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SUMMER 2024

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Dear Friends:

You've heard me say that Winthrop is on the rise, and much of that trajectory-shaping work fills our work days and beyond at the university right now. Enrollment indicators are the strongest they have been post-COVID. Admitted students are up over last year and two years ago, deposited freshmen and transfers are up, and our June Orientation sessions have been so full that we have added extra spots to accommodate our incoming Eagles. That success and excitement are mirrored in recent philanthropic accomplishments with fundraising totals this year already showing a more than 60 percent year-over-year increase over the past two years with an expected total of over \$4.5 million on the fiscal year books by the end of June. Watch for details on several exciting new gifts in the coming months.

I couldn't be more proud of these and other achievements that are building to the full launch this fall of our strategic plan, **Winthrop: United in**

**Excellence.** I hope you'll take a few moments to read some additional great things happening at Winthrop in this magazine edition, such as:

- The 60th anniversary of integration, and how Winthrop acknowledged the milestone; • Tales from alumni who wore the Big Stuff mascot costume during their time at Winthrop; • The WinthropLIFE program and how it prepares students for independent living; • A collaborative partnership with Hope House to help those in need;
- Compelling profiles on Kevin James '01, the 2023 HBCU President of the Year, and Brittany Lavis '10, one of the youngest hospital CEOs in the country; and
- The latest campus happenings, alumni news and university advancement updates.

Lastly, I hope you will make plans to join us on June 27 for our Day of Dedications. We'll toast our new fountain and officially welcome alumni and friends to the Morgan-Holcombe Alumni Center at the Stewart House. It will be an afternoon of celebrating our generous project donors, and I hope to see you there.

Always an Eagle, WHAT'S INSIDE

BREAKING BARRIERS. BUILDING BRIDGES BRINGING BIG STUFF TO LIFE PREPARING STUDENTS FOR INDEPENDENCE STEPPING UP FOR NEIGHBORHOODS IN NEED SAVING DREAMS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA INVESTING IN OTHERS PAYS OFF

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About the cover: Big Stuff, our beloved mascot, embodies the Winthrop spirit at games and special campus events. Read more on pages 4-7 about some of the alumni who have brought the eagle to life..

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**About the First Four**

## **BUILDING BRIDGES BREAKING BARRIERS**

**“You and I have a moral and a civic responsibility to live our lives so when we prosper, we help others to model our examples of doing good, changing the world for the better.”**

-Dr. Cynthia Plair Roddey '67 during her May Commencement address

Sixty years ago, **Dr. Cynthia Plair Roddey** knew that eyes were upon her as she walked to graduate classes as the first African-American student to integrate then-Winthrop College. Flash forward to May 4, 2024, and all eyes were fixed on her for a different reason: she delivered the Commencement address at both undergraduate Commencement ceremonies (**listen here**) and received an honorary doctorate of humane letters. Her inspiring Commencement address earned her a lengthy standing ovation from those in attendance.

During the address, Roddey said, “This year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of coeducation and the 60th anniversary of desegregation. These students challenged disparities in education as they related to race and gender. My Winthrop experience has been an invaluable bridge from academic life to a 53-year career in education from preschool to the university level. As the college progressed to university status, I have progressed from being a mentee to a mentor. This change has been a long process for me, and a number of professors, colleagues, family and friends have

**2** guided me in my social activism.” **Read more**

Roddey, who became the first African-American student to earn a graduate degree, and three other trailblazers – **Delores Johnson Hurt '68**, the late **Arnetta Gladden Mackey '67** and **Sue Frances Meriwether Steed '67** – have been honored over the years for their bravery and historic contributions as the first Black students to enroll at Winthrop. The Alumni Association bestowed upon them the 2017 Distinguished Service Award, and the S.C. House of Representatives passed a resolution in 2021 praising their efforts related to integration at Winthrop.

This year, in recognition of the 60th anniversary of integration, a special gala was held April 6 that celebrated their legacies. Kambrell Garvin '13, principal attorney and owner of Kambrell Garvin Law Firm, and a current member of the S.C. House of Representatives, delivered the gala's keynote address. Additional events are planned for later this year, including an integration exhibition that the Louise Archives and Special Collections will showcase during Homecoming and Reunion this November.

**3** about the university's integration history, milestones and achievements, and other Winthrop Firsts.

**Cynthia Plair Roddey:** first African-American graduate student, and she is widely acknowledged as the first African-American woman to enroll at the university. She earned a M.A.T. in library science.

**Read more.**

**Delores Johnson Hurt:** chosen by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to be one of the first undergraduate African-American students to enroll at Winthrop. She was a residential student and earned a bachelor's

degree in French. **Read more.**

**Sue Frances Meriwether Steed:** first African-American student to earn a degree at Winthrop (B.A. in biology). She transferred to Winthrop in the fall of 1964 from Tennessee Agricultural & Industrial State University. **Read more.**

**Arnetta Gladden Mackey:** one of the first African-American undergraduate students to enroll at Winthrop. Mackey, who earned a B.A. in biology, roomed with Hurt. She passed away in 2009. **Read more.**

Seated from left: Steed, Hurt, Roddey and Mackey's family members posed with faculty (standing) during an April 6 gala that honored the four Winthrop integration trailblazers.

