



## **2022 Alumni Distinguished Service Award Ashlye Rumph-Geddis Wilkerson '05**

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The Alumni Distinguished Service Award recognizes a Winthrop alumna/us who significantly contributes to the quality of life in their community, the development of overall values and morals within others and serves as an outstanding citizen. Distinguished service may have been rendered with one's community, church, charity, family and school on a national, state or local level. The recipient shall be a dedicated alumna/us who supports the growth and development of Winthrop through service to and/or support of established programs and objectives.

The 2022 Alumni Distinguished Service Award recipient is Ashlye Rumph-Geddis Wilkerson '05.

A community leader and advocate, Wilkerson fully embodies the spirit of excellence. She has a background in early childhood education and child psychology and formerly taught kindergarten and first-grade students. She also used her expertise as an adjunct professor in the Richard W. Riley College of Education, as well as in the Women's Leadership Studies program.

Wilkerson is lauded for her impact on education and literacy and was honored with resolutions from the South Carolina Senate and House of Representatives for her work with children's literature. She has four published titles: "Tori Finds Shapes All Around," "Tori Finds Colors All Around," "Tori Explores South Carolina" and "Tori Visits the Farm: Counting 1-10." Her books were adopted by Richland County School District One, City of Columbia's Together We Can Read Initiative and by former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley for her literacy platform across the state.

At the age of 29, Wilkerson was appointed by the South Carolina General Assembly to the Winthrop Board of Trustees to represent Congressional District 6. She is the youngest member of the Board of Trustees and is the only woman of color.

Hired as the inaugural professor for the Women in Leadership in South Carolina course at Columbia College, Wilkerson developed a course that celebrated the local women from across the state by developing and implementing a 10-week speaker series, "Women Lead SC." The series focused on topics that included Women Leaders in Faith and Religion, Business and Entrepreneurship, Health and Medicine, Non-Profit, Philanthropy and Community Engagement, Media and Publication, Education and Policy, Arts and Athletics, and Politics.

She served as the franchise owner and operator of the award-winning Wine & Design for eight years.

Wilkerson is the founder and thought-leader of the Phenomenal Women Leading-Women's Empowerment community with a network of more than 70,000 members across the globe. Services include coaching, online courses, mentorship and speaking engagements.

Wilkerson earned a bachelor of arts in philosophy from Winthrop University in 2005, a master of arts in teaching from Hampton University and a doctoral degree in teaching and learning from the University of South Carolina. She also attained two professional certificates in servant leadership and executive leadership from Cornell University.



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Wilkerson has received several distinguished honors, such as being named Who's Who Among Professional Women, The State 20/40, Columbia Business Monthly Best and Brightest 35 Under 35, National Council of Negro Women "Living the Legacy" award, The RAM Foundation Education Trailblazer, Midlands American Business Women's Association Business Associate of the Year, South Carolina Black Pages 20/40 and Columbia Metropolitan Magazine Top Ten Columbia Young Professionals.

She is a graduate from several leadership professional development programs, has served on more than a dozen boards and committees including the S.C. Humanities Board, and has volunteered with more than 10 non-profit organizations across the Midlands.

She is an active member of Rotary International, Junior League of Columbia, Jack & Jill of Columbia, The Links, Incorporated and the Gamma Nu Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. She and her husband, L. Kobie Wilkerson III, are the parents of two daughters, Alana and Aria.