PRINCIPIA

PURPOSE

SUMMER 2026



The Principia Athlete

PRINCIPIA
PURPOSE

SUMMER 2026 | ISSUE 393

The mission of the *Principia Purpose* is to build community among alumni and friends by sharing news, accomplishments, and insights related to Principia, its alumni, and former faculty and staff. The *Principia Purpose* is published twice a year.

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ON THE COVER
WIN-WIN

Committed to character, grounded in grit, and spiritually centered, today's Principia athlete demonstrates the promise of the whole-person approach.

THE PRINCIPIA ATHLETE

COVER DESIGN

Cover designer **Juan Cabral** (C'25) is a digital content creator and videographer. He graduated from Principia College with a degree in digital media and currently manages digital content, graphics, and short video for the Principia College athletics department.

FEATURED ATHLETES

1. Ron Henry (US'27)
2. Taylor Brown (C'26)
3. Paige Bradley (US'26)
4. Skyler Stock (US'23)
5. Joy Onyechi (C'26)
6. Alejandro Liborio (US'25)
7. Elsie Nabukenya (US'26)
8. Kingston Money (US'27)
9. Francisco Alessio (C'26)
10. Alex Kibbe (US'23)

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FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Playing with Purpose

BY **BARBARA BLACKWELL (HON'22)**
Chief Executive



Principia's whole-person educational model places equal emphasis on the intellectual, spiritual, moral, social, and physical growth of its students, and this approach has proven to produce individuals of outstanding character and immeasurable impact. Our founder, Mary Kimball Morgan, once stated that these elements included no hierarchy: a whole-person education entails all of these aspects, equally.

We understand that excellence is rarely the product of a single area of development.

Athletic achievement, for example, is not simply the result of physical training. It reflects the wisdom, creativity, collaboration, compassion, moral courage, and leadership developed through the whole-person model. Our approach fuels success not only in competition, but in every arena of life.

Today, Principia's athletics programs are getting national attention for their success. And while, for some sports, the win-loss records have changed, the purpose—and the product—of these have not.

> **These stories reveal the grit, grace, and shared purpose behind Principia's character-driven community.**

This issue of the *Principia Purpose* celebrates the enduring qualities that continue to make Principia athletics unique. Meet coaches and mentors leading and shaping the next generation of Principians, along with student-athletes whose resilience, determination, dedication, and love reflect the exceptional character that defines the Principia experience.

From multi-generation Principians to those who have recently discovered their home here, these stories reveal the grit, grace, and shared purpose behind Principia's character-driven community.

As a whole, it demonstrates what School Athletics Director **Shawn Brown** (US'00, C'04) calls Principia's "win-win philosophy"—winning the game and winning at life. "That's our calling card."

Dear Principia alumni and friends,

It is with abundant gratitude that I reflect on the 2025–2026 school year. Across Principia School and College, I have seen meaningful progress and evidence of why this community is unique.

I am especially grateful for Head of School, **Terry Grigsby** (US'97, C'01), and College President, **Dr. Meggan Madden** (C'93). In their first year, they have provided thoughtful leadership and clear direction, helping prepare Principia and our students for the future.

At Principia School, enrollment remains strong, supported by new families and growing retention rates. Our students are outperforming national academic benchmarks and peer independent schools on the MAP Growth assessment, reflecting strong academic preparation and achievement. The Class of 2026 performed well above national norms, with average scores in the 85th percentile in math and 82nd percentile in reading.

Students put learning into practice in inspiring ways. Upper Schoolers earned international recognition for human-centered inventions for individuals with specific needs, while students excelled in athletics, achieving top finishes in state competitions, and demonstrating teamwork and resilience.

At Principia College, we are encouraged by growing momentum across the institution. Enrollment indicators for this coming fall are the strongest they have been in several years. Across the College, students are putting learning into action through internships, research, leadership opportunities, and competitions. Last year, 99 percent of students seeking internships received an offer, and 97 percent of graduates were employed or continuing their education within six months of graduation. By national standards, these are exceptionally strong outcomes.



College students earned awards and recognition while competing against major universities and Ivy League schools in fields ranging from AI and mediation to theatre and systems thinking.

Most importantly, accomplishments on both campuses are grounded in Principia's commitment to spiritual growth, helping students deepen their understanding of God, strengthen their character, and discover purpose.

While important work remains, the Board fully supports the leaders guiding our institution and their commitment to the remarkable students who inspire us every day.

This school year also marked changes to the Board of Trustees. We extend our gratitude to **Dr. Scott Schneberger** (C'70), whose final Board term concluded in June after years of dedicated service to Principia.

Thank you for your partnership and for helping ensure Principia remains a place where students grow in character and readiness to serve the world. The progress we celebrate this year is possible because of alumni and friends like you.

With gratitude,
Kristin (Anderson) Jamerson (US'75, C'79)
Chair, Board of Trustees

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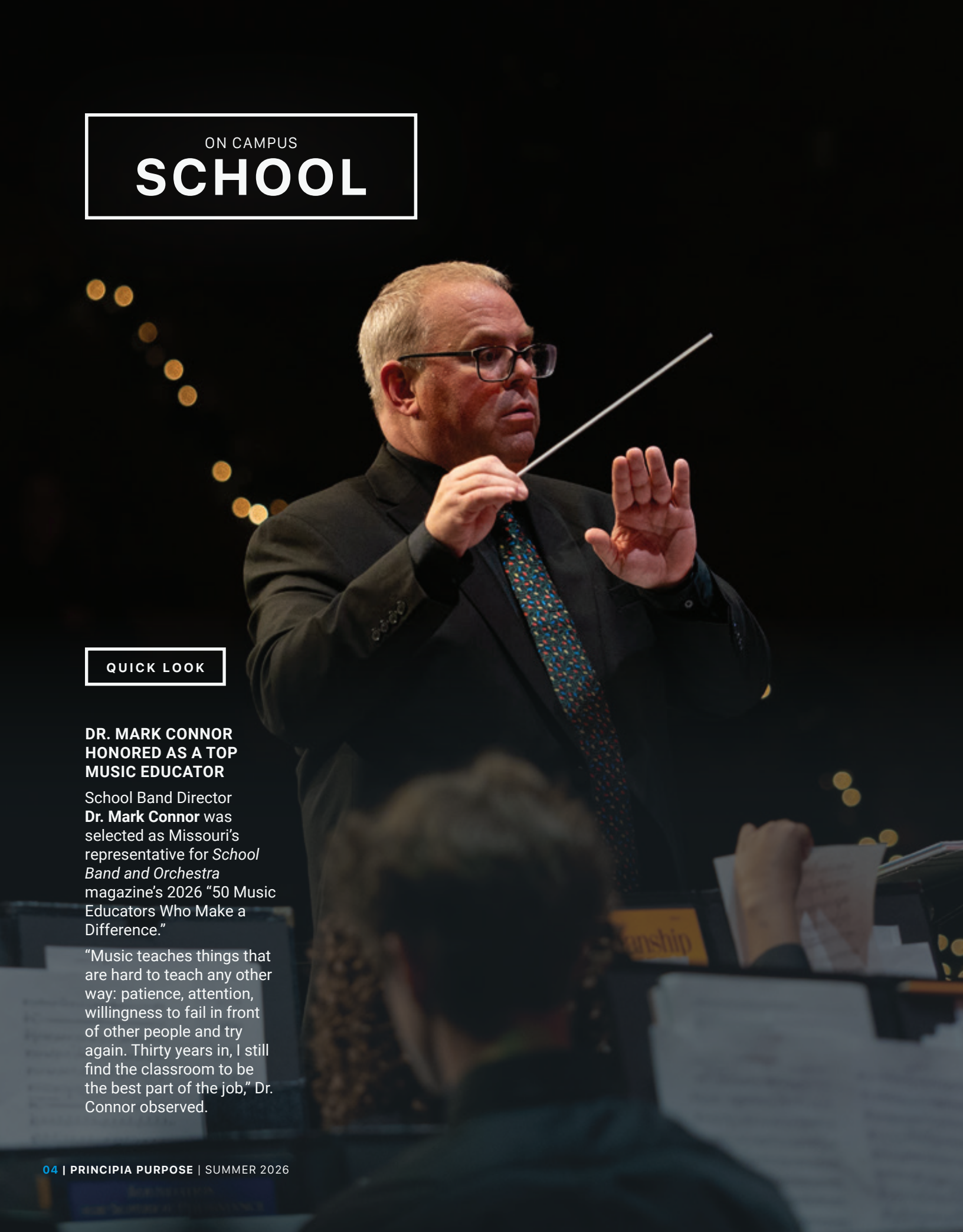
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ON CAMPUS

SCHOOL



QUICK LOOK

DR. MARK CONNOR HONORED AS A TOP MUSIC EDUCATOR

School Band Director **Dr. Mark Connor** was selected as Missouri's representative for *School Band and Orchestra* magazine's 2026 "50 Music Educators Who Make a Difference."

"Music teaches things that are hard to teach any other way: patience, attention, willingness to fail in front of other people and try again. Thirty years in, I still find the classroom to be the best part of the job," Dr. Connor observed.

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

From Inspiration to Exhibition: Principia Artists Earn Regional Recognition

This year, 15 Upper School artists were selected for two of St. Louis's most prestigious young artist exhibits: St. Louis Artists' Guild's Young Artist Showcase and the Foundry Art Centre's Regional High School Student Show. Chosen from more than 400 submissions, the honors celebrated the Principians' exceptional talent and provided a professional platform to display their creativity.

Having their artwork selected for exhibition was a meaningful recognition of the students' hard work, imagination, and talent. From ideation to creation—through planning, experimentation, and finally exhibiting their work—students made the full creative journey.

From **Jere's** award-winning *Bear* sculpture to **Ruth's** commendation for her self-portrait and **Anna's** singular duct-tape dress, Principia students showcased their creativity, dedication, and artistic growth.

The St. Louis Artists' Guild: **Anna, Anzu, Eli, Elise, Marina**, **Milo**, **Nadia**, and **Ruth**.

The Foundry Art Centre: **Aereon, Anzu, Benjamin, Isa, Jake, Jere, Milo**, and **Sekou**.







IN BRIEF

IMPACTFUL LEARNING

Principia's Impact Challenge invites students to unleash their imagination to solve real-world problems. This year, Principians and participants from five local high schools presented their innovations to fellow students, teachers, and professionals from 26 organizations.

Freshmen **Saanvi** and **Krish** chose to address financial literacy, teaching classes at local schools, connecting with professionals, and building a website for greater reach. They also plan to create a nonprofit organization.

"It was important to me because there are so many people living [in poverty]; it was a call-to-action for us," says Saanvi.

Watch Saanvi's interview

ROBOTICS TEAM MAKES ITS COMEBACK

After nearly a decade, Principia's robotics team is back. Led by Upper School robotics and sustainability teacher **Ketan Naik**, the team reflects his infectious enthusiasm. "There's a sense of community here," he said. "You feel supported, like you're building something together."

Meeting weekly, the team combines coding with creativity and confidence. In its first competition, Principia faced teams from across the country and notched a win. "Robotics is about creativity and problem-solving," said Naik. "Bringing everything you learn into one place, for one project, with one team."

IN BRIEF

DOUBLES TEAMWORK MAKES THE STATE DREAM WORK

Principia boys' tennis was back in the State Championship match again this year, finishing second in boys' Class 1 Doubles. **Reid Schauman** (US'26) made his third consecutive appearance in the doubles tournament, and second trip to the finals in just three years. Schauman and doubles teammate **Shepherd Thomas** (US'26) played a gritty match, narrowly missing a tiebreaker shot.

"Reid is a great doubles partner," beamed Thomas. "Playing with him just made everything easier." Good luck to Reid and Shepherd as they embark on their college careers!

FOURTH GRADERS POWER UP WITH COLLEGE STUDENTS

When fourth grade launched its renewable energy unit, they tapped a unique resource: Principia College's award-winning Solar Car team. The lower schoolers boarded the bus to Principia College, and what began as a toy build turned into real-world implementation and genuine connection.

"Just seeing a completely built, life-sized solar car gave them a grander vision and confidence for what they were doing in class," raved fourth-grade teacher **Audrey Cleveland** (C'09).

The students also toured Principia College's solar fields with College associate sustainability professors **Dr. Nick Johnson** (C'04) and **Kynan Witters-Hicks** (C'14).

CALL IT A COMEBACK

FIELD OF DREAMS: PRINCIPIA RESURRECTS ITS FIELD HOCKEY PROGRAM

It has been said, "If you build it, they will come." And this fall, Principia School is proving that true. After a 25-year hiatus, field hockey is back!

Principia's water turf field is already a regional hotspot for elite programs like AIM Field Hockey, founded by Upper School alum **Lauren (Worley) Cornthwaite** (US'95). Installed as part of the Bill Simon Athletic Complex, the field is an almost unheard-of asset for a high school, enabling faster speeds, more precise passing, and a technical edge.

And now, varsity field hockey has returned to the Upper School. Head coach **Todd Dillon** comes to Principia with a track record of building winning field hockey programs and developing student-athletes who thrive on and off the field. "There is a proud history here, and I'm honored to be part of the next chapter," said Dillon, "one that emphasizes competing at a high level and growing as individuals and teammates."

The foundation of this relaunch was laid years ago—literally from the ground up—and positions Principia field hockey for success for many years to come.





CHANGEMAKERS

Upper Schoolers Shape a City's Future



Principia prides itself on real-world education and preparing students to be impactful changemakers. And this year, upper schoolers proved that promise when their studies literally changed the shape of a city.

After identifying a crucial haven and stopover for migratory birds, the students lobbied the city of Maryland Heights on the outskirts of St. Louis to revise plans for a proposed large-scale development in order to safeguard the surrounding environment. Their data didn't just challenge existing city ordinances—it identified smarter, friendlier biodiversity plantings, and improved long-term sustainability.

Over a year later, that work bore fruit. Struck by the Principia students' research, Maryland Heights Director of Community Development Michael Zeek, proposed updates to the city's landscaping code—recommending reduced chemical use and other sustainable improvements, including pollinator-friendly habitats and designation as a "Bee City."