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### **Chris Thompson**

Chris Thompson '01 said performing as such a larger-than-life character helped shape him into the extroverted introvert he is today. In 1999 the Eagles were a few games into the basketball season and no one

Big Stuff pleases the crowd wherever he goes.

Children flock to him for a hug, and adults give him a high five. He shows up at games, university and community events, makes appearances with other mascots, and cheers on the Eagles as the university's biggest hype man. Big Stuff not only has witnessed many institutional milestones, but the #1 Eagle also embodies the resilient spirit of the Winthrop community.

Only a special person can bring this magical feathered friend to life, and Big Stuff's personality reflects whoever wears the costume. Read on as some of the former students who took on Big Stuff duties recap their adventures as Winthrop's beloved mascot.

### **Clay Summers**

Rock Hill resident Clay Summers '93 wore the costume from 1990-93.

"I can remember putting on the suit for the first time, and I fell in love with being Big Stuff," said Summers, who

works in medical sales. "When I went to cheerleading camp as a cheerleader, I was actually thinking I would rather be a mascot, because it seemed to be more fun and exciting."

His girlfriend, now his wife, Stacey Thomas Summers '94, '97, was a cheerleader at the time.

During his second year, he attended a mascot camp at Rutgers with 150+ college mascots. "It was a blast to learn all the details like how to walk properly in the suit to make it more animated; how to wave and make big movements so they look normal to the people outside the suit; and how not to talk in the suit and be discreet," Summers said.

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During his senior year, he was ranked 17th out of 100+ mascots in the country. "We had to turn in a 2-minute tape of things we did throughout the year with music put to it," Summers said.

To this day, some friends call him Big Stuff.

A year after he graduated, Summers borrowed the suit for a serious moment. While out to dinner with his girlfriend of seven years, he changed in the bathroom and walked out in the Big Stuff costume and proposed. "She said she should have known then to run away," he said, but they're still together after 30 years of marriage, three children and a grandson.

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had stepped up to be Big Stuff. Thompson was sitting a few rows behind former Athletic Director Tom Hickman at a game and shouted, "Hey, Tom! What do we have to do to get a mascot around here?"

Hickman said "Follow me!" and led Thompson to the locker room, showed him the costume and said, "Have fun!"

After an NCAA tournament game in Dayton, Ohio, one of the radio guys asked Thompson at the hotel if he could borrow the mascot head. "I saw him in the hotel lobby the next morning, and he had no idea where it was. We looked all

over the hotel with no luck," said Thompson, who now lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he is a senior marketing communications manager.

He feared having to tell the athletic department staff that he'd lost the head. "As we were walking toward the bus, we spotted an unusually large pile of sheets outside a room," Thompson recalled. "Inside was the mascot head. It had certainly been a surprise for the housekeeper cleaning the room!"

During his senior year, Thompson was both the mascot and a member of the Homecoming court. "I didn't want the game to be left without a mascot while I changed before halftime, so I decided to reveal myself during the Homecoming court presentation," Thompson said. "I ran off the court at the half, joined the lineup of court honorees, and walked out on the court, removing the head at the edge of the court. The crowd went wild! It was certainly the highlight of my time as the mascot!"

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### **Tony Moore**

Being Big Stuff played a huge part in Tony Moore's college career and contributed to his college identity. As the mascot from 2001-06, everyone knew him as Big Stuff.

"It made me feel like I was a part of Winthrop and it

allowed me to get to know people," said Moore '06, who lives in Los Angeles, California. "I was truly embraced by Winthrop faculty, staff, students, basketball players and the Rock Hill community."

He first tried out for the dance team and would have been the first male dancer but the coaches weren't sure if Winthrop was ready for that. They offered him the mascot job instead.

"It still allowed me to perform with the dancers

and the cheerleaders. I am happy I did because it eventually paved the way for the dance team to bring in male dancers," Moore said.

He always wanted to pursue a career in the entertainment industry so he has worked for several years in California as a host, emcee and actor.

He never received any formal mascot training, so he made Big Stuff his own. "I just went out there and did what I thought a mascot should do," Moore said. "I danced, I interacted with the fans, I cheered on the players and showed support at games and conferences. That is what I knew how to do."

His advice to future Big Stuff mascots? "Be yourself and have fun. Big Stuff is brought to life by the person in it. So make him shine the way that you do. Always be kind, courteous and supportive."

### **Andy Reid**

Andy Reid '07, '10, arrived at Winthrop as a transfer student from Tyler Junior College to play soccer.

"I became friends with Tony Moore when he was Big Stuff," Reid said. "I would joke that I was going to take his job as Big Stuff one day."

