

2025 Alumni Award Winners & Athletic Hall of Fame Inductee

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Jennie Eilers Gerard '62



Jennie Eilers Gerard '62 has spent her life turning visionary ideas into lasting, meaningful change. From her early days as a student at Collegiate, Jennie demonstrated a quiet leadership that would come to define her future. As one of her classmates, **Mary Entwistle Limbert '62**, puts it, "Jennie has always been so farsighted and committed, seeing opportunities and ways to serve and help that were way ahead of us. In so many ways, she was and is a leader."

After graduating from Collegiate, Jennie went on to earn a B.A. from Wellesley College in 1966 and a Master's in City and Regional Planning from the Illinois Institute of Technology in 1968. She then launched her career as a city planner, working at Philip Herr & Associates in Boston and Duncan & Jones in Berkeley in the late '60s and early '70s. In 1977, Jennie joined The Trust for Public Land, a national land conservation organization, where she held various positions, culminating as Senior Vice President for External Affairs. There, she was instrumental in the conservation of open spaces that continue to serve communities across the United States.

After the Trust for Public Land, Jennie served as the Chief of Staff for the City of Oakland's District 2 Council member, a role in which she worked tirelessly to serve her community and enhance the city's quality of life. **Abel Guillen**, a former Oakland City Council member, publicly recognized Jennie's "outstanding public service and passionate dedication to the constituents and the City of Oakland."

Jennie's work transcended the professional sphere. She has been a dedicated volunteer, serving on the board and as chair of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, which supports the creation of public trails from unused rail corridors. "Jennie fearlessly enacted her opinion to include 'the least among us' in her farsighted work for preservation, conservancy, and the Trust for Public Land," remarked classmate

Barbara Van Cleave Halvorson '62. "She made tiny talents into part of the cause for Nature."

After retiring, Jennie continued her work of protecting open spaces. Recently, she co-founded the Lake Merritt Conservancy in Oakland, California, to enhance the visitor experience while improving the lake's water quality. She has also co-founded several organizations focused on improving the lake's park environs, including the Lake Merritt Weed Warriors, which partners with the City of Oakland to maintain and improve the landscaped beds at the lake. Her commitment to community stewardship is evident in the words of her classmate, **Jill Davenport '62**, who praised Jennie's "vision and foresight" in the preservation of the natural world.

Outside her professional accomplishments, Jennie's impact on her classmates has been just as profound. "Jennie was often our leader and she was good at asking us for help," said **Suzanne Helm Blake '62**. Even after retirement, Jennie has continued to nurture the bonds of friendship within her class. Her classmates have praised her unwavering commitment to staying connected, with **Bessie Tyrrell '62** noting that Jennie "has never missed a class reunion, always finds time to host class Zoom meetings."

Jennie's legacy is one of impact, service, and dedication. Her work in conservation, community engagement, and civic leadership continues to benefit countless individuals. As her classmate, **Sally Van Winkle Campbell '62**, aptly stated, "Jennie – a woman who was and is ahead of her time ... a quiet force of nature."

YOUNG ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Brittany Fitzpatrick '05

Brit Fitzpatrick '05 has been thinking like an entrepreneur since childhood. At age seven, she launched her first business reselling ice cream to neighborhood kids who'd missed the ice cream truck during a summer with her Granny. The business thrived, until she sold a Bomb Pop for \$20 and quickly learned her first lesson in pricing and customer satisfaction: parents want their change.

That early experience sparked a lifelong passion for innovation and impact. Today, Brit serves as Head of Data & Impact at All Raise, a nonprofit working to accelerate the success of women and nonbinary founders and funders in the tech ecosystem. All Raise's mission of "Move Money. Shift Power. Change Culture," aligns perfectly with Brit's career-long commitment to equity and inclusion.

Brit's journey includes founding MentorMe in 2013, one of the first SaaS mentoring platforms, which supported over 100 K-12 mentoring programs across the country. She has launched entrepreneurial communities in Tennessee and helped establish 1804 Entrepreneur Center in Louisville, her hometown. She also helped found The Well, the city's first co-working space dedicated to Black-owned businesses.