"It didn't occur to me that my ideas could bring about this change," says **Scarlett**, now entering her junior year. "I went into the project expecting to learn more about the environment and ecosystem, but making a real-world impact completely changed my point of view—we can create the world we want to live in."

PANTHERS HIT TWO

BOYS' AND GIRLS' BASKETBALL SWEEP STATE TOURNAMENT

Panther basketball accomplished something few Missouri schools have, winning the girls' and boys' State Championships in the same year.

After two years as runners-up, the girls' team attacked the 2025–26 season with uncompromising commitment and focus—determined to capitalize on their resilience and hard work. With the boys' team cheering them on, the Panthers brought home a decisive victory over St. Vincent in the Missouri Class 3A State Championship.

Principia's championship season was the culmination of years of discipline, focus, and drive amid the grind of everyday play and practice. It was a journey powered by heart—the sheer dedication to battle through the challenges that make a team unstoppable.

A day later—same place, same time—the boys stepped into Mizzou Arena and won their second straight State Championship. With explosive speed, lightning-quick transitions, and dead-eye shooting, Principia put on a master class for basketball fans.

Both teams brought high-minded, hard-fighting grit—earning high praise from referees and opposing coaches as well as Player of the Year honors for **Quentin Coleman** (US'26) and **Dasia Scott,** and All-State nods for **Sekou Cisse**, **Loganne Love, Kingston Money**, **Aniyah Poniewaz**, **Wyatt Slay**, and **Gassim Toure.**





Meet New Middle School Principal Kendall Shoemake

STORY BY JAN CHURCH (US'81, C'90)





^
"It feels good," says Kendall Shoemake on his return to Principia Middle School.

This fall, before the morning bell rings and the first backpacks appear in the hallways, a new chapter will begin with the arrival of Middle School Principal **Kendall Shoemake** (C'15)—an experienced and energetic leader with a desire to listen, inspire, and contribute to a deep sense of belonging at Principia.

"What an exciting time to be at Principia," Shoemake said. "There's a vibrancy. It feels good; it feels alive. And that's the kind of energy that I like to bring to spaces."

Complementing his high energy is an approachable leadership style that makes students and teachers feel seen and supported. "I love the Principia community," he said. "I love what the School is doing and am a firm believer that it's on the forefront—from a pedagogical and instructional standpoint, and in its commitment to future-ready education. It's truly unique and innovative. That's what really excites me."

Shoemake's enthusiasm centers around Principia's framework of students' God-given and unlimited potential. "Everyone has innate, inherent, and unlimited potential with a limitless capacity to achieve their goals," he said. "For this reason, we don't put limits or labels on students; instead, we surround them with lots of love and support."

Head of School **Terry Grigsby** (US'97, C'01) said, "Kendall brings a deep commitment to the School's core value—LOVE—helping students recognize their Limitless potential; Overcome obstacles; Value God, themselves, and others; and Embrace Excellence."

Regarding Principia's whole-person approach to education, Shoemake emphasized that educating the whole child—physically, mentally, socially, morally, and spiritually—is essential to a balanced education. "When we talk about educating the whole child, we're talking about belonging and mattering. Principia creates a culture of intentional character development that is essential to the student's development."

Grigsby said, "His vision aligns perfectly with Principia's commitment to developing future-ready students who lead with purpose, resilience, and integrity."

Shoemake's guiding principle is a simple question: "What's best for the student?" His accessible and caring approach ensures students feel seen, heard, and valued—not only during





the school day, but through their entire journey at Principia.

"Excellence," he says, "is the capacity to give it all and lean in. That's the metric for being the best version of yourself. I think if you're dialed into a community where everyone is committed to striving and showing up as their best, which is where you really achieve excellence, we can all dream big."

Lifelong friends.

World-class education.

A place to belong.

PRINCIPIA SCHOOL



Start your journey today.

Learn More

Learn about our alumni referral program: **principia.edu/refer**

ON CAMPUS

COLLEGE

QUICK LOOK

FINN-ISHING WHAT THEY STARTED

At Principia, education and sustainability go hand-in-hand. That was the theme of the 2026 Principia College Finland abroad, where 15 College students explored the country's educational system, experienced its commitment to sustainability, and even built a barn.

"These experiences prompted reflection on the students' own educational journeys and expanded their understanding of what effective teaching and learning can look like," says **Dr. Nikki (Nicolet) Gamrath** (US'93, C'97), professor of educational studies and coleader of the abroad. "By seeing how environmental responsibility and community well-being are woven into everyday life, students gained insights that will continue to influence their academic, professional, and personal growth long after the end of the semester."



LIFE ON THE RUN

HOKA Cofounder's Life as a "Runtrepreneur"

This March, Principia welcomed entrepreneur and Cofounder of HOKA **Jean-Luc Diard**. He spent the day touring both the St. Louis and Elsah campuses, visiting classes, and talking to students, professors, and reporters. That evening, he shared entrepreneurial insights and lessons learned with an audience of hundreds in Cox Auditorium.

Diard cofounded HOKA in 2009 with a vision to rethink running shoe design and enhance athletic performance. Under his leadership, HOKA grew from a niche brand into an internationally recognized shoe company worn by elite athletes and everyday runners alike. Known for its innovation-driven approach, HOKA has experienced rapid global growth and has become a major player in the athletic footwear industry, redefining comfort, performance, and design.

"This experience gives students a rare chance to hear directly from someone who has built a global company from the ground up," said **Dr. Lucia De Paz** (US'96, C'00), then director of the Center for Business and Computer Science.

"Entrepreneurship is as much about curiosity, resilience, and collaboration as it is about business strategy, and I'm excited to explore those ideas together," Diard shared with the audience.





Watch the recording

IN BRIEF

PAC 2026 TAKES PARTICIPANTS ON JOURNEYS OF HOPE

Principia College hosted the 2026 Public Affairs Conference (PAC) in April. Titled *Journeys of Hope*, PAC 2026 brought together thought-leaders, students, and community members for a dynamic exchange of ideas on immigration.

"As a member of the largest immigrant group in the United States, I felt a responsibility to help educate others on issues affecting my community" said PAC CoExecutive Director **Saray Hernández Cisneros** (C'26). "Being a global citizen involves empathy, education, and raising awareness about the impact we have on one another."

Speakers included authors, advocates, professors, and a former U.S. Border Patrol agent. "PAC provides hands-on experience in leadership and civic engagement, reinforcing the College's commitment to developing informed and active global citizens," reflected Cisneros.

COLLEGE REBRAND SCORES BIG

Principia College's new brand identity and admissions campaign were awarded Gold and Silver awards in the 2026 St. Louis American Advertising Awards (ADDY), hosted by the St. Louis Ad Club. Principia College's Gold-winning admissions kit will advance to the district competition in Chicago, where it will compete against other regional Gold winners.

"I am especially grateful for our partnership with Grown Creative—an award-winning creative agency—on this project and many others," said Principia College Marketing Director **Steve John** (US'89, C'96). "Additionally, this recognition reflects the importance of a strong brand identity for enrollment growth."

PRINCIPIA COLLEGE

TAKING THE REINS

GREG BROWN HIRED AS HEAD WOMEN'S BASKETBALL COACH



After finishing last season atop the St. Louis Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SLIAC) for the first time ever, Principia College women's basketball continued to build for future success, naming **Greg Brown** as its new head coach.

For the past three seasons, Brown has helped lead the Panthers to the team's first NCAA tournament and first SLIAC regular season title, as well as coaching softball and helping recruit an extraordinary group of student-athletes.

Prior to Principia, Brown coached high school girls' basketball in the St. Louis area. As head coach at McCluer South-Berkeley High School, he was twice named Suburban Conference Coach of the Year. From 2019–23, Brown coached at Lift for Life Academy, leading the team to a Missouri Class 3A State Championship and being named Missouri Coach of the Year.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for me to grow as a person and in faith as I guide and lead these young women to achieve their highest potential, both on the court and in life," says Coach Brown. "It is my goal to continue the success and further build Principia College's women's basketball program."



IN BRIEF

TAKING THE STAGE, BRINGING HOME THE HARDWARE

Five Principians recently attended the prestigious American College Theatre Festival and returned with an impressive array of achievements.

Actor **Ekene Cindy Obi-Njoku**, a junior, emerged victorious in the Irene Ryan acting competition, winning the Classical Acting Award for her performance as Lady Macbeth.

College students and alumni recognized for excellence in *The Three Musketeers* included costume designer **Caroline Atukunda**, a junior; lighting designer **Brianna Shipley** (US'21, C'25); and visiting professor **Riley Capp** (C'19). **Gavin McFall** (US'21, C'25) earned Excellence in Lighting Design for *Murder on the Orient Express*.

"MORE THAN AN INSTRUMENT": COX AUDITORIUM'S PIPE ORGAN

This summer, organ enthusiasts from across the U.S. gathered on the College campus to see and hear Principia's illustrious pipe organ up close. The American Guild of Organists took a detour from its annual meeting in St. Louis for a field trip to Elsah to appreciate the College's Casavant Opus 3838 pipe organ. This grand organ combines art and craft for a distinctive, even transcendent, experience. "The organ is at the intersection of the sacred and the academic," says **Dr. Rose Whitmore**, professor of music, department co-chair, and College organist. "It provides a space for students to experience something so much larger than themselves."

See how the organ inspires today's students

PRECIOUS MEDALS

Panthers on the Podium

The 2026 Principia track and field season was a historic one, and the Panthers wrapped it up by bringing home 18 medals—including nine golds—at the SLIAC Conference Championships. SLIAC Women's Outdoor Field Athlete of the Year **Hannah Myers** (C'26) won gold in all three jumping events, breaking **Kathy (Kavana) O'Shea's** (US'83, C'87) 40-year-old school record in triple jump and her own school record in long jump.

Principia also took gold in sprinting, distance, and throwing events. Junior **Amarachi Ejimadu** (US'23) won the women's 100m and 200m; **Sophia Green** (C'26) triumphed in the women's 10,000m; **Nana Koranteng** (C'26) beat all comers in the men's 400m hurdles and long jump; and **Mark Fisher** (C'26) was victorious in the men's hammer throw. Koranteng's two SLIAC titles this year mean he ties a unique conference record, holding gold medals in six different events throughout his indoor and outdoor career. This was a season the Principia record books won't soon forget!







LEARNING GLOBALLY

FACULTY PROFILE: DR. GALEN BENSON

In May, **Dr. Galen Benson** (C'89) was recognized as Principia College Teacher of the Year for the second time, a teaching honor notable for the fact that it's chosen by the students themselves. We caught up with the ninth-year education professor to find out what makes him tick:

What were you doing before teaching at Principia?

I taught GED, cognitive education, and parenting in the Colorado State prison system—in prisons ranging from minimum-security to near-maximum-security. I was also on the Crisis Response Team, where I was trained at the FBI hostage negotiation school.

This taught me about active learning, active listening, and problem-solving, all of which have enhanced my understanding of communication and the importance of critical thinking.

How did teaching in prison inform your teaching at Principia?

Teaching felons caused me to reflect on the Bible's statement that we are all made in the image and likeness of God. *All* doesn't only include "good" people! I could see [each inmate] as the image of God and treat them with dignity and respect. Treating others with empathy, dignity, and respect is how I approached my interactions then and it's the same approach I take today, whether walking down the street in a new city, sitting on a subway with strangers, or interacting with students in a Principia classroom.

If you were not a college professor, what would be your chosen line of work?

During high school, I decided to try new jobs every few years. My experiences have spanned fields such as sales, government, travel, entertainment, finance, athletics, and education. But overall, education has been the most personally fulfilling and the area where I have had the most positive impact.

College Students Score the Ultimate Hack

STORY BY MAKENNA KIBBE (US'21)



ACMC founder Ivan Vashchenko presenting about the Hackathon.



Members of Principia College's ACMC take the stage.

Principia College prides itself on offering every student opportunities to design their own path. For **Ivan Vashchenko** (US'23), that meant creating a new club. In February 2025, Ivan and faculty sponsor **Dr. Jonathan Langton** (US'97, C'01) designed and created the Applied Computational Modeling Club (ACMC). Just over a year old, ACMC has already earned significant recognition.

In its third-ever hackathon, ACMC participated in the LIVE AI Ivy Plus Hackathon, competing against elite institutions like MIT, Harvard, and Duke University. The Principia team rose to the occasion, delivering a dominant hackathon performance and earning top placements across multiple categories.

"A huge part of [our success] came from our preparation, the way we intentionally structured the team, and the discipline everyone showed in doing their part," said Vashchenko.

Every member of the ACMC—from seniors **Klaudija Klava Bumane** (C'26) and **Kesiena Berezi** (C'26) to juniors **Prem Pun Magar** and Vashchenko, and freshman **Volodymyr Hrimov**—brought a distinct perspective shaped by their unique academic backgrounds. All double or triple majors, their disciplines span mechanical engineering, computer science, physics, mathematics, visual arts, digital media, and philosophy.

In the LIVE AI Hackathon, each team designed, developed, and demonstrated an application using AI or blockchain in the medical or financial fields. The 36-hour sprint culminated with the team submitting a four-minute video pitching their product.

ACMC designed Argus, an AI financial tool that acts as a safety net for companies using AI shopping agents. As companies increasingly rely on these AI tools to automate large purchases, vulnerabilities become evident. Principia's team envisioned a system that can block unauthorized purchases and designed a dashboard for easy tracking.

With over 400 participants, the Argus team was recognized in almost every category:

- Global Overall Honorable Mention
- Global Best Demo
- Financial Tech 2nd Place
- AI/Machine Learning Honorable Mention
- Design Honorable Mention
- Product Honorable Mention



ACMC faculty sponsor Dr. Jonathan Langton on stage at the community presentation.

Along with these accolades, Argus is being evaluated for potential investment funding up to $25,000.

The club is currently preparing for three more competitions: STL TechWeek's University Pitch Competition, a Datathon at UHSP, and a hackathon involving Geospatial Video Intelligence.