Moore convinced him to try out, and Reid was selected as one of a couple of Big Stuff mascots after Moore graduated. "It was a wild ride of not knowing what I was doing, but I figured it out as I went," Reid said.

His favorite memory was traveling to Spokane, Washington, during March Madness and the Eagles beating Notre Dame in what is still Winthrop's only win in the NCAA tournament. The Eagles played Oregon in the next round.

"The Oregon Duck and I decided to meet up for a 'fight' before the game started," Reid said. "We met at mid-court and had a dance battle and then acted like we were stepping on each other's side of the court. We fist bumped and walked off. The crowd went crazy, and tournament officials threatened to kick us out of the game for our 'antics.'"

Their antics got them a mention in the Top 25 "Best Mascot Fights" in ESPN magazine and ESPN online.

Reid earned a psychology degree and worked as a graduate assistant with the Eagle Club. He earned an M.A.T. and married volleyball player Shannon Sitzmann Reid '09. Now teaching high school in the largest Catholic school in Iowa, he and his wife stay busy with three boys.

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### **Margaret Smith Canon**

Margaret Smith Canon '08 remains one of the few women to wear the Big Stuff costume. She and another student took turns showing up at games and events to represent Winthrop. One of her friends had been a fill-in Big Stuff, and Canon decided to try out.

Her friends turned out for her tryout at a women's basketball game and cheered in support. "I really enjoyed it," Canon said. "It was pretty exhausting. I never sweated so much in my life."

She didn't have any training or formal choreography so she danced and passed out pizza to the most spirited fans at basketball games. She also

wandered through the stands to shake hands and pose for photographs.

She learned that some young kids could get over-zealous meeting Big Stuff. "Some would punch me or pull my tail," she recalled.

Now living in Brevard, North Carolina, where her husband works for a Young Life camp, she's a mom to two young children.

Embodying Big Stuff was a great experience for her. "It is the best fun fact that I can tell people about myself," Canon said.

### **Charlie Snipes**

Charlie Snipes '13 got a taste of being a mascot at Rock Hill High School so when he attended Winthrop, he approached the athletic department about becoming Big Stuff.

"For me it was a way to get involved in athletics and a

way to start networking," said Snipes, who was a sport management major. He tested the water as the mascot at some events in the late summer, then tried volleyball and soccer games and then basketball.

Once he started as Big Stuff in 2007, he remained the mascot until 2013.

"It became so much more than networking," Snipes said. "It really became a family thing because the athletic department was so tightknit."

When Snipes' mother passed away in 2010, several head coaches, players, staff and President Emeritus Anthony DiGiorgio and First Lady Gale DiGiorgio showed up to pay their respects. "I thought I was just a person that put on a

costume," said Snipes, who works as a brewer and bartender at the Rock Hill Brewing Company. "It showed me that I meant a lot to a lot of people."

During his time, he traveled to basketball games, participated with professional Charlotte sports team mascots at events, attended cheer camps and competed as a mascot against other college mascots, coming in 15th in the nation at one point.

Another newsworthy appearance was walking fellow alumnus Johannes Schneider '05, '13, down the aisle at his wedding in McBryde Hall. Charlotte news stations and ESPN were there to record the magical moment.

With tryouts going on now for a new Big Stuff, Snipes joked that he may give it another shot because he still has a few more appearances left in his bag of tricks.

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[WinthropLIFE] students live in residence halls. What about apartments off campus? They can work on campus. Why not off campus?"

Morrison also encourages people to ask questions and to engage with WinthropLIFE students when they see them around campus.

WinthropLIFE TEACHES INDEPENDENT LIVING FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

For Alex Velasco, a regular day at Winthrop can include working a shift in Eagle Eatery, attending his weight-training class, watching a basketball or volleyball game and spending time with friends. In other words, he's like any student, with one distinction: Velasco is part of the WinthropLIFE program.

"I like coming here. It's really cool," Velasco said.

**WinthropLIFE** offers postsecondary education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, building and strengthening participating students' skills in employment, self-determination, health and nutrition, social networking and independent living.

**Now what?** Once students with intellectual disabilities graduate high school, the logical next question is often what to do next. Interested families can apply to WinthropLIFE, and once accepted, sit down with Ryan Morrison '13, program director, to set realistic, but ambitious, goals for their next four years as Winthrop Eagles. Students take one physical education course each semester in addition to one to three other courses. They also have the opportunity to participate in Commencement and earn a letter of completion.

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"Anything that really happens as a young person matures is independent life," Morrison explained. "The other side is employability. We want to teach our students how to find jobs — job skills, interview skills, etc."

He specifically strives for another goal of the program: to help students "develop into independent, contributing members of their communities."

"We added the 'contributing member of my community' when we also added the volunteer piece," he said. "We don't want for it to just be money. It's not just about jobs or salaries. If you're coaching Little League, if you're volunteering at your church, whatever you're doing, if that was your goal and you worked and achieved that, that's as worthy a goal as making a million dollars."

**Possibilities are endless** In addition to expanding the program from two years to four years, Morrison believes the possibilities for more expansion are "endless."

