Brett Hurt, Glass Half Full founders honored as 2026 Entrepreneurs of the Year

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Tech entrepreneur and Tulane parent Brett A. Hurt highlighted the transformative potential of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) in his remarks as 2026 Distinguished Entrepreneur of the Year.

Tulane University honored tech entrepreneur Brett A. Hurt and Glass Half Full founders Franziska Trautmann (SSE ’20) and Max Steitz (SLA ’20) as Entrepreneurs of the Year at the 2026 Albert Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation Awards Gala.

The event, an annual presentation of the Lepage Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Tulane’s Freeman School of Business, was held March 10 at the Audubon Tea Room in New Orleans. The Lepage Center presents the awards each year to highlight outstanding entrepreneurs in the Tulane community. Hurt received the Distinguished Entrepreneur of the Year Award, which recognizes individuals who

are dedicated to improving the community through proven innovative initiatives and who exemplify entrepreneurial success and philanthropic generosity. Trautmann and Steitz received the Outstanding Social Entrepreneurs of the Year Award, which honors individuals who have attained notable success in developing, promoting and sustaining initiatives that benefit and strengthen the social foundation of our community.

The gala featured remarks by Josh Fleig, chief innovation officer with Louisiana Economic Development, and Tulane President Michael A. Fitts, who introduced Hurt, as well as Freeman School Dean Paulo Goes and Lepage Center Executive Director Rob Lalka.

Hurt is a visionary leader who began programming at the age of 7 and went on to earn an MIS degree from the University of Texas at Austin and an MBA from the Wharton School. He currently serves as CEO of Love Conquers Fear, a purpose-driven venture focused on helping humanity realize abundance for all.

A serial entrepreneur, Hurt founded and served as CEO of Coremetrics, a top-rated web analytics firm that was acquired by IBM in 2010. He subsequently co-founded and led Bazaarvoice, a leading software-as-a-service (SaaS) platform that helps brands and retailers collect, manage and display user-generated content such as ratings, reviews, photos and Q&As. More recently, he co-founded and served as CEO of data.world, a cloud-native, SaaS-based data catalog and governance platform. The company was acquired by ServiceNow in 2025 to power its AI platform.

With his wife of 29 years, Debra, Hurt co-leads Hurt Family Investments, which supports over 85 startups and numerous philanthropic efforts. He and Debra live in Austin, Texas, and have two children, Yuzu and Rachel (BSM ’27), a current Tulane triple-major student.

In accepting the award, Hurt highlighted the “magical” potential of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), the theoretical future of AI, which offers humanity the promise of solutions to our greatest existential challenges, from health care to energy to climate change.

“The magic is us leaning into love, allowing love to conquer fear, and embracing that future abundance for all,” Hurt said. “I’m 95% certain that we make it, but it’s really going to take Team Humanity, leaning in and doing it together, and it’s going to take great institutions like Tulane, manifesting that love and manifesting that hope. You

guys are in such a good position to do it, and this city is in such a good position to do it.”



Glass Half Full's Franziska Trautmann speaks after receiving the 2026 Tulane Outstanding Social Entrepreneurs of the Year Award as her co-founder Max Steitz looks on.

Trautmann and Steitz founded Glass Half Full in 2020 out of their shared frustration with the lack of glass recycling infrastructure in New Orleans. What began as a grassroots backyard operation has evolved into a regional powerhouse for environmental sustainability. Operating from a 10,000-square-foot facility in Chalmette, Glass Half Full processes glass waste into high-quality sand and gravel products. This recycled material serves critical local needs, including coastal restoration, wetland rebuilding and flood mitigation across Louisiana. By keeping processing local, the organization has successfully diverted millions of pounds of glass from landfills while expanding its reach into Mississippi and Alabama.

In her remarks, Trautmann thanked the many groups and people who contributed to the success of Glass Half Full.

“I think a lot of times, people try to use our story to say that individuals can make a big difference — which is true — but it’s also so many people in this room and not in

this room," Trautmann said. "From the beginning, it's been a team effort, and I think that gets hidden behind the, 'Oh, these two kids did this thing,' but it's taken so many of us and this community, and I don't think we could have done it anywhere else, and I don't think we could have started it anywhere else but Tulane."