"It has been amazing to watch students genuinely care about what they are building, get excited to attend events, represent Principia, and later share how the things they learned through ACMC helped them in the classroom or at internships," said Vashchenko, reflecting on the experience.

Learn about ACMC's Argus Model and see their official pitch



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PRINCIPIA COLLEGE

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A Legacy of Servant Leadership

This past spring, Principia College lost two former presidents whose lives and leadership shaped the College in lasting ways. Dr. David Pfeifer and John W. Williams, JD, loved Principia beyond measure and shared a deep devotion to teaching, each returning to the classroom after serving as College President. For both, Principia was their life's work.



David E. Pfeifer, PhD

Dr. David Pfeifer (FS'77) was a thoughtful and deeply principled leader who helped shape both the academic reputation and physical landscape of Principia College. Guided by humility, compassion, kindness, and a readiness to serve, he gave generously of himself to Principia and its students.

Dr. Pfeifer joined the Principia College faculty in 1974 as an assistant professor of philosophy. He was named the first Edith and Lewis White Distinguished Professor in 1996. Over the years, he held a variety of administrative roles in addition to teaching, including department chair, director of the Office of Special Programs and Principia Adult Continuing Education, coordinating dean, and acting dean of faculty.

He became College President in 1989 and served until 1996 before returning full time to what he called his "first love"—teaching. "You just can't duplicate that contact with students," he once shared.



Dr. Pfeifer celebrates the student government class of 1991.

He remained at Principia through 2005, completing 31 years of dedication and service to the College. From 2005 to 2021, Dr. Pfeifer taught at Indiana University at Indianapolis. There, he served as director of the Institute for American Thought while also conducting research, publishing professionally, and leading several academic projects related to American philosophers Charles Sanders Peirce and Josiah Royce.

Known for his ability to listen with compassion and his genuine care for others, Dr. Pfeifer described his life and leadership simply: "I don't go out looking for 'positions.' I look for ways to serve."

As College President, Dr. Pfeifer oversaw transformative campus projects, including the Merrick Wing of Davis Music Hall and the expansion of the Science Center. His leadership reflected a commitment to elevating the sciences at Principia while ensuring new additions blended thoughtfully with Principia's historic Maybeck architecture.

Dr. Pfeifer also remained actively engaged in the wider community through service on local boards and organizations. While living in Elsah, he served on the Jersey County Board, Great Rivers Land Trust Board, Nelson Foundation, Illinois River Coordinating Council, and QEM Fire Protection District Board. Through this work, he brought the same thoughtful leadership, spirit of service, and commitment to the common good that characterized his contributions to Principia.

Together with his wife, **Jane Pfeifer** (FS'92), who later served as Principia's archivist, Dr. Pfeifer fostered a spirit of hospitality and thoughtful conversation through the beloved "Soup and Conversation" and other gatherings that welcomed



John Williams and Dr. David Pfeifer welcome new College President Dr. Meggan Madden.

faculty, staff, and students into their home. His thoughtful leadership, steadfast faith, and love for Principia continue to be reflected in the institution he helped shape and the people he so generously served.

John W. Williams, JD

John Williams (C'76) devoted his life to Principia College as a dedicated student, beloved professor, and intrepid College President. Spanning more than four decades, his tenure strengthened Principia through teaching, mentorship, leadership, and steady care for the community. An educator at heart, he brought energy, enthusiasm, and humor to the classroom while challenging students to think critically, independently, boldly, and with compassion.

Williams began his career as an attorney in the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice before returning to Principia College. Throughout his time teaching mass communications and political science, he served in numerous roles, including instructor, advisor, lecturer, Political Science department chair, pre-law advisor, and multi-term president of the Faculty Senate. He led more than a dozen study abroad programs to East Asia and championed countless academic initiatives. He became the inaugural recipient of the Horace Edwin Harper Jr. and Evelyn Wright Harper Award for Teaching Excellence in 2013 and was named Professor Emeritus of Political Science in 2026.

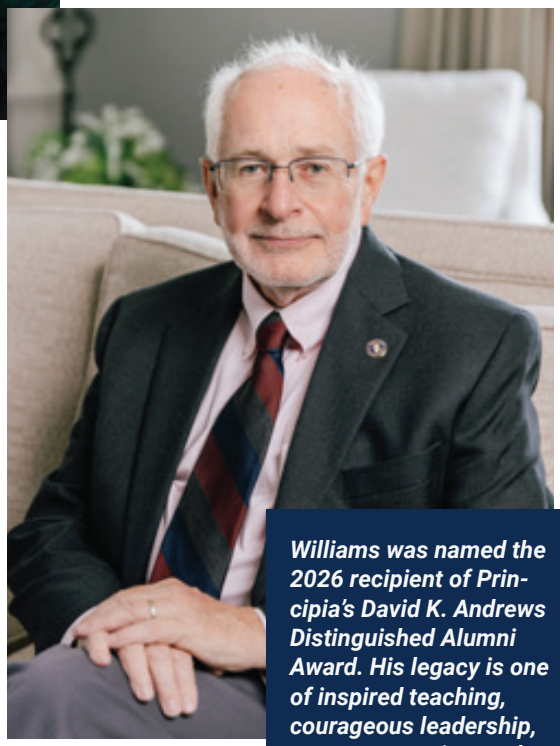
Following eight months as Interim President, Williams was appointed President of Principia College in 2020 and served through 2023 before returning to the classroom. His principled, compassionate, and inclusive approach to leadership was a steadying influence during a transformative period in the College's history. Reflecting on leadership, he once said, "Our purpose at Principia begins with the words 'to serve,' and servant leadership is one of the most powerful visions of how we should be leading." Under his courageous and dedicated leadership, the Spiritual Life program was established, the College opened its doors to students of all faiths, and he guided the community through the challenges of the COVID pandemic.



John Williams led the 2013 Tibet Abroad.

During his career at Principia, Williams was blessed with two marriages to exceptional women. John's late wife, **Judy (Blackburn) Williams** (C'63), was a devoted alumna and longtime employee of Principia, whose contributions to the College community remain deeply appreciated. His wife since 2006, **Missy (Ford) Williams** (C'76), served Principia as the College's First Lady, touching the lives of many. Together, John and Missy helped create a culture of care, encouragement, and belonging that continues at the College today. Their support of Principians at everything from mediation competitions and solar car races to theatrical performances, athletic events, and the Class of 1976's recent 50th College Reunion, will long be remembered.

Williams's commitment to education and service extended well beyond Principia. He served as adjunct faculty in Washington University's graduate program in international affairs and held leadership roles in professional organizations, including president of the Illinois Political Science Association. A respected civic leader throughout the region, he also served as president and board member of the Great Rivers Land Trust, bringing the same passion for service and engagement that defined his work at Principia.



Williams was named the 2026 recipient of Principia's David K. Andrews Distinguished Alumni Award. His legacy is one of inspired teaching, courageous leadership, generous service, and an abiding love for Principia.

OF NOTE



QUICK LOOK

A PLACE TO BELONG, A CREW TO GROW WITH

Lean on your people when pursuing your dreams: that's the message former cum laude honoree **Ross Furbush** (US'11) had for upper schoolers during this spring's Cum Laude Induction Ceremony. Using Netflix's live-action adaptation of *One Piece* as an analogy, Furbush extolled the power of community. Drawing upon lessons from the highly successful Japanese manga franchise, he illustrated for students how sharing our ambitions and supporting others in achieving theirs allows us to accomplish more together than we ever could alone. "We here [at Principia] are your community," said Furbush. "And we're here to help you achieve your dreams."

ALWAYS IN STYLE

Uniforms Through the Years

View more from the archives

While Principia's character-first education has remained unchanged, some things are a little less timeless. Principia's athletic uniforms through the years reflect changing performance needs, advances in fabric and construction technologies, and of course, fashion trends. As Principia athletics have grown and transformed, so has the look of our teams and athletes.

1920s



"GYMNASIUM UNIFORMS"
These lightweight pleated cotton bloomers, made by the first US women's gymnastics uniform manufacturer, allowed for easy movement.

1930s



COLLEGE WOMEN'S SWIMMING
Once featuring built-in shorts for water aerobics, swimsuits have evolved from heavy wool knit to today's lightweight synthetic fabrics.

1940s



UPPER SCHOOL FOOTBALL
Panthers in the 1940s ran roughshod over the competition in long-sleeve all-wool jerseys. Not pictured here: matching navy blue leather helmet.

1950s



COLLEGE LETTER SWEATER
Cream-colored cardigans were the height of chic in their day. Athletes attached patches indicating their grad years and preferred sports.

1970s



COED TRACK AND FIELD
Runners in the 1970s sported a simple and lightweight singlet. The "flying foot" insignia was an unofficial but beloved logo of Principia track and field athletes.

1980s



UPPER SCHOOL LETTER JACKET
In the 1980s, Upper School athletes showed off their varsity letters in iconic gold and blue letterman's jackets, featuring sports pins and their grad years.

Dates shown are best estimates based on available archival evidence.



FAST COMPANY

AMY (ALESHIRE) KRAHENBUHL INDUCTED INTO SLIAC HALL OF FAME

College cross country phenom **Amy (Aleshire) Krahenbuhl** (C'07) has been inducted into the SLIAC Hall of Fame.

Walking onto the College cross country team as a freshman with no prior competitive running experience, Aleshire had the best single season in SLIAC women's cross-country history in 2003. That year, she ran the fastest 6K in SLIAC championship history (21:15) and was named SLIAC Runner of the Year and Newcomer of the Year. Aleshire went on to finish sixth overall at Nationals, earning All-American honors with the highest national finish ever by a SLIAC woman. Aleshire lives in Santa Barbara, California, with her husband and three children.

MAKING A BOLD IMPRESSION

Mason Williams Included in California Art Club Exhibition



This year, landscape painter **Mason Williams** (C'17) was selected for inclusion in the California Art Club's 115th annual Gold Medal Exhibition. "One of my favorite impressionists is Edgar Payne, who served as President of the Club in 1926," said Williams. "I was first introduced to Payne's work when I was working on large-scale desert paintings my senior year at Principia College with **Duncan Martin** (C'76), my teacher at the time." Williams enjoyed a "full-circle moment" when he returned to campus for this summer's College Reunion, led a painting class with Martin, and exhibited some of his recent landscape works.

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

Ngozi Asinga's Legacy of Connection

For Principia alum, two-time Olympian, and 2026 Graduation and Commencement speaker **Ngozi (Mwanamwambwa) Asinga** (US'89, C'93), homecoming came in springtime this year. The seven-time NCAA All-American athlete spoke about her journey from Principia to the Olympics, sharing lessons in resilience and determination. Beyond the stage, Asinga made time to connect personally with students from Lower School through College. Read excerpts from her inspiring address on the next page.

SPIRITUAL LENS

I CAME, I SAW, I CONQUERED

Excerpt from College Commencement and Upper School Graduation addreseses by ***Ngozi (Mwanamwambwa) Asinga*** *(US'89, C'93)*





At first, these words sound like a declaration of domination. But I have learned that conquering is not about victory over another person; it's about growth, stepping into the unknown, and allowing every experience to help shape who we are.

I CAME to the United States from Zambia at 13 years old. Crossing the ocean to a foreign land was scary, but deep in my heart, I knew this journey would change my life forever. And boy, did it.

Attending Christian Science camp and then Principia Upper School and College was more than an experience; it was a transformation that revealed strengths I never knew I had.

I missed my family terribly and felt isolated at first, but I realized I had to decide whether to remain trapped in a pity party or adapt and grow. In those moments, I turned to the Bible: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

I had to trust that my circumstances would work for me, not against me. In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy writes, "Desire is prayer; and no loss can occur from trusting God with our desires, that they may be moulded and exalted before they take form in words and in deeds" (p. 1:11).

I SAW that sometimes the greatest growth begins the moment we leave behind what feels comfortable. I came here as a young girl from Zambia, stepping into the unfamiliar and unsure of where I belonged. But every challenge and lesson were preparing me to finally realize my potential. Soon, life would place me on one of the biggest stages in the world—and there I would discover what it truly meant to conquer.

I CONQUERED my dream of competing in the Olympics in 1992, when I was a junior at Principia College. I was the first woman ever to represent Zambia in track and field at the Olympics, even being chosen to carry the Zambian flag during the opening ceremony.

Just two days before my first race, I woke up in excruciating pain. I had been struggling with shin splints, and I could not put weight on my feet. I was overwhelmed and scared; here I was at the Olympics to run and represent my country, but that was looking unlikely.

I called a Christian Science practitioner. She listened, reassured me, and prayed with me. I remember her reading the scientific statement of being from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*:

"There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all ... Therefore man is not material; he is spiritual" (p. 468:9).

And this from Hebrews 12:1: "... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

I fell asleep, and when l woke up, I was healed. I never experienced shin splints again, even four years later when I competed in the 1996 Olympic Games.

Principia taught me discipline, resilience, leadership, and the courage to step into unfamiliar spaces. The Olympics expanded that vision, showing me what was possible when preparation meets opportunity, and faith is stronger than fear. I learned that perseverance is not a moment but a lifestyle.

Graduates, your race is just beginning. Your hills may look different from mine, but the courage, faith, and perseverance required will be the same. We all have moments when the climb feels too steep. But if we dig deep and trust that we will have everything we need, we will rise boldly and walk courageously—we will *conquer*—knowing our greatest victories are still ahead.



THE PRINCIPIA ATHLETE

How Athletics at Principia Prove the Potency of the Whole-Person Approach

STORY BY **ERIC MORSE (US'90)**

People are talking. There are murmurs in the Metro League and whispering around SLIAC. *What is going on at Principia? Are they prioritizing athletics over academics? Compromising character to succeed in sports?*

Absolutely not, contend College Athletics Director **Ramiro ("Coach Ro") Dominguez** and his School counterpart **Shawn Brown** (US'00, C'04). The "secret," they say, is no secret at all: Success on the scoreboard is simply an extension of Principia's whole-person philosophy.