"We want to grow, and that's one of the exciting parts to me, wondering 'Can we build this thing the way we envision it?'" he said. "For example,

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"We want to let people know: they're university students first, WinthropLIFE students second," he said. "We have students in fraternities, on the cheer team, on the Council of Student Leaders... Be comfortable asking questions such as 'I see you have on a WinthropLIFE shirt. What does that mean?'"

Fellow Winthrop students serve as peer mentors for WinthropLIFE, helping the program's students with academics, social activities, transportation, residential living, life skills and much more. "Our program would not exist without peer mentors," Morrison said.

"He [my peer mentor] takes me to cool movies sometimes on weekends, like 'The Amazing Spider-Man.' Oh yeah!" Velasco said of his exceptional peer mentor.

Quincy Sloan serves as one of those peer mentors.

"They're seeing people just like them — Winthrop students — navigating the college experience, and they feel less alone," said Sloan, a psychology major from Blythewood. "We teach different career-building skills, like time management. The parents give us different goals that they have for each student, and we as academic mentors help them reach their goals."



"We're not just helping students get through college," he continued. "We're helping them become independent successful members of society."

### **About Ryan Morrison**

Due to his love of cowboy movies and horses, Morrison originally worked as a horse trainer.

But one day, he felt called to change careers.

"It came out of the blue," he said. "I felt then, and feel to this day, that God wanted me to do this."

He earned a special education degree from Winthrop in 2013.

### **Barradale Gift**

Cam and Katie Barradale, founders of the Cooper Royall Foundation, have made a financial commitment to the WinthropLIFE program. Named after one of their sons, the Cooper Royall Foundation aims to enhance the offerings available to special needs families throughout the various stages of life.

This gift and the support of other donors ensure a bright future for the WinthropLIFE program.

For more information on how to give to the program, visit [www.winthrop.edu/give](http://www.winthrop.edu/give) or call **803/323-2275**.

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Student-athletes, including men's and women's basketball players, have stepped up in a big way to assist the Hope House. Players have logged more than 5,000 hours of community service this past year.

and moved three years ago to Oakland Presbyterian Church's gymnasium.

In addition to Winthrop, more than a dozen churches chip in to help make sure no one in York County goes hungry.

### **STEPPING UP FOR NEIGHBORHOODS IN NEED**

One of Winthrop's closest neighbors along Oakland Avenue has created a partnership that benefits both organizations.

The university and Hope House, which is a local food pantry, have found several ways to strengthen their neighborly ties.

"This past year, we've put the athletic teams in the spotlight for their service," said Executive Director Gordon Bell, adding that the men's basketball team has stepped up to assist, along with the lacrosse, soccer and women's basketball teams.

The students sort the food that comes in, pre-bag it for the clients, break down boxes, unload trucks, take food to the clients' cars, and take out the trash, among other tasks.

"They do everything," Bell said of the student groups. "They aren't above doing anything."

**Making service a priority** Athletic Director Chuck Rey said the student-athletes made community service a priority this past year, putting in more than 5,000 hours.

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"This has been a really good partnership for us," Rey said. "This has made our students realize what is important and has made them even better people."

The Hope House continues to grow after becoming affiliated with Second Harvest a few years ago. Every Monday, the agency receives between four and a dozen pallets of food and household items from Second Harvest. There could be milk, eggs, toilet paper, snacks, groceries, car seats, dried goods, vitamins, shampoo, conditioner, ace bandages, Tylenol, etc.

"We never know what we will get from them," Bell said.

As executive director for the past eight years, Bell has worked with Winthrop fraternities, sororities, staff members, student organizations and different classes. Recently, Winthrop staff members dropped off bins of unused food and other items left by students after spring semester ended.

Hope House started in 1975 in a 1,700-square-foot house located near Glencairn Garden

Bell estimates that the agency serves 250 to 300 families a week. Last year nearly 38,000 individuals were helped with food, utilities and medications.

The agency can give help to anyone who lives in South Carolina, and it provides groceries for everyone in a household. This equates to \$185-\$225 per week for a family of four, Bell said. A family box may provide produce, dairy, meat, canned and dry goods, fruit, vegetables and produce, particularly in the summer.

When COVID started, the agency's client numbers ballooned, particularly with inflation, gas prices and the high cost of groceries.

**Partnering for the future** Bell hopes to work more with the modern languages department to have a Spanish speaker at Hope on an interim basis, Bell said. They're also working to train the staff with some basic Spanish language skills.

The agency also would like to work with the Winthrop community on its community garden and in helping offer an Honors College leadership class. Other ideas include bringing in human nutrition students to give short presentations on nutritious meals or to bring in social work students to work as interns.

"We already have lots of ties to Winthrop that people don't know about," Bell said. Before the dean of students and the human nutrition department started on-campus food pantries, Hope House helped Winthrop students who were experiencing food insecurity.

"Our ties with Winthrop run deep, as they should," Bell said.