A proud alumna of Howard University (B.A.) and the University of Memphis (M.A.), Brit's work has been widely recognized. She created #ProjectDiane, the first dataset tracking venture capital investment in Black women founders, and was appointed to the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Her thought leadership has been featured in *Essence*, *GOOD Magazine*, *FastCompany*, *Inc.*, and *Business Insider*, and she's spoken at more than 30 national events, including TEDx, Dreamforce, and White House Demo Day.

Brit also runs Nevertheless, a technology-driven small business supporting Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises. Her data-backed, community-centered approach continues to drive measurable impact across the startup ecosystem.



In addition to her professional roles, Brit serves on the External Review Board for the Mid-South Research Evaluation and Commercialization Hub (REACH) at Vanderbilt University, where she helps support National Institute for Health (NIH) funding to drive medical innovation through university commercialization across the region.

She is a judge for the annual Black Ambition Prize launched by entertainer Pharrell Williams, which funds bold ideas and companies led by Black and Hispanic entrepreneurs.

When she's not leading change, Brit enjoys day trips and road trips accompanied by a good 90s R&B playlist, spending quality time with friends and family, going to the gym, keeping up with her bonus nephew and nieces, unwinding with documentaries and her favorite TV shows, and fellowshipping with her weekly women's Bible class.

Brit credits Collegiate teachers **Maria Hardy-Webb** and **Heather Grant** for instilling high expectations early on, "It's one thing for a teacher to want you to succeed, it's another for them to expect you to succeed. These two were the latter for me."

She draws inspiration from her hometown hero Muhammad Ali, whose words guide her outlook on work and life: "Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing."

COLLEGIATE SERVICE AWARD

Kelly Estep



Kelly Estep has long been a guiding force within the Collegiate community, bringing warmth, leadership, and a deep commitment to making every family feel welcome and valued. Since her children, **Aidan '23** and **Lily '25**, began attending Collegiate in Lower School, Kelly and her husband Brian Butler have embraced the school not just as an academic institution but as a home.

Driven by a desire to help others feel that same sense of belonging, Kelly jumped into service in nearly every role imaginable including room parent, grade rep, event volunteer, and, ultimately, President of the Parents Association (PA) for two years. In her time with the PA, she helped transform it into a more inclusive, welcoming space for all families, including efforts to engage more dads and underrepresented voices. She led key faculty appreciation initiatives and family support programs and helped foster deeper collaboration between parents and school leadership.

During her tenure as PA President, Kelly also served on the Board of Trustees, where she supported Collegiate's Inclusion and Belonging and wellness efforts and advocated for stronger ties between the school and the broader Louisville community. Her leadership reflects the same intentionality she brings to her professional life as co-owner of Carmichael's Bookstore, a beloved Louisville institution. Whether curating books or strengthening school communities, Kelly fosters connection wherever she goes.

Her impact extends far beyond Collegiate. Kelly served on the board of the American Booksellers Association for six years and currently serves on the boards of Educational Justice, Friends of Bardstown Road, and the Buy Local Louisville Foundation. She also contributes her voice to neighborhood zoning and planning committees, helping build vibrant, inclusive communities throughout the city.

"Community, belonging, and understanding of others is never a given," Kelly says. "It takes time and energy to build that trust and respect." Her service to Collegiate embodies that philosophy—and has helped countless families feel that they, too, have found a home here.

FACULTY AND STAFF SERVICE AWARD

Rick Haas

Rick Haas is the kind of teacher students never forget—the one they all admire, appreciate, and return to visit, even years after leaving his classroom. With a warm smile, a sharp intellect, and an unwavering dedication to learning, Mr. Haas has shaped generations of students over his remarkable 34-year career at Collegiate. Known for his thoughtful, engaging approach to teaching and his deep, genuine care for each student, Mr. Haas has been a cornerstone of the Middle School experience and a beloved mentor to countless learners.