> **"Principia teams are just different. They are ruthless but polite. They are tough but sensible. They are hard-nosed but intelligent."**
>
> **– Opposing college men's basketball coach**

The Principia Athlete

Principia athletes come in many shapes, speak a variety of languages, and excel in a plethora of pursuits. For a small community, Principia athletes are remarkably diverse—so diverse that it's easier to define them by what they are *not.*

The Principia athlete is not one-dimensional, out for personal praise or to elevate self over team. God-guided—coached by character educators who prioritize sportsmanship over the scoreboard and growth over glory—the Principia athlete proves the promise of Mary Kimball Morgan's whole-person education.

When two dozen coaches, educators, and administrators were asked what they look for when recruiting a Principia athlete, several words came up repeatedly: commitment, determination, grit, joy. Not mentioned once: standout statistics or athletic prowess.

"We're looking for students who want to be here, to grow spiritually, intellectually, and mentally," says Dominguez. "We're looking for students who buy in. And I find students want those things too."

College softball coach **Grace Burrows** has been traveling the country, recruiting prospective Principians. "I look for good people," she says. "You can build an athlete, but if they're not here to be a good teammate and a good student who is involved on campus and getting their homework done—if they're not holding themselves accountable—then I'm not interested. That's what we look for here."

"I hear those voices that ask, 'Is Principia just a basketball school now?'" says Upper School Principal **Samantha Dry**. "But they don't see the whole picture—the students who competed in State in music or the 15 upper schoolers selected for a juried art show, or the students making real change through the Impact Challenge and service projects."

If Principia is compromising grade points for game points, no one told Upper School boys' basketball coach **Jay Blossom**. "We have higher standards across the board [than other schools]," he says. "It takes a lot of work, but we demand it, and our kids buy into that. You can see it in the way they conduct themselves on the court, in the classroom, and in their own lives."

Spirituality and the Principia Athlete

The role of faith in society is evolving, and it's natural for people to ask how students and coaches practice spirituality at Principia. To borrow a phrase, there is no spot at Principia where God is not.

"Being able to respect the religions of different kids, and to lead with it and not hide it, is special," says Upper School wrestling and track and field coach **Lee Furnace**. "The number one goal of coaching is to help these kids see their Creator through what we're doing."

> **"It was an honor to share the court with such a talented team that also demonstrates such admirable character."**
>
> **– Opposing high school boys' basketball coach**

After going through the ringer of big-time tennis, **Saray Hernández Cisneros** (C'26) (p. 25) found that Principia College's Christian Science-based environment healed her fraught relationship with the sport.

Upper School swimmer **Sarah Lamb** (p. 29) credits Principia's metaphysical approach with helping her smash personal and School records. "At Principia, my coaches have a spiritual standpoint, and I can go to them for spiritual help," she says, "That's helped me overcome mental limits and accomplish my goals."

Healings are happening in the heat of competition. Spiritual growth goes on in interactions large and small. In diverse but undeniable ways, the Principia athlete continues to demonstrate how fearless faith overcomes limitation.

The Principia Athlete and the Whole Person

Principia athletics aren't in competition with the whole-person ideal; they are proof of it. "Research shows that self-efficacy is greater in students who participate in athletics, clubs, student government, etcetera," says College President **Dr. Meggan Madden** (C'93). "The whole-person concept aligns with this research. It is the rich foundation from which students grow spiritually, morally, academically, and athletically."

Madden's statement is supported by performance: 50 Principia College athletes earned SLIAC All-Academic Team honors this past school year.

Upper School graduate and incoming Principia College freshman **Shepherd Thomas** (US'26) (p. 33) advanced to the State finals in both soccer and tennis, but his athletic pursuits didn't deter him from also making the honor roll and leading Hubbell House as House Captain. Upper School junior **Hazel Stewart** (p. 31) found that lessons learned on the soccer pitch improved her confidence and performance in the classroom. **Zayana Brown's** (C'26) (p. 28) love of soccer opened doors to dance, choreography, and opportunities to write, direct, and perform. The examples are as numerous and diverse as the student-athletes themselves.

As Principal Dry says, "You don't come to Principia just for sports. You come for the whole experience. We want you to be all in, to add value everywhere, because that's how you learn who you are and what it means to be a proactive change agent."

The experience of the Principia student-athlete proves the interconnectedness of whole-person education. "We strive for excellence in the classroom; we should strive for excellence in athletics," says Dominguez. "Let's make sure we're being competitive and striving for that excellence." Brown ups the ante: rather than simply *striving* for excellence, "We should demand it."

Brown describes this as Principia's "Win-win philosophy: winning in objective and winning in purpose." In other words, prevailing on the scoreboard through a purpose-driven, character-focused approach. "That's our calling card."



PANTHERS ON THE NATIONAL SCENE

Principia's student-athletes are garnering attention, achieving accolades, and collectively performing at a higher level than ever before. Some, like the ones below, are making waves on the national scene, prompting lifelong Principians and newcomers alike to ask, ***"Who is the Principia athlete?"***



The Principia athlete is Upper School junior **Dasia Scott**, a quiet leader on and off the court who enters the season as the top-ranked recruit in Missouri. In addition to leading Principia to three straight State finals and being named All-Metro Girls' Basketball Player of the Year as a junior, she is known on campus as a leader of character—elected Hubbell House Captain and taking the stage to lead an inspirational chapel talk.



The Principia athlete is also **Nana Koranteng** (C'26), a four-year men's soccer and track star. A singular athlete who ranks among the top athletes in program history, Koranteng earned Second Team All-American and Academic All-American honors, setting the school record in triple jump and tying the men's SLIAC record of winning gold medals in six different disciplines during his indoor and outdoor track & field career.



Or **Quentin Coleman** (US'26), who not only led the Panthers to back-to-back State championships, but also secured VIP honors in competition against the Class of 2026's top national blue-chip recruits—all on his way to starting for Team USA U18 and a spot on the University of Illinois roster.



Finally, Academic All-American **Hannah Myers** (C'26) distinguished herself in two sports. On the basketball court, she led SLIAC in three-pointers, helping secure the Panthers' first regular season conference title. She was also the SLIAC 2026 Outdoor Field Athlete of the Year, setting six school records and winning five event championships on her way to receiving Principia College's Corde & Willard Hanzlik Award, for "athletes of the highest character—in practice and competition, as well as classroom and social settings."

The Principia athlete is more than stats, star power, or success on the scoreboard. The Principia athlete is committed to academic excellence, character development, service to others, and spiritual growth. Read on to meet a few more of Principia's outstanding student-athletes.

COLLEGE TENNIS

REDEFINING "BEST-CASE SCENARIO"

A six-year-old girl in a tiny Mexican town picks up a tennis racket. By 10 she's competing nationally. From there, she's launched into the stratosphere—a teen tennis phenom competing at the ITF World Junior Tennis Championship at age 16. If **Saray Hernández Cisneros's** (C'26) story sounds like a best-case scenario, the best was yet to come.

As the pressure of international tennis took its toll, the sport she once loved became more obligation than passion, and Cisneros's idea of "best case" began to look more like a supportive environment to try new things than a cutthroat tennis circuit filled with cameras and oversized checks. Enter Principia College tennis coach **Shannon Carney**.

"Coach Carney posted about Principia College on Facebook," says Cisneros. "I'd spoken to D-I and D-II coaches, but there was something different about Coach Carney. She was welcoming and kind."

As in tennis, so in life, the best course is rarely the easiest, but Saray Cisneros is nothing if not persistent. Growing up without access to English classes, her mastery of the language was incomplete. But she was undaunted when she didn't pass Principia's English language assessment. She simply retook the test. Again, and again. On her third try, the self-taught English speaker proved ready to tackle a four-year college education—in English.

"My professors and classmates were understanding and patient with me—in communication and understanding cultural norms," recounts Cisneros.

At home in Principia's supportive environment, Cisneros devoured new opportunities. She picked up a shift at the Pub. She found a natural fit managing the Languages and Cultures Department. She got a third job at the library. And she reignited a spark for her first love.

"Coach Carney was loving and encouraging—she saw me as a whole person," Cisneros says. "And it healed my relationship with tennis. I fell in love with the sport again!"

Cisneros found ways to serve and volley in the classroom as well as on the court. Just a few years removed from failing the English language assessment, she was reporting for the *Pilot* and tutoring in the writing center. Then the global studies and sociology/anthropology double major was named the 2026 Public Affairs Conference co-director.

When asked about the transformation, Cisneros credits her spiritual approach. "Christian Science helped me understand and navigate college," she says. "I grew up Catholic ... but I realized that you can learn from other religions. I now identify more with Christian Science than with Catholicism."

"Principia gave me the tools to evolve my interests and expand my curiosity," she continues. "They made me feel that I could do anything." It's hard to imagine a better-case scenario than that.



Saray Hernández Cisneros

SCHOOL TRACK AND FIELD

COMMAND PERFORMANCES ON THE TRACK AND STAGE

You might not call this Furnace fiery. But her opponents in track and field sure do feel the heat.

Puns aside, Upper School freshman track phenom **Khloe Furnace's** easygoing humility belies a competitive streak that has propelled her to the top of the Principia record books in her first season as a high school athlete.

Maybe she takes it all in stride because obliterating expectations is nothing new. Furnace recalls her first time throwing the shotput as a "scrawny" 11-year-old coached by her grandmother: "They just put me in this random event. I picked up the shotput and threw it. Mine landed about six feet farther than all the other girls'!"

It's a precedent that has persisted. Now 14, Furnace smashed School records in both the shotput and discus in just her second high school meet, and wrapped up the season with a fifth-place finish at State.

But if athletic excellence runs in the family (father **Lee Furnace** is a former national champion athlete who coaches wrestling and track and field at the Upper School, and brothers **Korbin** and **Lee "Trey" Furnace III** both advanced to the Missouri State Wrestling Tournament this year), it hardly defines her.

"Khloe is very diligent and disciplined in her training," says head track and field coach **Sarah (Jarvis) Grigsby** (C'07). "She is also a very thoughtful person; I appreciate that about her."

In fact, while sports get the spotlight for now, performing arts may soon take center stage. An accomplished cellist, she is breaking the mold in band just as much as in track and field—even adapting conventional arrangements to take advantage of her talents. "Concert band is a different style of music from the classical music I was trained with," she says. "So, it's been a fun experience to adapt the music for cello."

The pull of the stage proves strong, and she's building performing muscles alongside the athletic ones. "When I came to Principia in seventh grade, I said I would never do anything like [acting]—but the next year, I was in *The Lion King JR*, and I fell in love with being on stage!"

One thing is for sure: whether she's projecting from the stage or tossing projectiles from the throwing circle, this Furnace *is* on fire.



Khloe Furnace

COLLEGE RUGBY

ALWAYS AT HOME ON "A GREAT JOURNEY"



Francisco Alessio

For the creator and host of *The Leaving Point*, a podcast that shares stories about athletes competing abroad, **Francisco Alessio** (C'26) always seems to be at home. Principia's 2026 Lincoln Laureate, Alessio was born in a small town in Argentina, spent time in Southern California, then got his college education in Elsah, Illinois. At each stop, he found his people, built a community, and thrived.

Alessio grew up as the son of a firefighter and a high school teacher who instilled in him a tireless work ethic and the importance of academic excellence. While he concluded his college career receiving Principia's most prestigious academic award and a bevy of high-level job opportunities, it was rugby that brought him here in the first place.

"[When I started looking into college], I was focusing on rugby," says Alessio, a subtly confessional tone to his voice. "I had played for my local team, state team, and eventually the trials for the under-20s Argentinian National Team. Then [former Principia rugby coach] **Ward Patterson** (C'82) contacted me, and I heard about Principia."

While he could have competed in much larger programs, Principia provided Alessio opportunities to dive into his ever-expanding list of passions. "What makes Principia different are the extracurriculars. You can take classes at any school, but what are you doing outside of that? What is the extra mile?"

A standout athlete since he started playing rugby at age four, Alessio is no stranger to going the extra mile. At Principia, that didn't just mean training and conditioning; it meant preparing for the GRE, pursuing internships, and launching the aforementioned podcast. "I was having a hard time getting an internship, so I figured I'd create something," he recalls. "I asked myself and my friends, 'What am I good at?' I love helping with recruiting, meeting people, and hearing their stories. I'll create a podcast!"

With the podcast, the stories flowed. And so did the internships: shadowing a CEO in California, studying finance in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and diving into investor relations in Lisbon, Portugal.

"[Principia rugby] really developed my character—that ability to bounce back, to get ready for the next play. That's a lesson that applies to life and whatever I'm doing," says Alessio.

The academic accomplishments, real-world work experience, and boundless enthusiasm led to multiple job offers well before commencement. Next stop: San Clemente, California to explore mergers and acquisitions. "It's been a great journey," Alessio says of his Principia College experience. And wherever the journey takes him next, he's certain to feel right at home.

COLLEGE SOCCER

THE JOY OF ADDITION

Mid-conversation, **Zayana Brown** casually mentions the word "amalgamation." For someone struggling to describe this multi-talented student-athlete, the off-handed comment is the perfect distillation: Zayana Brown *is an amalgamation*. Now entering her senior year, the Georgia native is soccer player, actor-writer-director, dancer-choreographer, and musician all rolled into one.

"I've always done multiple things," she says. "When I was doing theater in high school, my director knew that I might have to scoot out to go to soccer practice, or vice versa." The opportunity to be a leader on the soccer field first attracted Brown to Principia College, but she had other leading roles in mind as well. "Honestly, I think theater is a bigger part of college for me [than athletics]. Art and creativity are a big part of my personality."

Brown's accolades range from College orchestra violist to SLIAC Women's Soccer Defensive Player of the Week, but even this impressive range left room for more. If an amalgam is a combination of things, then amalgamation is the act of adding-on; and Brown jumped at the opportunities Principia afforded her to do more, reach further, go bigger.

When a freshman-year class in dance history opened the door to a new way to combine athletic movement and dramatic expression, Brown took her next leap. Encouraged by dance professor **Erin Lane**, Brown says, "I went to Dance Production auditions on a whim, and it ended up being super fun. I've done Dance Production every year and it's been really rewarding!"