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daily in real time, 'Look at what Morris Brown College did today.' This strategy built momentum, which ultimately saved the college."

Due to his achievements, the Our HBCUs Matter Foundation named him the HBCU President of the Year, which James said was a "huge honor and demonstration that we were seen and appreciated."

THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA **SAVING DREAMS**

**A college degree changes lives** James' focus on ensuring everyone has a chance at quality higher education actually began in...music theory class! Although the Columbia native originally pursued a music education degree, he changed his major to speech and transferred to Winthrop to study communication disorders. He particularly enjoyed his audiology and sign language courses.

"I thought I would go on to graduate school to study it," James explained. "I ended up teaching adult students...and fell in love with working in higher education."

He earned a master's degree from Troy State University followed by an Ed.D. in higher education leadership from Nova Southeastern University. While watching television one night, he saw a story about Morris Brown's former president stepping down. Inspired, James called the office and said, "I want to be your president."

Scroll through the social media accounts of **Dr. Kevin James '01**, president of Morris Brown College, and here's a glimpse of what you'll see:

James playing drums and challenging others in a fundraiser for Homecoming; strolling around the campus with rapper T.I. after securing a technology grant from the Atlanta-based celebrity; and announcing to 274 Benjamin E. Mays High School students that they've been admitted to Morris Brown for fall 2024, including full tuition scholarships for the class valedictorian and salutatorian.

Since assuming the presidency in 2019 at Morris Brown, a private, historically Black, liberal arts

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college in Atlanta, Georgia, the Winthrop alumnus has used social networking to help the institution regain accreditation, grow enrollment, land corporate partnerships valued in the millions, and more.

"Social media literally saved Morris Brown College," said James, who earned a B.A. in speech at Winthrop. "I learned early in my presidency that people did not believe what you said, only what they saw. Because no HBCU has ever rebounded after a 20-year hiatus, no one believed what I was trying to do was possible. I took to social media — mainly because it was free and that's where the people are — to demonstrate

"It was simple to me once I realized I liked working with adult students," he said. "A college degree has proven to not only change lives, but families and generations. Why not be a part of that?"

With a nod to the aforementioned achievements, Morris Brown just extended James' contract through 2029. So what's his secret to success?

"Never giving up, hard work, building a strong dedicated team around me and not taking no for an answer."

### **FUN FACTS:**

- Kevin James is one of the founding chapter leaders of the Winthrop Alumni Association's current Atlanta Chapter.
- He received the Alumni Professional Achievement Award from the Alumni Association in 2020.
- He plays the drums and the saxophone.
- His favorite Winthrop memory: becoming a member of the Psi Kappa Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.
- He's the oldest of five siblings and the only male.
- Both of his parents were teachers.

- Favorite book: "The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You" by John Maxwell.

*A college degree has proven to not only change lives, but families and generations.*

*Why not be a part of that? -Kevin James*

" "

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## **INVESTING IN OTHERS PAYS OFF**

**The perfect balance** Other than a childhood dream to be a bus driver, Lavis never felt drawn to any sort of career. She took career tests in high school and middle school, most of which pointed toward business, and accompanied her mother, who was a nurse, to work sometimes.

"Healthcare was always interesting," Lavis said. "I would love going to work with my mom. She had suggested I do something in pharmacy. I had the chance to shadow someone in that field, and while I didn't really feel I would enjoy that, it did get me thinking maybe I would like healthcare."

Lavis clicked a link on the Winthrop website and saw 'Healthcare Administration' as a program option. Plus, she could be close to home (she's originally from Rock Hill) and stay in touch with friends who were also planning to attend – "the perfect balance for me."

She embraced the program, particularly enjoying any and every class with Mike Matthews, management professor and director of the healthcare management program ("Any class with Dr. Matthews always meant there would be some good laughs!); and Keith Benson, emeritus professor of healthcare management ("He challenged me to see I had more potential than I believed I had.").

**Brittany Cornwell Lavis** '10 strongly believes in investing – as in, investing her time in people.

In fact, the alumna considers these investments to be the most rewarding aspects of her career roles over the years, most recently as group chief executive officer for the Detroit Medical Center, a facility that promises its "legacy of caring is unmatched."

"I was so lucky to have people who invested their time in me, and so I've worked hard to continue to do that throughout my career," said Lavis, of Broomfield Hills, Michigan.

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Some of her investments include: selecting interns, all of whom came from Winthrop, ensuring they were able to balance the opportunity to learn with adding value for an overall holistic experience while at Piedmont Medical Center; allocating challenging projects to people, yet balancing it with support ("I think this is the best way to learn and grow"); and emphasizing to her leadership team to also focus on developing future leaders.

The path to these investments began with the desire to drive a bus...sort of!

Lavis pointed to the program's internship requirement, which she completed at Piedmont Medical Center, as instrumental to setting her up for success.

"From there, I made it very known that I wanted to get a full-time job from that opportunity and worked very hard to earn the trust of that executive team," Lavis explained. "I wanted to show them I was someone worth investing in."

