

King City Secondary School Hosts Inspiring Alumni-Student Forum with Help from PAE Students

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A powerful spirit of connection and inspiration filled the halls of King City Secondary School as students engaged in a unique opportunity to learn from some of the school's most accomplished graduates during an alumni-student forum hosted by the Personalized Alternative Education (PAE) department.

The event, held on Thursday, May 15, brought together Grade 11 and 12 students with inductees to the school's Case of Distinction, a longstanding initiative celebrating distinguished alumni. Over 100 students attended each session throughout the day, listening to and engaging with alumni from a wide range of professional backgrounds.

The success of the event was due in large part to the involvement of students in the PAE department, who played a hands-on role in planning, organizing, and executing the forum. In the days leading up to the event, PAE students visited classrooms to introduce

the presenters and share information about their achievements. On the day of the forum, they also acted as emcees, helping to welcome speakers, guide the flow of sessions, and ensure that everything ran smoothly.

"This was such a thought-provoking event for students," one alumni participant commented. "I hope you hold these smaller group events again for upcoming students."

Among the featured speakers were:

- Terry Hoover, maple syrup producer
- J. Robert Gardiner, legal and literary professional
- Loredana Cunti, specialist in arts and literature
- Jung-Yul Kim, former professional football player and police officer
- Dorothy Engelman, media and communications entrepreneur
- Cindy Payne-Frostad, independent educator and consultant.



Inductee Speakers. Back left to right: Bob Gardiner, Dorothy Engelman, Jung-Yul Kim, Cindy Payne-Frostad, Terry Hoover, Lorie Cunti. Front: KCSS PAE teachers Rebecca DeMille, Val Maniatis.

These alumni shared deeply personal stories of challenge, perseverance, and achievement, offering students a glimpse into the many paths that life after high school can take. Teachers reported strong engagement from students, who were eager to ask questions and absorb insights about post-secondary life and career choices.

“It was nice seeing all the different paths available and to always keep an open mind,” said one student. “You never know where you will end up in 20+ years.”

Another student reflected, “I really liked everything about the whole event. Being able to see people that were once in our same exact shoes and seeing the life choices they made was really interesting.”

The event drew its inspiration from several existing school initiatives, including Experiential Learning, Pathways to Opportunity, and Pathways Planning and Supports. Organized as an informal, small-group forum, it allowed students to move beyond passive observation and actively participate in conversations with alumni.

The alumni featured are among the 72 (soon to be 73) individuals honored in the Case(s) of Distinction, displayed prominently in the school’s front foyer. Established in 2003 by the KCSS Alumni Association, the Case showcases plaques with bios and then-and-now photos of graduates who have made notable contributions to their professions and communities.



In an era where traditional alumni reunions have waned and connections often live online, such as through www.kcssalumni.com, the event was a deliberate attempt to rekindle real-life mentorship between past and present students. With King City Secondary School approaching its 65th anniversary in 2026, the event felt particularly timely.

The forum was spearheaded by PAE teacher Val Maniatis, along with colleagues Rebecca DeMille, Daniel Rogers, and Imola Szentgyorgyi, who recognized the value of face-to-face inspiration in helping students explore future possibilities.

The event also marked a poignant moment for the school community: it came shortly after the announcement that the Case of Distinction Committee and the KCSS Alumni Association would cease operations in 2025. Ms. Maniatis, who joined the Committee in 2023 after years of serving as a liaison, saw this event as a way to continue the legacy of alumni-student connection in a new form.

The team hopes to expand the event in the future, including a broader range of alumni voices representing various trades, professions, and life experiences.

As one student summed it up:

"I thought it was a good experience to get the chance to talk to people about their future and ours."

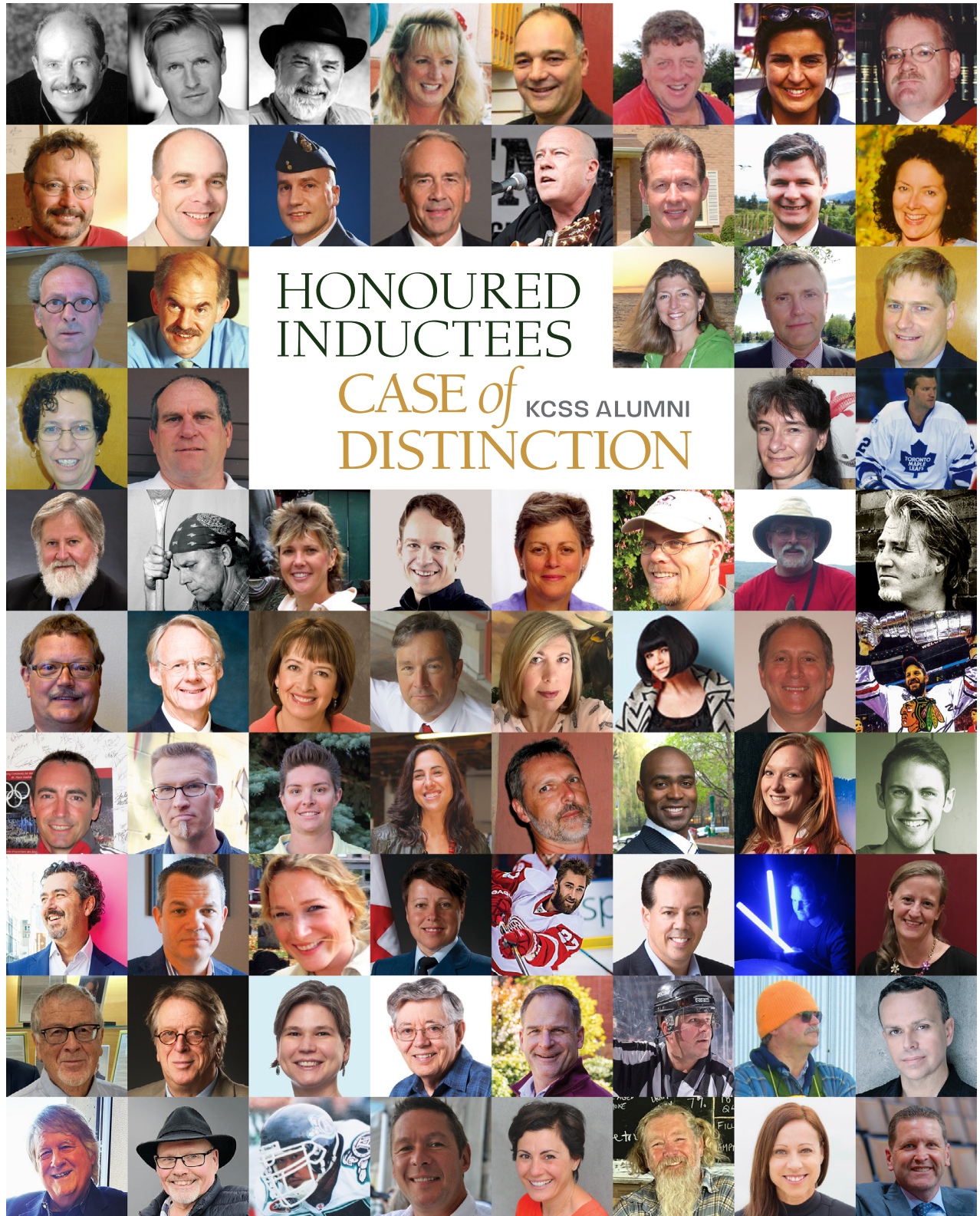


Illustration: Andrew Heffron
(KCSS 1988-95) COD Inductee 2012



KING CITY SECONDARY SCHOOL ALUMNI

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