Some people are slow and steady; others go fast then rest. But true to form, Brown prefers to do both—and does both equally well. Thanks to her boundless energy and restless creativity, she has produced a mind-boggling repertoire of work at increasingly higher degrees of difficulty. In just three years, Brown completed the requirements for a theatre major and dance minor, accomplishing her capstone—directing and starring in a short play—at the end of her junior year. And the actor and soccer player who casually dropped in on dance auditions just two years ago is now choreographing original works for others. In fact, in just one breakneck semester, she performed in seven productions—including directing and choreographing.

"I've had chaotic semesters when I didn't know if I was going to make it," says Brown. "But this one felt pretty calm." On the soccer field, they might call that "being in the zone"; for Zayana Brown, it's just the joy of addition.



Zayana Brown



SCHOOL SWIMMING

MAKING HISTORY THROUGH MENTAL FORTITUDE

Sarah Lamb arrives at Principia Upper School in the morning, aces her classes, and then goes and makes history—literally. Every Wednesday and Thursday, as an intern at the Missouri History Museum, she and a team of peers chronicle St. Louis's historical neighborhoods and produce informational materials for museum visitors.

On alternate days, the Upper School sophomore reports to the Principia pool and breaks records. This season, Lamb broke the School's 100-breaststroke record *twice* on her way to scoring fifth in State. History-making all the way around.

When asked what her secret is to clocking the two fastest 100-breaststroke times in Principia history, she is quick with an answer: *mental fortitude*.

"I've always known that swimming is 90 percent a mental sport, and all about overcoming limits you put on yourself," she reflects. "But coming to Principia, where my coaches have a spiritual standpoint, I know I can go to them for spiritual support. That's really helped me overcome mental limits and accomplish my goals."

Lamb credits the Principia program with unlocking her record-breaking potential. "My times had been stagnant for about two years, but Coach **Jess (Matson) Fendon** (C'04) helped me push myself mentally and know that I'm capable of anything—I dropped three seconds in just one season!"

Fendon says the benefit of Lamb's work ethic and mental toughness radiate throughout the whole team. "Her exceptional work ethic, focus, strength, competitive spirit, toughness, and resilience have made her not only a remarkable swimmer but also an outstanding teammate," says Fendon. "Her dedication and determination consistently inspire those around her."

Swim team isn't the only mental challenge Lamb savors at the Upper School. The honor roll student just completed precalculus as a sophomore and loves Principia's experiential trips. "My family loves to travel; the trips were a big factor in us coming here," she recalls. "The Dominican Republic service trip was life-changing for me. It was such a cool opportunity to see my impact on people in real time."

Looking ahead, Sarah's gearing up for the Bible trip to Greece and Türkiye and landing a spot in the USA Swimming Sectionals meet. She may be making history, but she's definitely not looking back.



Nolan Simon

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

SCORING ON THE REBOUND

Nolan Simon always believed his time in the gym would pay off. Thousands of shots. Hours of ball handling. Blood, sweat, tears. "I knew basketball could help me transition into life and chase my goals," he says.

But as it often goes, the payoff was different, and even greater, than expected. While his dream of playing D-I basketball never materialized and his college career got off to a disappointing start, a chance encounter set him on a fresh and fulfilling trajectory.

"**Jake Kampf** (C'23) used to shoot at the gym where I worked out," says Simon. "He always wore a Principia College shirt, so I got his number and texted him out of the blue." It was a bold step for the introverted Simon, who attributes the impulse to divine guidance. He says it's proof that "having faith can help guide your decisions and give you strength in difficult moments."

The text led to an introduction; the introduction to a campus tour, and within months, Simon was at Principia having a standout season as a SLIAC conference leader.

"After my freshman year, my confidence was shot," says Simon. But Principia's supportive environment and his tireless work ethic turned that around. "I just kept grinding every single day—proving that I'm capable of becoming the great player I always dreamed of," he says. "And I had a great support system, with Coach **Neyko Dominguez** restoring my belief that I'm capable of doing anything."

The results speak for themselves: Simon finished his junior season as the SLIAC leader in points per game and national Division III top 10 scorer. And the kid whose parents insisted on academic excellence also earned spots on the Principia Honor Roll and the SLIAC All-Academic team.

When he's not scoring impressive game points and grade points, Simon is making assists in the Career Development Office. "The work is important to me," he says, "because a lot of kids experience the same thing I did, and lose confidence in themselves. So I like giving back and supporting them, just like people here supported me."

Reflecting on his time at Principia, Simon says, "At first, I was very shy. But I give thanks to my parents, because they made me get out of my comfort zone. And to God—God put me in this position. I couldn't have done it myself."

SCHOOL FIELD HOCKEY

COACHING, COMPETING, AND CONQUERING PERFECTIONISM

They say you never forget your first love. For **Hazel Stewart** and the game of field hockey, that adage rings true. The Upper School senior got hooked on field hockey at three years old. She dabbled in dance briefly but recalls, "I had so much competitive spirit and energy that I had to keep playing field hockey. That's how I let everything out."

Club field hockey became a constant in Stewart's life. By her teenage years, she was training, practicing, and helping coach younger teams—even while she competed on Principia's volleyball and soccer teams. That often meant two practices a day; not starting her homework until 9:30 p.m.

But the long days and hectic schedule didn't deter Stewart from academic success; her name is a perennial presence on the honor roll as well as team rosters. "Balancing school and sports has been a huge thing for me, because I'm a perfectionist," Stewart says. "Obviously no one's perfect, but I like to try."

The pressure that accompanies perfectionism can be overwhelming, and athletics offered Stewart more than an opportunity to "let everything out." A soccer goal-setting exercise helped her address the issue. Well-known to her teammates as an uplifting presence on the field ("Hazel is constantly supporting the players around her," says soccer midfielder **Milo Broadhurst**), Stewart realized that she owed herself the same measure of compassion. "One of my goals for the season was to treat myself the way I would treat others when I make a mistake or don't do something perfectly."

Self-compassion is key to resilience, and resilience is a cornerstone of Principia's athletics program. "Resilient is who Hazel is," says Principia soccer coach **Nigel Marples**. "She shows up with joy every day and works hard. The consistency of her mentality is exceptional."

Stewart says this approach "has helped me play more freely. Also in school, when I don't get a perfect test grade, I can learn from it. What did I do wrong? What can I do better?"

It's an outlook that will serve her well later in life. The aspiring elementary school teacher cherishes her experiences coaching the younger players: "Coaching has helped me see the sport from a whole different perspective."

With varsity field hockey returning to Principia in her senior season, Stewart will get plenty of opportunities to lead, teach, and demonstrate compassion. "I'm excited to help rebuild this program because field hockey is my favorite thing. I love it so much. Finding other people who love it as much as I do makes me happy."

If those aren't the words of true love, I do not know what are.



Hazel Stewart

COLLEGE TRACK AND FIELD

ONE STEP AHEAD OF EXPECTATIONS

Zachery Proctor (US'22, C'26) is perpetually in motion. His legs charge down the cross-country homestretch, his wheaten curls awash in late-afternoon sun; his arms propel him over Arkansas River rapids; and his boundless curiosity continues to add new line items to his already-bulging resume. For this two-sport champion, expectations are just another opponent, and he always stays one step ahead.

Case in point: while many long-distance runners revere the solitude of a run, for Proctor it's the camaraderie that keeps him going. "The people are a big part of why I've been running so long," he comments, referring to longtime Upper School and College teammates **Rex Heath** (US'22, C'25) and **Aaron Nutwell** (US'22, C'26). But it's not just as teammates; Proctor savors a "competitive connection" with his opponents, as well. "You get to talk beforehand," he says, "then you go bump against each other in a race."

He bucks stereotypes in his academic journey as well. Early to declare a major in computer science, he rejects the notion that the field needs to be solitary and sedentary. "I found it fascinating and fun," he says. But, true to form, he wasn't one to rest there. Indulging his love of creativity and collaboration led to a second major in digital media and journalism—and forays into lighting and sound design, broadcast production, and news reporting.

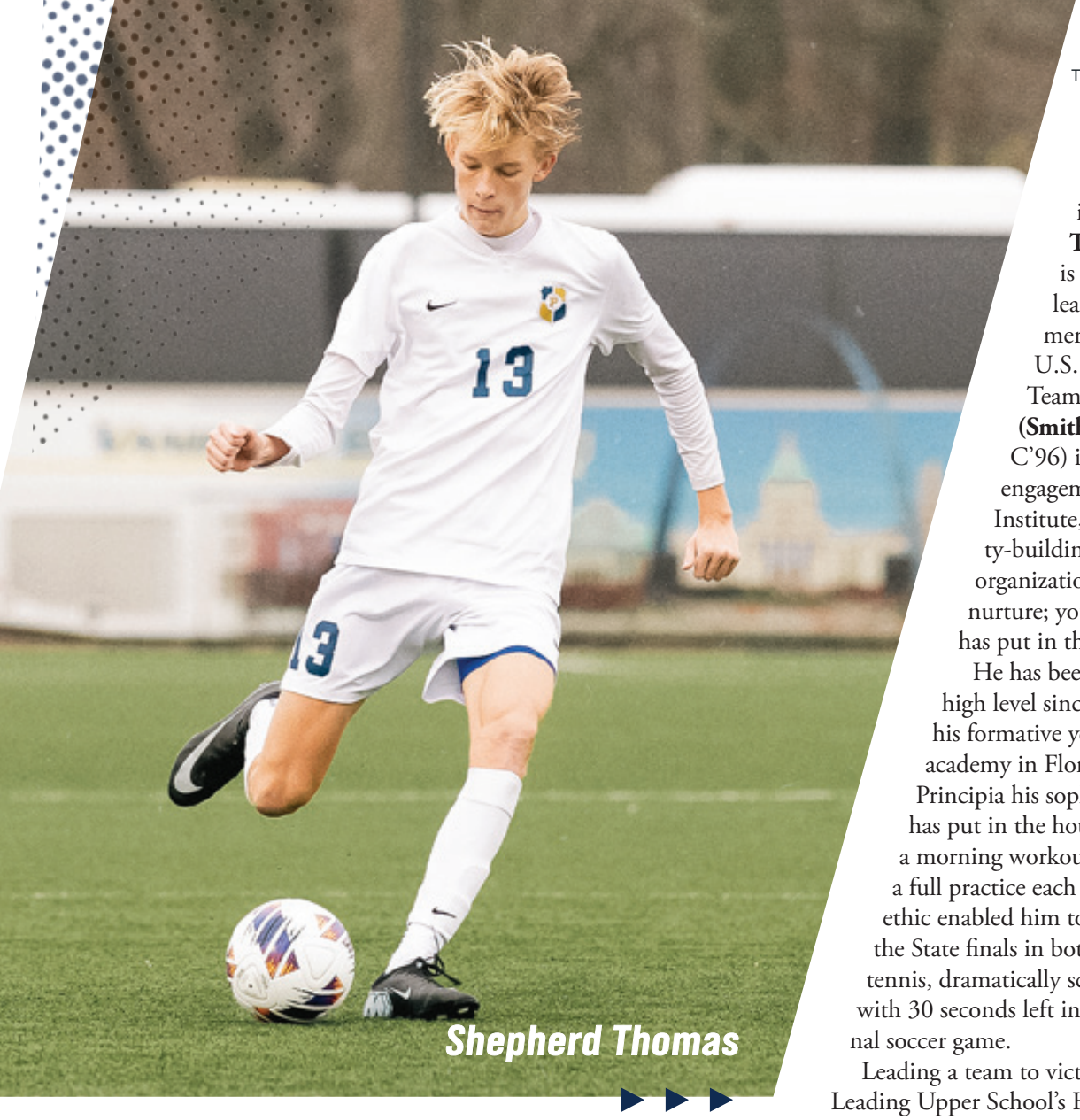
The Denver native hops continents as fluidly as he takes on new areas of study: running through ancient monasteries on an Upper School trip to Greece and letting his curls fly free on the oceanside cliffs of New Zealand during a College study abroad. "I got to interview people in New Zealand and I enjoyed the experience," says Proctor, before adding his characteristic twist: "Talking to strangers kind of freaks me out. But apparently, I like doing things that freak me out."



Zachery Proctor

He may have a wandering soul and limitless curiosity, but (again, counterintuitively) he's anything but inconsistent. Proctor is a Principia Dean's List member and a perennial member of the SLIAC All-Academic Team. College track coach **Justin Halley** says, "Zach is just a hard worker. Looking back at all his seasons at Prin, he's never had a bad one. He just gets better each year."

But looking back isn't his style. Always ready for the next thing, Proctor has ambitions that are predictably unpredictable: stringing news for the *Christian Science Monitor* in Boston or riding the rapids through the Grand Canyon. Either way, the list of things that freak him out is shrinking fast.



Shepherd Thomas

SCHOOL SOCCER

TAKING THE LEAD

Plenty has been written about leadership. How it can be born or built, earned or bestowed. With the role of leader comes responsibility—the aphorisms to that end ("Heavy is the head ..."; "To whom much is given ...") are too numerous to count.

For **Shepherd Thomas** (US'26)—honor roll student and elected captain of both the boys' varsity soccer team and Upper School's Hubbell House—leadership comes easily but is taken seriously.

"My coaches have told me I'm a natural leader," says Thomas. "I think my teammates see me as a leader because I'm not afraid to hold someone accountable or take responsibility myself."

Leadership runs in the family—father **Travis Thomas** (C'95) is a notable author and leadership coach and former mindset coach of the U.S. Men's National Soccer Team, and mother **Hollister (Smith) Thomas** (US'92, C'96) is head of community engagement at the Euphrates Institute, a global community-building and peacemaking organization. But call it nature or nurture; youngest son Shepherd has put in the work.

He has been playing soccer at a high level since age eight, spending his formative years at an elite soccer academy in Florida. Since arriving at Principia his sophomore year, Thomas has put in the hours, waking up early for a morning workout and then completing a full practice each afternoon. That work ethic enabled him to lead Principia to the State finals in both soccer and doubles tennis, dramatically scoring the winning goal with 30 seconds left in this year's State semifinal soccer game.