And what a return on that investment! Since graduating with a B.S. in healthcare management

"

*I was so lucky to have people who invested their time in me, and so I've worked hard to continue to do that throughout my career. -Brittany Lavis*

"

in 2010, Lavis has served in various roles, including CFO at Piedmont Medical Center; assistant CFO at WellStar Atlanta Medical Center; CFO at Placentia-Linda Hospital in California; and CFO for several years at Detroit Medical Center before taking on the CEO role.

Becker's Hospital Review recognized her as one of its 150 Hospital and Health System CFOs to Know and most recently, one of its 196+ Women Hospital Presidents and CEOs to Know. Modern Healthcare named her an Up & Comer in 2018, and she's received the Tenet Circle of Excellence Award for her work.

But, Lavis said, those accolades don't hold as much weight as her investments in people.

"It makes me proud to invest in others so that they too can celebrate the fruits of their labor and hopefully give back."

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## SUMMER 2024

New Honors College Set to Debut in Fall 2025

The Board of Trustees recently gave university administrators the green light to launch by fall 2025 a leadership-focused Honors College. With the aim of producing the next generation of leaders, the college would be a high-impact workforce talent incubator for the region.

Winthrop currently has an Honors Program offered through its University College.

Honors College students, regardless of their major, will hone their leadership acumen by participating in a required series of leadership development seminars, events, and mentorship sessions to include economic development and community leaders.

Professor of Chemistry Nick Grossoehme was recently named the **college's inaugural dean.**

Isaiah Venning '95, '00

Venning Re-elected to Board of Trustees

Alumni selected **Isaiah "Reggie" Venning** '95, '00 to serve for a second term as the alumni representative to the **Board of Trustees.** He begins a six-year term on July 1.

The Rock Hill resident earned his B.S. in business

administration and his M.B.A. at Winthrop. He is a self-employed stock trader.

Venning gives freely of his time on the Winthrop campus to give tours and attend various events. He was selected as the university's 2021 Alumni Distinguished Service Award recipient and, more recently, as one of the Rock Hill 2024 Come-See- Me Community Service Merit Award recipients.

Winthrop Commemorates 50th Anniversary of Coeducation

On March 19, 1974, then- S.C. Governor John C. West, who was surrounded by members of the General Assembly and members of the Winthrop Board of Trustees, signed the Winthrop coeducation bill into law. Prior to that, the General Assembly had allowed limited admission of

males, primarily as graduate students, to Winthrop. Now, 50 years later, Winthrop celebrated the historic coeducation milestone with an exhibit and April 11 reception. **The Louise Pettus Archives** and Special Collections created the exhibit "Redefining

experiences.

Look for additional coverage of the 50th anniversary of integration in the fall edition of the Winthrop Magazine.

Golf and Esports Teams Capture Championships Winthrop Welcomes Two Administrators Sebastian van Delden

**Sebastian van Delden**, former dean of the School of Sciences, Mathematics, and Engineering at the College of Charleston, joined Winthrop in January as provost and vice president for academic affairs. He replaced Interim Provost Peter Judge, who came out of retirement as professor emeritus of religious studies, to lead the division until a permanent provost was named.

He earned a bachelor's degree, master's degree and Ph.D. in computer science from the University of Central Florida. His Ph.D. dissertation focused on artificial intelligence.

**16** Karen Oremus

**Professor Karen Oremus**, interim dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts, will assume the position as permanent dean, effective Aug. 1. Oremus was named interim dean in 2022, and feedback from the commu-

nity on her performance has been overwhelmingly positive. She will oversee fine arts, design, music, theatre, dance, arts administration, the Arts in Basic Curriculum Institute and the Winthrop Galleries.

She received her B.F.A. in printmaking with a minor in Roman archaeology at Concordia University and an M.F.A. in printmaking from the Tyler School of Art of Temple University.

The men's golf team captured the first Big South Conference Championship in program history on April 20. **Head Coach Kevin Pendley '98** became the first former Big South individual champion (1997, 1998) to win a team championship as a head coach. The Eagles ended this season May 13-15 in the NCAA Rancho Santa Fe Regional.

**Winthrop Esports** Super Smash Bros. Ultimate and League of Legends teams won national championships at the Collegiate Esports Commissioners Cup (CECC) and the National Esports Collegiate Conference (NECC) competitions in Arlington, Texas, in May. Winthrop also received the CECC School of the Year Award, and computer science major Bharat Chintipall earned the MVP Award for his stellar play in the SSBU competition.

Winthrop: The South Carolina College for Women Confronts Coeducation” that highlighted historic photographs, newsprints, documents and artifacts that illuminated Winthrop’s 20-year journey toward coeducation. At the reception, five male graduates – Moe Bell ’73; Joe Osborne ’74; Steve Penland ’71; Dennis Stamper ’72; and John Hiott ’76 – spoke about their Winthrop

CAMPUS NEWS

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SUMMER **2024** Jay Dowd’s Loyalty to Winthrop Runs Deep

Jay Dowd ’89 played baseball as a college student, but it wasn’t on the diamond that he found his sweet spot. Having built a career in advancement at numerous institutions, Dowd might well be considered the designated hitter for philanthropy in higher education.

