.

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

The Converse community continues to be a big part of my life in so many ways. I still love keeping up with my professors. I enjoy thinking about how I can work to give back to current Converse students whether it's through sharing career opportunities or volunteering for events. Most importantly, I am blessed to be surrounded by Converse alumni that I call dear friends. The Converse community just continues to grow with you as an alumna.



Why do you feel it's important to give back to Converse?

Converse is a special place. We all stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. It's our turn as alumni to lean in and lead our alma mater. There are so many ways that we all can share our time, talents, and resources to give future generations the opportunity to experience all that Converse has given to us.

What excites you most about serving as the 2024-2025 President of the Alumni Association Board?

We have an incredible alumni board that represents a variety of experiences and perspectives of Converse alums. I'm thankful to be able to leverage our diverse board to serve our beloved alma mater and help more alumni come back home to Converse. I'm also excited for the chance to be back on campus more!

How have your continued engagement with Converse as an alumna and your undergraduate experience shaped your life beyond campus?

Converse gave me the confidence to take on the world. Converse graduates have hands-on leadership experience from the many opportunities students have to learn and lead on campus. My time at Converse helped me to think of myself as a leader and how I could continue to grow and give back.



I can see that reflected in my current role as Director of Women's Democracy Network working with women leaders from all over the world to get involved in their communities and countries. I'm fortunate to continue to have the opportunity to serve on other nonprofit boards as well. I credit Converse for a strong foundation in leadership development.



Do you have a favorite Converse memory?

My favorite memories all revolve around the rich traditions that mark the Converse experience; from dance-offs at Peppermint Balls with my classmates to the friendly 1889 competitions (especially powder puff football games) and to the legacy of sisterhood with Big Sis/Little Sis week and all the fun of reveals.

Converse gave me some of my best friends that I am still close to today.

REUNION RECAP

April 18-20, 2024



More than 175 Converse alumni gathered on campus for Reunion 2024 on April 19-20 to reunite with old friends, walk down memory lane, and see how our campus has revitalized over the years.

Reunion attendees had the opportunity this year to join in on Founder's Day, where we honored the Class of 1974, who were inducted into the Golden Club to mark their 50th reunion. With their 25th reunion, we celebrated the Class of 1999 as they joined the Silver Club. Many alumni from class years ending in 4 and 9 celebrated milestone reunions as well.

This year's Class Act Gift award winners are the Class of 1968, raising a whopping \$116,575 for the Converse Annual Fund. This year's Participation Award Winners are the Class of 1999, with the new Golden Club members, the Class of 1974, coming in a very close second.

Save the date for next year's Reunion on the weekend of April 25, 2025!

HIGHLIGHTS

From the Alumni Board

MEET YOUR 2024-2025 ALUMNI BOARD

VALERIE DOWLING '07

President

LIBBY CUTTINO TILSON '79

Immediate Past President

KATY KLINE TYNDALL '13

Secretary

CHUNSTA MILLER '02

Annual Fund Strategist

SUSAN MISKELLY '97

Communications Strategist

MYLES LAWTER '13

*Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
Committee (DEIC), Chair*

GWEN STEMBRIDGE '10

*Connecting Alumni to
Converse (CAC), Chair*

RACHEL BISHOP '99

*Converse Alumni Recruitment & Retention
Effort (CARRE), Chair*

CARY PERKINS '96

Recognition Committee Chair

ALLISON BENTON '21

CIMONE FRANCIS '16

SHENNA GAINES '13

JESSICA CASE HOLLAND '03

CAITLYNN JARVIS '20

ADDIE LEDBETTER '17

LAURA MASSEY '01

AMANDA NEWELL '12

DIANE PICKENS O'CONNELL '77

JACKIE JONES PUTNAM '75

ROBBIE MOSELEY RICHARDS '92

CASSIDY RINDGE '19

SANDY KOPP ROBERTS '75

KAY STRICKLIN '73

ASHLEY THOMASON WHITT '11

NINA SULLIVAN WILLIAMS '77

Members At-Large

Nominations for Alumni Association Board Members and the 2025 Alumni Achievement Awards open on August 1, 2024! Visit converse.edu/alumni to submit.

2023-2024 ALUMNI BOARD ACHIEVEMENTS

- Created more impactful and widespread means of connecting alumni to Converse through the new Communications Strategist position.
- Promoted and supported the Converse Annual Fund by modeling 100% participation.
- Secured class representatives and giving officers for the classes celebrating their reunion this year.
- Connected alumni with Converse College for Women (CCW) students through a pen pal project and supported Admissions and Career Development via virtual and in-person engagement.
- DEIC and CAC hosted a virtual Town Hall open to all alumni.
- Revised and approved Alumni Board Bylaws.

SPRING 2024

Event Highlights

SPARTANBURG, SC

FEBRUARY 2024

Hosted by the Klein family at the former Cleveland/Converse Alumnae House. The event included a trunk show with FOUND, a company created by Converse alums and sisters, Tracy Williamson Dart '91 and Christi Williamson Pringle '93.



COLUMBIA, SC

MARCH 2024

Hosted at the home of Marion McNair Coleman '87 with fellow alumni Becky Airheart '76, GiGi Dawson '85, Kelley Maloney Liggitt '85, Cathy McAllister Watson '86, and Susan Cunningham Owen '88.



COMING SOON TO A TOWN NEAR YOU

The Office of Alumni Relations is hitting the road again this fall. Keep checking converse.edu/alumni/gather, as we add events!



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CLASS OF '73 Awakens Andrews

Converse extends our deepest appreciation to the Class of 1973 for their gifts in support of the renovation of Andrews Lobby. Their generosity ensures that students feel right at home at Converse when they enter this unique living-learning community.

Students succeed when they thrive both academically and personally, which is why we are maintaining our focus on revitalizing parts of our beautiful historic campus.

Stay tuned for updates on this exciting rejuvenation!



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