Leading a team to victory is one thing. Leading Upper School's Hubble House, full of diverse personalities and divergent priorities, is another. "In soccer, everyone wants to be there, and we all know what we have to do to succeed," Thomas explains. "But being the House Captain is more of a challenge. Not everyone wants to participate. That's where my skill with creating relationships comes in. If I can befriend someone or build trust, they will support what we're trying to do. If I treat them with respect, they will respect me in return."

Shepherd Thomas is already looking ahead to his next challenge at Principia College, where he will continue to play soccer and prepare for a business career. Whatever direction he takes—on the field and off— you can bet he will take the lead.

Faith, Respect, Effort, Enthusiasm: COACHING AT PRINCIPIA TODAY

STORY BY **ERIC MORSE (US'90)**

Broadly speaking, the coaching canon is well-defined and well-known. You've got your John Woodens and Phil Jacksons, your Vince Lombardis and your … Ted Lassos.

But at Principia, the job—the *purpose*—of coaching is unique. Principia's founder defined athletics as an integral part of a whole-person education. "We are told that 'training is the act of bringing one into a fit condition,' physically, mentally, or morally. Fitness of condition, then, is the result of a process of education," Mary Kimball Morgan once told a gathering of Principia parents.

"Here at Principia, we want students to grow in character," says College Athletics Director **Ramiro "Coach Ro" Dominguez**, "and we're looking for students who buy into that."

For School Athletics Director **Shawn Brown** (US'00, C'04), while athletics are part of a whole-person education, the inverse is also true: "All five aspects of the whole person can live in the athletic space." He explains, "Sports give opportunities to teach and coach the moral and social components; likewise, every sport has an intellectual side, and of course the spiritual component is huge."

Today's names, faces, methods, and facilities have changed, but Principia's whole-person, spiritually guided approach to athletics remains intact from the early days of the institution. At all levels, Principia coaches today are highly trained experts in their



"We want students to grow in character." — Ramiro "Coach Ro" Dominguez

fields; many hold advanced degrees; they are students of their sports, leaders of their teams, and people of faith. Principia coaches—from Lower School PE teachers who introduce young students to movement, to College coaches preparing adult athletes for the national stage—demonstrate how today's athletics programs are built for success on the scoreboard as well as integral to character growth and spiritual development. Or, in Brown's words, "winning in purpose and winning in objective."

"You have to see what real winning is."

"The objects we pursue and the spirit we manifest reveal our standpoint, and show what we are winning" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 239:20), wrote Mary Baker Eddy, Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science. This statement serves as both a definition and recipe for winning, and it pervades the coaching philosophy at Principia.

Lee Furnace is a recent addition to the School's athletics program, but he's been embracing Principia's coaching philosophy for decades. A two-sport collegiate athlete and member of two national championship teams, Furnace went on to coach wrestling and football at the college and professional levels, then created a successful nonprofit that teaches wrestling and character lessons to young people in underserved communities. He just finished his second year of teaching Lower and Middle School PE, while coaching Principia's revived wrestling program.

"You have to see what real winning is, and what we're winning at," says Furnace. "You get back to the basics of what you're here to do, and that's to let your light shine, to get better, to work toward your goals, and get a little better every day." Furnace adds, "We're going to win matches this way. We're going to win championships this way. If we

"We always bring it back to faith. Faith is first." — Lee Furnace





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"The Principia athlete is courageous, persistent, and receptive."
—Sarah (Jarvis) Grigsby

"We focus on the whole person ... loving everyone as God would."
— Grace Burrows
v



don't win the championships, we're going to win at life with our kids."

The proof is in the pudding: in just two years since resurrecting the program, the fledgling varsity wrestling team has sent nine wrestlers to the State meet, including two State finalists.

Together with fellow PE teachers **Sarah (Jarvis) Grigsby** (C'07), **Cameron Bania** (US'18) and **Nigel Marples**, Furnace is part of a team of elite athletes-turned-championship coaches who nurture Principia's youngest athletes. The vibrant PE program is a linchpin of Brown's plan to revitalize School athletics. "To close the gap [between Principia and its Metro League rivals], we need to start our students earlier, build their knowledge of the game and their competitive drive," he contends. "A lot of character is learned from hard work and resilience."

Marples played professional soccer in three countries before joining the School faculty a decade ago. Since then, he has taught in the classroom, served as Middle School athletic director, and led overachieving boys' and girls' varsity soccer teams to the State tournament. "Lots of teams talk about character, but at Principia it's paramount. That sets our programs apart," he says. "In Lower School PE, we teach 'Panther Way' qualities, like inclusivity, perseverance, joy, and embracing challenges. And that carries through to varsity sports in Upper School. These are unifying values that all Principia athletes connect with and that lead us spiritward—to grow spiritually."

"They're more than just athletes."

College baseball coach **Chris Marston** (US'06) was a Principian before he took his first breath. The third-generation Principia baseball coach bears the name—and the visage—of the School's most iconic baseball family. But the former D-II athlete has seen enough of other programs to immediately identify what sets Principia apart: "We don't look at our students and say, 'Oh, you're broken and we need to fix it,'" he explains. "We see their unlimited potential, and as coaches we help mold and uncover that potential."

On paper, Marston's counterpart



"Lots of teams talk about character. But at Principia, it's paramount."
— Nigel Marples

"As coaches, we help mold and uncover athletes' unlimited potential."
— Chris Marston

on the College softball diamond couldn't seem more different. While Marston has bled Principia baseball from the day he was born, new Principian **Grace Burrows** was playing basketball at Missouri Baptist University only a few years ago. But she is 100 percent aligned with Principia College's coaching mission. "We focus on the whole person, seeing everybody in God's image, and loving everyone like God would," says the college basketball star who, just two years out of school herself, was handed the reins of a softball team … with a roster of just two players.

It took Burrows only three years to turn Principia College softball into a competitive program. She credits Principia's welcoming environment with attracting athletes who are humble, selfless, and willing to put in the work. Her approach to coaching showed results on the stat sheet as well as school transcripts: her team boasted four Academic All-District athletes *and* set a school record for runs scored in a game (24). Just a few hours later, they broke that record by scoring 29 runs.

Another new face rewriting the Principia College record books is head track and field coach **Justin Halley**. In his first year as head coach, Halley led a team that featured 13 SLIAC All-Academic Team honorees, four athletes who competed at the national level, and the 2026 SLIAC Indoor Track Athlete of the Year.

Like his colleagues, Halley sees athletic accolades as one part of a bigger picture. "I want [the student-athletes] to understand that achieving a personal best is amazing and we're going to celebrate it. But if it doesn't happen, that's okay too." Halley continues, "What I really enjoy is working with the kids who are struggling, making time to talk and figuring out what I can do to help. Do they need to take time away from practice to focus on academics?



The key to success is building that relationship and understanding that they are more than just athletes."

The School has its own turnaround artist in boys' basketball coach **Jay Blossom**. The St. Louis Sports Hall of Fame coach came out of retirement to sign with Principia and made history in short order, winning Principia's first boys' basketball State Championship, then back-to-back State Championships, and quickly achieving a national top 10 ranking. Well-known for his success on the basketball court, Blossom is also a former U.S. Government teacher who prioritizes academics and character development in his coaching. "We emphasize academics," he says. "Everything we do serves education, and we have high standards for the kids to meet. Frankly, I get more out of seeing my players go on to have a family and be productive members of society than winning on the court."

Blossom's character-first approach and embrace of the whole person were immediately evident to Brown, who saw firsthand as the basketball coach "fell in love with this place," as Blossom puts it. "He was only going to give me 15–30 minutes and say, 'Thanks, but no thanks,' but we ended up talking for two hours. And then we talked for two hours every day for a few weeks," Brown recalls. "Because what Principia is trying to do in terms of winning in objective and winning in purpose—building kids up and preparing them to be better human beings in the world—convinced him. We're character educators, and that's a coach's first and foremost job."

"Letting our light shine on a bigger scale."

Principia's administrators hear the chatter. "Principia has changed," people say. But Directors Dominguez and Brown say nothing could be further from the truth. Success on the scoreboard simply proves the effectiveness of Principia's longstanding approach when applied to a growing community.

"The key to success is understanding they are more than just athletes."
— Justin Halley





"We have high standards, and our kids buy into that."
— Jay Blossom

Dominguez enjoys watching Principia transform student-athletes in real time. "When I talk to transfer students, they're hungry for our whole-person concept," he says. "They often say, 'I didn't feel supported at my old school.' Whereas at Principia, the environment is loving and supportive. There's a genuineness that makes us unique in higher education."

And that environment provides a pathway to success, according to College volleyball coach **Alana Hinson** (C'24). "From professors to coaches, at Principia, everyone wants you to succeed. And whether the students are Christian Scientists or not, they are looking to explore how their faith will play a central role in their life. That's huge for people who want the space to do so in their own manner. And Principia is great at encouraging spiritual growth."

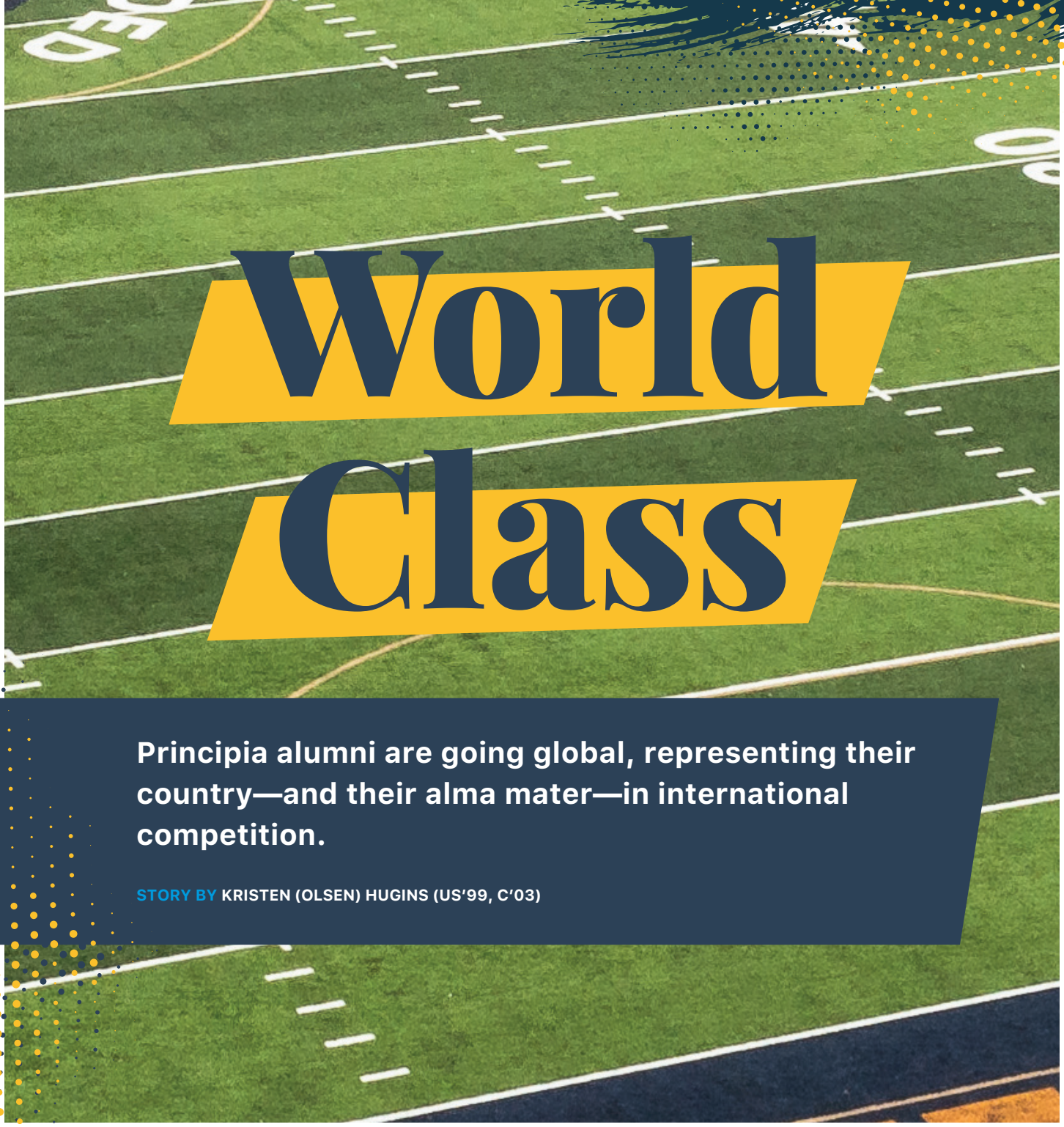
On the wrestling mat, Coach Furnace's philosophy has a distinctly Principian ring to it. "I tell my kids to wrestle FREE: that stands for faith, respect, effort, and enthusiasm. 'Wrestling FREE' allows them to be free from self-doubt and from focusing solely on outcomes. It frees them from anxiety and all the things athletes deal with. And we always bring it back to faith. Faith is first."

Blending a diversity of coaching talents around a singular purpose sows the seeds of success, says Halley. "[The coaches] all have different styles, but similar philosophies. Everybody embraced us with open arms here. It's been amazing," he beams. "Having that environment is crucial to building a strong program."

For Brown, this chapter of Principia's story is proof of what he's long known to be true. "We don't need to reinvent the wheel. Winning in objective and winning in purpose, and doing both of those things well, is our calling card. We're letting our light shine on a bigger scale."

"Students are looking to explore their faith ... and Principia is great at encouraging spiritual growth."
— Alana Hinson





World Class

Principia alumni are going global, representing their country—and their alma mater—in international competition.

STORY BY **KRISTEN (OLSEN) HUGINS (US'99, C'03)**

From winning gold medals to learning new languages, from overcoming injuries to coaching the next generation, five Principia alumni who are international athletes share their experiences and insights with *Purpose* readers. Though they play different sports, there is one common denominator among them. Be it friends, family, or coaches, the people they met who guided them during their time on the world stage of sports formed an irreplaceable team they will each cherish for life.