When The Citadel Foundation CEO and some former teammates recently gathered at the Winthrop Ballpark for a game, there was an unspoken sense of loyalty to the home team that resonated beyond the exchange of memories and rekindling of friendships.

Dowd and other former players and friends have established a fund in memory of his coach, the late Horace Turbeville, and Dowd is currently in the process of funding his own named endowment to benefit the baseball program. He is a member of the Eagle Club, a basketball season ticket holder and supports many other programs within Winthrop Athletics.

Since graduating from Winthrop, Dowd also has established multiple scholarships and contributed to a variety of initiatives for student success.

An endowment named for his mother, Barry Gibson Webster ’63, honors her memory by benefitting students in the Richard W. Riley College of Education, Sport and Human Sciences. Another, established in honor of his faculty mentor, Jason Silverman, provides support for incoming freshmen majoring in history, Dowd’s major.

As a student, Dowd was a leader in his fraternity, Pi Kappa Alpha, and served as an orientation leader and as a member of the Student Alumni Council. The Winthrop Alumni Association honored him with a Professional Achievement Award in 2010. He later established a scholarship in honor of his orientation leader, Debbie Garrick ’87, ’89.

If you would like to explore ways to give back to programs and initiatives that impacted your love of Winthrop, please contact the Division of University Advancement at **803/323-2275** or **make a secure gift online**.

Day of Giving Breaks Records!

The fourth annual Day of Giving, held April 16-17, became the most successful 24 hours of giving to date, thanks to generous alumni, faculty, staff and friends. Donors gave in spades, surpassing the 1,000 donor goal, and unlocked several giving challenges and matching gifts to raise even more financial support.

**1,003** DONORS

**\$301,928** RAISED

**WHO** GAVE

• **ALUMNI: 64%** • **FRIENDS: 13%**

• **FACULTY STAFF: 12%** (past & present)

• **STUDENTS: 11%** **TOP 5 FUNDS** 1. **WINTHROP FUND**

2. **COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, SPORT, AND HUMAN SCIENCES EXCELLENCE FUND**

3. **MACFEAT LABORATORY SCHOOL FUND**

4. **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS TUITION GRANT FUND**

5. **BLACK ALUMNI COUNCIL SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

**1,286 GIFTS WERE MADE TO 124**

From left: Dowd, John Black '91, Jeff Garbett '90 and Ken Woody '90 recently met up at the Winthrop Ballpark to take in a game.

#### **DIFFERENT FUNDS**

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**RECORD \$147,500 IN CHALLENGE AND MATCHING GIFTS MADE BY 34 DONORS**

• **Trustee David McDonald '01** has established the Dr. David D. McDonald Scholarship Endowment. The scholarship will support a secondary educational major with first priority going to a student from a single parent family and/or a first-generation student.

• **President Edward Serna and wife Lauren** have established the Edward & Lauren Serna Endowed Legacy Scholarship. The scholarship will continue the Winthrop tradition among families, rewarding a **legacy student** who has a family member that previously attended and graduated from Winthrop.

ADVANCEMENT NEWS Milestone Generosity

Thank you to the following donors who recently created new endowed funds.

• **James Hammond '88** and faculty member Lisa Harris have established a new scholarship to recognize and support students in financial need. The James Hammond and Lisa Harris Endowed Scholarship will provide funds to support undergraduate students majoring in any computing program offered by the Department of Computing and Information Sciences or students formally admitted to the teacher education program through the Richard W. Riley College of Education, Sport and Human Sciences. Awarding of the scholarship will be rotated evenly between computing and teacher education beginning in fall 2024.

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SUMMER **2024**

ALUMNI NEWS

Celebrate a Day of Dedications with Us!



On June 27 Winthrop will dedicate both the new fountain and the Morgan-Holcombe Alumni Center at the Stewart House. The fountain dedication will take place at 2 p.m. in Tillman Hall Auditorium before guests head out to the fountain for a champagne toast. The Morgan-Holcombe Alumni Center at the Stewart House dedication will be held at 3:30 p.m. with a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially dedicate the center's new location. We are very grateful to our generous fountain donors and Betty Morgan Holcombe '56 for making these projects a reality.

Watch live via the Alumni Association's **Facebook page**.

Welcome to the Newest Alumni Executive Board Members!

Eight alumni were recently selected to serve on the **Winthrop University Alumni Association Executive Board**. Linda Driggers Williams '64; Kimberly Dickens Williamson '82; Alison Hamilton '92, '95; Helen Diamond Steele '01; Veronica Vereen '04; Erica Wright '04; Rebecka Garner '08, '09, and Ryan Laughlin '17 were selected to serve the 2024-27 term and will partner with the Alumni Association to connect with more than 60,000 alumni. Sherille Godbolt Barber '87, '99, and John DeLoache '92 were elected to serve a second term.