In his 8th-grade U.S. History class, Mr. Haas blended textbook instruction with an immersive exploration of primary source documents—especially the U.S. Constitution and the landmark legal cases that shaped its amendments. His classroom emphasized critical thinking, thoughtful discussion, and careful analysis, challenging students to engage deeply with the material and develop their own informed perspectives. More than one graduate has likened his class to a law school seminar, a testament to the rigor and relevance of the skills he taught—tools that have continued to serve students long after they left his classroom.

Mr. Haas' teaching journey at Collegiate began in the late 1980s as a substitute teacher. During the 1990–91 school year, he stepped in for an eight-week 6th-grade math assignment, which led to a full-time role by the fall of 1991. Over the years, he taught 6th-grade history, 8th-grade math, 7th-grade geography, and 9th-grade algebra, before finding his home in 8th-grade history—a role that has allowed him to share his passion for American government and civic engagement.

Beyond the classroom, Mr. Haas has made a profound impact on the life of the school. He served as the first Middle School Dean of Students, led numerous grade-level teams, and coached quick recall, Middle School softball, and future problem solving. He was also instrumental in creating the ME Project, a signature 8th grade program that supports personal reflection and growth.



Mr. Haas is admired by students and colleagues alike. His quick wit, steady presence, and love of learning make him a beloved figure in the community. He models curiosity, care, and intellectual rigor in every interaction.

Following his retirement from full-time teaching at the end of the 2025 school year, Collegiate is grateful that Mr. Haas plans to stay connected to the community as a substitute teacher in the years ahead. His legacy—marked by deep learning, meaningful relationships, and unwavering dedication—continues to shape the Middle School experience and inspire those who were fortunate to learn from him.

ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Haji Abdikadir '18

Haji Abdikadir '18 has been selected for the Collegiate Athletic Hall of Fame in recognition of his outstanding achievements in soccer, perseverance, and his dedication to representing Collegiate both nationally and internationally.

Born in Somalia, Haji moved to the United States with his family at the age of eight, settling in Louisville, Kentucky. From high school to his professional career abroad, Haji's journey exemplifies excellence, determination, and the power of sport to connect communities worldwide.

Haji's legacy at Collegiate began with a record-breaking high school career that made a lasting impact on the soccer program. In his junior year, Haji led the Collegiate soccer team to the state quarterfinals, earning multiple accolades including First-Team All-State, All-Region, and All-District honors. His performance that season, scoring 40 goals and adding 12 assists despite a knee injury, also earned him national recognition as the Gatorade Kentucky Player of the Year and USA Today National Player of the Year. His contributions helped his team win the All "A" State Championship, where he was named tournament MVP.

Building on his high school success, Haji played for the University of Louisville, where he made 43 appearances, scored four goals, and contributed three assists. Haji's determination was evident as he overcame the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on his seasons. His leadership on the field set the stage for his professional career.

Haji transitioned to professional soccer with USL Championship side San Diego Loyal in 2021, debuting soon after. Later, he moved to the Colorado Springs Switchbacks FC and then to Athlone Town in Spain's Irish First Division. He also represented the Somalia National Team in the 2023 Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers, proudly representing his roots on the global stage.



Outside of his playing career, Haji continues to invest in the future of the game through coaching and entrepreneurship. He founded TSOMFUTBOL, a thriving soccer academy and coaching business focused on developing technical skills, discipline, and confidence in young players. "It stands for They Sleeping On Me," Haji explains. "It's more than just a name — it's a mindset. For the ones grinding in silence, staying patient, building, and letting their game speak." Through TSOMFUTBOL, Haji empowers youth athletes, especially those from underrepresented communities, to unlock their potential both on and off the field.

Throughout his career, Haji has maintained a deep connection to Collegiate, now giving back as a Varsity Titan Soccer coach. Using his experience and expertise, Haji mentors the next generation of athletes, cultivating the same passion for soccer that shaped his journey.

Coach Chad Wozniak, who coached Haji at Collegiate, reflects on his impact: "Haji was a standout leader. His dedication and work ethic were unmatched, and his accolades speak to his talent and drive. He sets the bar high and inspires others to reach for excellence."