GOLDEN (MEDAL) ARM

Jenna Marston (US'09)



Baseball has shaped **Jenna Marston's** (US'09) life. She played in Venezuela for Team USA in the 2010 Women's Baseball World Cup, traveled to Japan in 2014 to play again for Team USA, and earned a gold medal in Canada at the 2015 Pan American Games.

Raised in St. Louis and now living in Springfield, Missouri, Marston first encountered baseball as a young girl observing her father, **Bill Marston** (US'75, C'80), coach the sport at Principia. "My family instilled a love of the game. I started playing tee ball at age four." Her family attended her Little League games, where she competed with her brother **Chris Marston** (US'06), now a baseball coach at Principia himself.

At Principia Upper School, Marston played softball, basketball, and baseball. She remembers College coach **Ken Leavoy** (C'75) telling her softball team, "You can have *fun*-fun, but you can also make hard work fun." He shared Principia athlete **Melanie (Fisher) Duffy's** (US'99) successes with that approach, which inspired and shaped Marston's mindset throughout her baseball career.



In 2010, Marston advanced through open tryouts for the women's Team USA and made the final cut. The team traveled to Venezuela to compete shortly after she joined and meshed quickly. She still cherishes her friendships with team members to this day.

In Venezuela—Marston's first time competing internationally—nearly 17,000 fans attended the game, a turnout she had never seen playing women's baseball in the U.S. "Venezuelan fans expressed such excitement to see the game."

In 2015, Marston participated in the Pan Am Games in Canada and won gold. Her own former coach Ken Leavoy was on staff for the Canadian women's softball team, who also won gold. In mutual Principian support, they cheered each other on. "Winning a gold medal was awesome! Hearing the national anthem with 'USA' across your chest is a great feeling," Marston shared.

Marston offers young athletes this advice: "Do whatever it takes. If you feel like giving up, aren't sure it's worth it, or have to do tough things, remember ... it's absolutely worth it to go abroad and play the game you love."

Glancing at her gold medal now, Marston knows she did not earn it alone. Everything her parents did for her, how her brother challenged and supported her, and the encouragement from her Principia coaches—Coach Leavoy, Coach **Larry Frank** (US'81), and her dad—all led to that singular accomplishment. "Winning the gold and becoming the woman I am today was a team effort."

TAKING A EURO-STEP

TreVaughn Goodman (C'20)



TreVaughn Goodman (C'20) has played basketball most of his life: first in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where he was raised, then at Principia College, and now internationally, in Spain.

A love of the game runs in his family. Goodman's mother won state championships, broke records, and played on a full-ride scholarship at Alabama A&M. When Goodman was six, his mom nudged him, "Let's go to the court and shoot."

While he valued his mom as his inspiration and his rock, his inner competitive drive pushed him to excel beyond even what she had achieved. Today, he knows she's proud of him for persisting, but "She never knew that my internal fire came from trying to be even better than her," he admits.

After some challenging early years, attending Principia College was a bit of a culture shock. Goodman gives head coach **Todd Zimmerman** (C'11) a lot of credit for helping him adjust. "[Zimmerman] met a rowdy, arrogant eighteen-year-old who just wanted to play basketball."

Even when Goodman started arguments with teammates, Zimmerman believed in him, reminding him, "Your identity is more than basketball." Zimmerman ensured Goodman left a positive legacy at Principia—not only on the court, but as a person. "Todd catapulted me forward. When he retired, we gave him a players' tribute. I still talk with him today."

Goodman also played rugby at Principia for two years, coached by **Ward Patterson** (C'82). Patterson helped him see people for who they are on the inside. "Without Ward and Todd sticking beside me, I wouldn't be who I am today."

For the past six years playing basketball in Montenegro, Serbia, and Spain, Goodman has continued to mature. He learned Spanish while playing on the tight-knit team Cabezuelo CB (Club Baloncesto) Socuéllamos. Teammate Diego Serrano became TreVaughn's best friend, and Serrano's family took him in. Goodman celebrated Spanish holidays with Serrano's family who referred to him as "hijo," son. Most recently, he played for Estudiantes Cartagena in Spain.

When he's not training or competing during the eight-to-ten-month basketball season in Europe, Goodman appreciates the gifts of being a global athlete: other countries' slower pace and lifestyle, their languages, food, and social experiences. "You don't know who you truly are until you step out of your boundaries and evolve."

Today, Goodman advises young athletes considering global careers: "Stay in your lane; there's no traffic there. It's just you versus you, getting one percent better each day. Beware of comparison culture. Compete with yourself, and what's meant for you will unfold."





SWISS ARMY MAN

Robert Baker (C'78)

During **Robert Baker's** (C'78) freshman year at Principia College, he learned and excelled in what became his favorite decathlon event—the javelin. "When you get the aerodynamic flight pattern right, it takes off like a plane!" At 6'1", powerful and strong from weightlifting, and well-practiced in throws, hurdles, and more, Baker wanted to compete in every decathlon event: nine throwing, running, and jumping events, plus hurdles.

The summer after his freshman year, Baker returned home to Amarillo, Texas to expand his decathlon skills. On his college breaks going forward, Baker lived with a Principia alumni family in California where he was able to practice six days a week.

After graduating from the College, Baker trained year-round for six years in Santa Barbara, California. He did three decathlons a year in the U.S. and competed almost every weekend in the winter against international teams. He came in eighth at the Olympic decathlon trials.

During the height of the Cold War in 1980, the U.S. led a boycott of the Summer Olympic Games in Moscow. Baker had made the USA international team. The top three athletes would participate in the Olympics, and the six athletes below them would head to Germany. Unfortunately, both opportunities were canceled due to the boycott. Although disheartening for Baker, he was grateful for his opportunities to train for nearly a decade in California's top-notch facilities and beautiful environment.

After returning to the Midwest, Baker's first coaching job was at Principia Upper School with **Bill Simon** (US'54). He coached track for 30 years at both the Upper School and College (where his wife, **Joy (Clayton) Baker** (US'79), still teaches dance), and for eight years at the nearby Mary Institute Country Day School. He also coached a U.S. decathlon team in Canada.

Most important, Baker is grateful he made good friends who were fellow athletes. One close friend he competed against was state track champion Tony Allen-Cooksey, the first African American student to attend Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology in Indiana. "He visited Principia a lot, sometimes for dances. We even moved to California simultaneously and still remain close."

When it comes to training, Baker declares: "Follow your dreams. Research and live by the best facility, coach, and practice group. Make sacrifices, stay with a family if necessary, and train to compete. Commit completely to the sport and keep getting better."





SPIKING IN GERMAN

Christina (Speer) Watzula (US'05, C'09)



Raised in San Luis Obispo, California, **Christina (Speer) Watzula** (US'05, C'09) started playing basketball in fourth grade, joining a volleyball team in middle school. She played both sports at Principia Upper School and College, where her love of volleyball grew.

Watzula valued how much her coaches and professors took an interest in their students. "I'd wander into their offices and invite them to join me for lunch. And they would!" Watzula's Principia volleyball coach, **Mary Ann Sprague-Denison** (C'84), provided her with sports contacts outside of Principia. One St. Louis volleyball coach offered her conditioning training at an open gym, where a European coach there encouraged her to go pro. Until then, Watzula had no idea professional volleyball existed, or that she could play in Europe.

The next steps of her journey required strong trust in God. At Principia, she had developed and strengthened that trust. Through prayer, she knew the right spot awaited her.

Sprague helped Watzula enroll in tryouts for players seeking volleyball careers in Europe. The tryouts, held in Slovenia, led to an invitation to play in Germany. At age twenty-two, speaking no German, she leaned in and accepted. Soon afterward, a German club signed her and she quickly started learning the language.

Later, Watzula joined another club that reached the final round of the 2014 German Volleyball Cup, attended by 10,000 spectators. A third team she played on participated in the CEV Challenge Cup and traveled to Austria, Switzerland, Israel, Türkiye, and Azerbaijan.

Over her six-year international volleyball career, Watzula has played on teams with players from Serbia, Czechia, Hungary, Australia, Germany, and England. She loved experiencing the diverse cultures. She also enjoyed coaching at beach volleyball camps (including in Türkiye), coaching young players, and doing translation work to help sponsors and teammates with essential paperwork.

Being a global athlete even connected Watzula with her husband, a friend of her assistant coach back then. Married since 2019, she and her husband live in Dresden, Germany.

When she graduated in 2009, Germany was not even on her travel list, but she loves living there now and is fluent in German.



To young athletes, Watzula urges, "Cherish your love of the game and the joy of playing. Very few people in professional volleyball get rich, and it's not a career that lasts forever, so hang on to that joy of playing. Joy is so important in all you do."



Head Rugby Coach at Principia College, **Damir Conci** (C'25) started playing the sport at age six in Villa Carlos Paz, Córdoba Province, Argentina. Eventually, he became the Córdoba state team captain. Soon after, a club from his grandparents' home country of Croatia learned of his interest in their national team. After watching him play against the best team in the league, the club invited 17-year-old Conci to join the Croatian national team. He loved traveling internationally as their youngest player, alongside teammates from South Africa and New Zealand.

By 18, however, he already had a troublesome shoulder injury, a broken nose and ears, and a hurt ankle. Conci began considering further education and found Principia. "Principia offered a chance to study while easing back into rugby, and I loved that idea."

For four years, Conci captained Principia's rugby team, with players from Zimbabwe, Argentina, Kenya, South Africa, and the U.S. "We passionate Argentinians like to get super motivated before a game and go wild. The more chill South Africans on our team listened to music instead," he recalls.

Navigating the team members' different perspectives, Conci led them to calmly talk through disagreements. Soon, the team's chemistry shifted, creating an unbreakable bond between the players. To foster teamwork, Conci figured out what each player preferred and planned pregame warmups accordingly.

While attending Principia, Conci still played about five games per year for the Croatian national team. After graduation, Conci stayed at Principia to coach the Thunder Chickens.

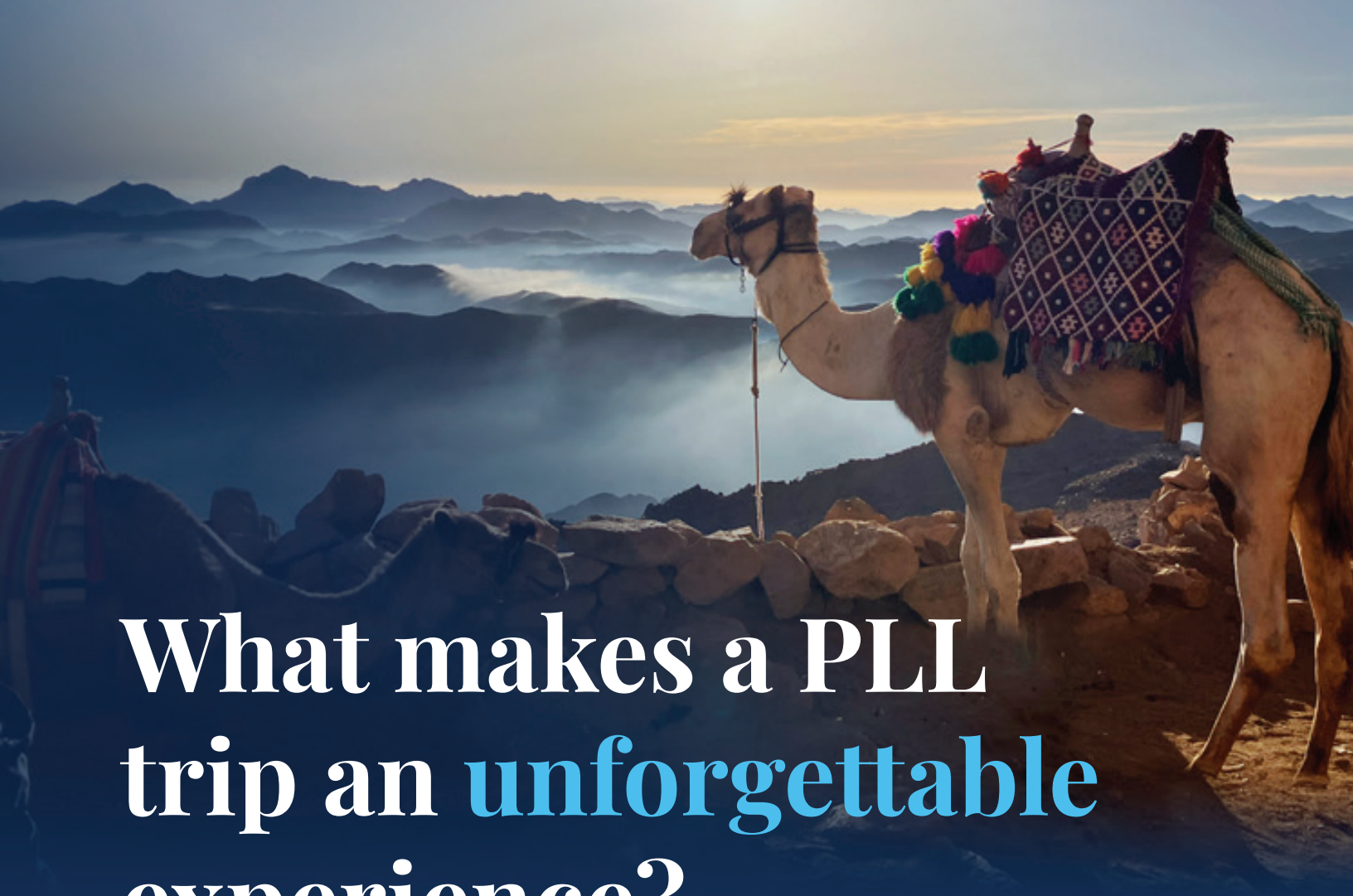
Conci encourages aspiring athletes to stay open to improvement, pursue goals despite the cost, and be present. He shares that many of the determined players and coaches he has known were not that talented to begin with but worked hard and seized opportunities. "I tell athletes interested in international careers that their chance will arrive. Your talent level shouldn't stop you. If you are prepared, you will make it."

Conci plans to continue promoting rugby's growth in North, Central, and South America. To do so, he's considering becoming an executive manager of a league or club. To prepare for this next step, Conci will be attending Wheeling University on a full scholarship to earn his MBA and serve as forwards coach. "Rugby is my love. It's taken me everywhere in life."



SCRUM MASTER

Damir Conci (C'25)



What makes a PLL trip an unforgettable experience?





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"From start to finish, the loving and generous care in all the details made for an **extraordinary journey**. There we were, learning about these **spectacular places** and spaces with excellent guides and our **Principia trip scholar**."

"I expected this trip to be educational. I expected to learn a lot, and I did! But the experience was so much more than that. It was not only a **journey of the head, but also of the heart**. The special experiences you created for us, as well as the kindness and generosity shared, touched me in a way that I'll never forget."

"Twice I have gone on PLL trips by myself, and I always felt so included and befriended and welcome. **What a blessing!**"



"I appreciated the friendship and camaraderie I experienced. **The whole trip was wonderful!**"



"The people! Our trip leaders, tour guides, bus drivers, and everyone connected to this incredible **adventure of a lifetime**. Also, the organization, daily excursions, and first-class accommodations."

"It was **absolutely fantastic**. Everyone was so friendly, and it was so nice to go on all the excursions with people we knew. ... Principia took great care of us, and **I would highly recommend a Principia trip** to anyone."

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Learn.



Dearest Alumni & Friends!

What a remarkable year 2026 has already been! From welcoming the Classes of 2026 into our alumni family, to traveling across three continents with Principia Lifelong Learning, to celebrating together at Reunion in June, each event has been a joyful reminder of the enduring spirit of Principia and the extraordinary light our alumni and friends bring to the world.

As we look ahead to the remainder of the year, we're excited for all that lies ahead: cheering the Solar Car team on along its route from Minnesota to Texas; exploring Alaska, Egypt, and Europe together; welcoming alumni back to campus for the College Gold & Blue Weekend and Athletic Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony; and connecting through many more in-person and virtual gatherings.

We also invite all alumni and friends to help share the gift of a Principia education by referring prospective students. Through our referral scholarship program, students who enroll receive a $1,000 annual scholarship to either Principia School or Principia College. To learn more and submit a referral, visit **principia.edu/refer**.

And, as always, we warmly invite you to come home to Principia. Whether it's for a campus visit or tour, a Pub shake, or simply time to reconnect, we would love to welcome you back.

Lovelovelove!

Merrilee

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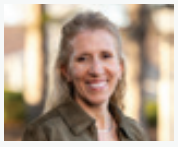
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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Filmmaker Kira Powell has 'Best Eyes' and Best Short Film



Alumni visits are a special opportunity for students to see where life might take them, and to remind alumni how far they have come since graduation.

Most recently, **Kira Powell** (C'06) paid a visit to the School and College campuses, sharing her journey in filmmaking with Principia students.

After graduating from Principia College, Powell moved to Los Angeles and discovered her love for acting. She was featured in many award-winning commercials and indie films, but after five years, Powell decided she wanted to share her own story.

Powell started writing *Caught in the Mix*, a one-woman show reflecting on her childhood—growing up half Black, half Ecuadorian in a majority White community. She was inspired to apply to the American Film Institute (AFI) to expand her one-woman show into a thesis film, *Best Eyes*.

"When I went [to AFI], I was able to write and develop my short film, *Best Eyes*. Now I can use it as proof of concept for a feature," Powell explained.

As a student, Powell pursued myriad opportunities through classes and clubs. She was involved in Principia Internet Radio and the newscasting team, developing experience in various aspects of media. "There was a lot of diversity here, in terms of what I could learn. That helped me transition into life," said Powell.

Powell emphasized how Principia helped her develop her value system. "The way we treat people and the way we want to be treated and respected ... you do that by being your authentic self."

College junior **Alex Kibbe** was moved by her career journey. "Seeing Kira pursue her passion was inspiring. It was a good reminder that your voice has value," she said.

Best Eyes has already earned notable accolades, including:

- 57th NAACP Image Awards Nominee–Outstanding Short Form (Live Action)
- 2025 AAFCA/LEJA Afro-Latino Short Film Competition–1st Place
- 2024 DGA Student Film Awards–Jury Award for Best African American Student Filmmaker

"To be your authentic self, you need to feel safe, and I always felt safe here at Principia," Powell reflected. "It was a peaceful and nurturing environment for me, and I could be my full self and not be afraid. I've carried these things with me throughout my life."

Class Notes

C'72

Pictured at a Friends of Eliestoun board meeting in Elsah are **Danne Rhaesa** (C'79), **Alice (Englemann) Dervin** (C'73), Linda Mace, and **Philip Smith** (C'72). **Jeri (Prugh) Hosmer Lewitz** (C'55) started Friends of Eliestoun to preserve the historic home.



C'75

Alumni from the 1973 Australia Abroad reunited at the 2026 College Reunion. The geology- and education-focused abroad included stays in Melbourne, Heron Island, the Barrier Reef, and mining areas such as Broken Hill. Bottom row: **Les Baker** (C'75), **Betsy (Garland) Lovell** (C'75); Top row: Jim Golmon, **Nancy (Richardson) Golmon** (C'74), **Laurie (Crow) Holser** (US'72, C'76), **Scott Hedberg** (C'75), **Ann Farley Gaines** (C'76), and Geoffrey Novelli.



C'77

Members of the Principia Club of North Carolina—**Andria (Witt) D'Errico** (C'75), **ZuZu (Faller) Freyer** (C'74), **Inge Hardi** (C'77), and **Doug Sherry** (C'71)—joined their families and 15 core volunteers from Sleep in Heavenly Peace on Saturday, April 25, to build 22 twin beds for children in Durham County, North Carolina, as part of Principia's Global Days of Service. Sleep in Heavenly Peace is a national nonprofit dedicated to ensuring that no child sleeps without a bed of their own.



C'82

Richard Crandell (C'82) participated in a Principia Lifelong Learning trip to Southeast Asia in January 2026. Former Principia College professor and president **John W. Williams, JD** (C'76), served as the trip scholar aboard the

Honors

Honorary Alumni Association Membership Award – Lucy Harper

In June, the Principia Alumni Association Board proudly awarded Honorary Alumni Association Membership to Lucy Harper in recognition of her extraordinary service and commitment to Principia. For decades, Lucy has been a devoted friend and champion of the institution, generously supporting students, faculty, and leadership while helping shape the Horace Edwin Harper, Jr. and Evelyn Wright Harper Award for Teaching Excellence. Lucy's integrity, generosity, and dedication to Principia's mission continue to strengthen and inspire our community, making her a deserving recipient of this distinguished honor.



Susie (Levy) Ledbetter (C'70), **Ed Harper** (US'59, C'63), **Lucy Harper** (HON'26), **Madelon Maupin** (C'73), and **Barbara Blackwell** (HON'22).

cruise liner *Oceania Regatta* for the 14-night journey, which included stops in six ports in Indonesia, four ports in Malaysia, and the island of Phuket, Thailand. Principia alumni and friends benefitted from Williams's regional expertise and cultural knowledge as they toured natural and manmade wonders. Highlights included Hindu temples, Islamic mosques, stunning landscapes, and the monumental stupa of Borobudur on the island of Java, where the travelers paused for a group photo.





US'84

Lauralyn Brown (US'84, C'88) wrote and illustrated her first children's book, *The Love-You Moon*. This hopeful and gentle story helps children cope with separation. When Buzz, a young bear cub, misses his daddy, he discovers that they can both see the Moon, no matter how far apart they are. As the Moon's phases change, Buzz learns to count the days until his daddy's return, finding comfort and connection in the night sky. An encouraging story, it helps children feel close to the ones they love, no matter where they are. Its detailed illustrations and tender message coax conversation and curiosity, reminding readers that love can shine across any distance, just like the Moon. The book is available on Amazon.



C'84

Lynn (Herbert) Thorp (C'84) has been hard at work on her newest project, *MV Signs Then & Now*, a practical sign language television series for Martha's Vineyard's local public access channel. The 26-lesson series, developed as a collaborative community project, helps hearing people build a shared visual language through simple gestures, fingerspelling, and basic ASL signs. Its goal is to bridge communication gaps among families, friends, coworkers, and the broader community, fostering stronger connections among hearing, hard of hearing, and deaf individuals, as well as people with voice or developmental challenges, and those for whom English is a second language.

US'92

Heather Newkirk (US'92, C'96) and her husband Ross are celebrating the relocation and expansion of their holistic center, Awaken Wholeness Center LLC, which reopened in Richmond, Rhode Island, last fall. Spanning 4,000 square feet on 3.5 acres, the center features cutting-edge technologies, various holistic services, energy practitioners, classes, and events.

C'16

After six years with the St. Louis and San Antonio Police Departments, **Henry Hathaway** (C'16) graduated from the U.S. Marshals Academy in December 2025 and is now a Deputy U.S. Marshal in Alpine, Texas. Henry is also engaged to be married to Alejandra Calvillo in October 2026.

US'21

Emma (Franklin) Warrick (US'21, C'25) married **Jacob Warrick** (US'21, C'25) on October 17 at Pleasant Hill Chapel in Defiance, Missouri. Jacob and Emma met in seventh grade at Principia Middle School, and began dating their senior year at the Upper School.



Class Notes

From the Chapel Green to the Putting Green

by **Kris Smith** (C'82)

This is a celebration of a daughter's accomplishments and a lifelong friendship. It's the story of two Principia College graduates—at the time, a freshman and a junior—paired at random as roommates in the fall of 1978 in Principia's Brooks North House.

Eric Larmer (US'76, C'80) and I have stayed in touch over the years, while living in various parts of the country and pursuing different career paths. Eric's careers in business, finance, and executive coaching were a far cry from mine as a teacher and PGA golf professional. We stayed connected in a somewhat cursory fashion through the years, but that took a turn for the better when my daughter Kate Smith-Stroh began pursuing her career as a professional golfer.

Kate honed her skills at the University of Nebraska where she won a Big-10 title and went on to play in nationally acclaimed amateur events, such as The U.S. Women's Amateur, the Augusta National Women's Amateur, and The Palmer Cup. It's been a fun journey—one filled with the typical ups and downs of golf. Our family was collectively pinching ourselves as Kate qualified for the LPGA Tour in 2025.

This is where Eric comes in more than 25 years later. Eric became an integral part of the story, caddying for Kate multiple times throughout her stint on the Epson Tour from 2022–2024. Together, Kate and Eric had some strong finishes.

It has been an incredible experience to reunite with my first college roommate. Eric has been there for Kate's journey. Kate also appreciates that Eric and I have close to a 45-year friendship that started in Brooks North way back in 1978. At the time, a college freshman and junior did not see this life story looming over the horizon. Thank you, Eric, for sharing Kate's journey and career with me and my family.

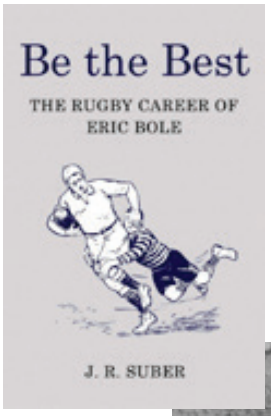


1980 Golf Team - Eric Larmer second from left



1982 Golf Team - Kris Smith back row far left

Eric Bole (FS'54) Recognized Among England Rugby Greats



In April 2026, the England Rugby Football Union (RFU) announced it would award retrospective international caps to 47 players, formally recognizing those who represented England in matches dating back to 1945. Among them was **Eric Bole** (FS'54). During the 1940s, Bole was an accomplished rugby player. He captained the rugby team at Cambridge University, represented England in six Victory Internationals, and won three County Championships playing for Lancashire.

Throughout his 17 years at Principia, Bole served as soccer coach, houseparent, Middle School teacher, principal of Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools, and Upper School headmaster before being named vice president of Principia. Later, he served on the Board of Trustees.

"It is only right," the RFU announcement states, "that we formally acknowledge their achievements. These caps are a long-overdue honour, and we look forward to celebrating these individuals and their families as we place their names into the permanent history of English rugby."

James Suber (C'11) self-published *Be the Best: The Rugby Career of Eric Bole,* available on Amazon.

For the full announcement, visit **englandrugby.com**.



Eric Bole on the rugby pitch

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Every planned gift is an act of faith in Principia's future. By naming Principia as a beneficiary in your will, trust, or retirement account, you help ensure that the values that shaped your own life continue to uplift students for generations to come.

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To explore how your legacy can bless future Principians, contact **Tucker Fendon (C'05), Major Gift and Planned Giving Officer,** at 314.514.3119 or tucker.fendon@principia.edu.



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Join us for an exciting weekend in Elsah, including a celebration of our 2026 Gold & Blue Athletic Hall of Fame inductees.

- Pam (Lindquist) Blaney (C'86)
- Alan Cheatham (C'12)
- Christina Day (US'03, C'07)
- Coach Lee Ellis
- Ken Leavoy (C'75)
- Wylie Mangelsdorf (C'14)
- 1959 Men's Track & Field Team
- 2013 Rugby Team

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Edith (Daischer) Frame (US'44)
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Peggy (Mayer) Norman (C'48)

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Aileen (Musgrave) Seshun (US'53)

Thomas "Tom" G. Treanor (US'51, JC'53)

Edward "Eddie" R. Murphy, Jr. (US'55, C'60)

Richard "Dick" H. Ward (US'57)

Bonnie (Bleichman) Hockman (US'64)

Janet M. Hilliker (C'64)

Norman "Norm" G. Bleichman (US'61, C'65)

Cyrus "Cy" J. Bunting (US'61)
Former Faculty/Staff

Susan "Susie" (Edwards) Getzschman (US'61, C'65)
Former Faculty/Staff

Peter A. Ward (C'66)
Former Faculty/Staff

Sally (Schauman) Brown (C'67)

Jan (Harrison) Abrams (US'65, C'69)

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Wendella (Arbour) Edginton (US'70, C'74)

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