Save the Date for Homecoming and Reunion

We look forward to welcoming you back to campus Nov. 4-9!

Registration for **Homecoming and Reunion** will open in the fall. Homecoming T-shirts will be available for purchase for \$20 on Aug. 1. If you purchase a Homecoming T-shirt between Aug. 1-Sept. 30, you will receive an e-mail when your T-shirt ships from the vendor to the address you noted on your order form.

Alumni Association Debuts Inaugural Senior Week

The Alumni Association marked the final days of the semester for the Class of 2024 with an inaugural **Senior Week!** A **variety of events** were held April 29-May 2 to commemorate the seniors' time at Winthrop and aid in their transition from student to alumnus. Events included Strike a Pose: Professional Headshots; Maximize Your Money Luncheon; Paint n' Sip Brunch; Champagne Toast and 2.024 Grad Dash.

The Class of 2024 gift campaign was also part of Senior Week. Students who donated \$24 to commemorate their

## **20**

class year also received a donor medal to wear at Commencement and a T-shirt to wear at the 2.024 Grad Dash. Sixty-two students donated to the class gift campaign. Thank you to the student donors!

Students Receive Rings at Spring Ceremony

The Student Alumni Council hosted the Spring Official Ring Ceremony on April 10. Twenty-two students received their official **Winthrop ring**. There was also a very special ring recipient! Find out who on p. 23.

To ensure sure you are connected with Winthrop and receive Homecoming and Reunion information, **share your updated contact information** with the Alumni Association and follow the Alumni Association (@winthropalumni) on **Facebook** and **Instagram** for updates.

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SUMMER **2024**

## CLASS NOTES

1965 **Ruby Norris Morgan** of Greenville was inducted into the Steinway & Sons Teacher Hall of Fame.

1967 **Maggie Gamble** of Kershaw was honored by the Lancaster County school board for her 20 years of service on the board.

1977 **Bill Hilton** of York received the Order of the Palmetto in recognition of his contributions to science, nature and education.

1980 **Paula Kirkland** of Moore was selected for the National High School Hall of Fame for her achievements as the Dorman High School volleyball coach.

1981 **Steven Gribble** of Rock Hill was inducted in the York County Sports Hall of Fame.

1985 **Rene Cobb Sawyer** of Easley became dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at Greenville Technical College.

**Jessica Fields Williams** of Walterboro will be Colleton County School District's superintendent for the 2024- 25 school year.

1986 **Beverly Wilson Mozie** of Winnsboro has been promoted to director of finance for Blythewood and Fairfield Counties.

1987 **Carl Wells** of Columbia has been named the associate dean for community building and campus life at Newberry College.

1988 **Brown Simpson** of Rock Hill was named to the OTS Sports Wall of Fame for his contributions to sports broadcasting.

1991 **Sarah Wylie Johnson** of Chester is the lead student information systems coordinator for Rock Hill Schools.

1993 **Bridget Sawyer Durham** of Rock Hill published her first children's book, "Trade Places With Me," written about her mother's childhood in Rock Hill.

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1995 **Carolina De Freitas Blouin** of Augusta, Georgia, won the United States Tennis Association's Singles National Championship for her division.

1996 **Seanna Adcox** of Columbia was named editor of the newly launched South Carolina Daily Gazette.

1998 **Stephanie Smith Hucks** of Lexington was named director of human resources for Lexington School District Two.

1999 **Jacqueline Lukich Persinski** of Lancaster was named principal at Sullivan Middle School in Rock Hill.

**Nijjama Caldwell Smalls** of Manassas, Virginia, published a novel, "The Black Family's Guide to Healing Emotional Wounds."

2000

**Marilyn Martin** '00, '03, of Rock Hill was appointed to the Citizen Review Board by the Rock Hill City Council. She also received the distinguished adjunct faculty award from Central Piedmont Community College for the 2023-24 academic year.

2001 **Michael Bagwell** of Santa Clara, California, was promoted to principal subject matter expert in surface finishing at Apple.

Spartanburg Mayor Jerome Rice presented **Renee Murray Mack** of Spartanburg, founder of Youth & Family Solutions, with a proclamation recognizing August as Supervised Visitation Awareness Month.

Greenville resident **David McDonald** has been selected as Lexington School District Two's chief academic and innovation officer in West Columbia.

2002

**Alrinthea Carter** of Los Angeles, California, gave a keynote speech during Clemson University's Black History Month events.

**Ryan Harvey** of York was named chief executive officer for Family Trust Federal Credit Union.

**Nicki Wise**, formerly of Nixa, Missouri, was named associate dean of academic affairs for Clemson University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

2005

**Chelcie Myers Eastman** of Summerville is the lead project manager and interior designer on Magnolia Network's "Happy to be Home with the Benkos."

**Caryn Little** of Charlotte, North Carolina, was promoted to senior director of web, digital and streaming optimization for Bahakel Communications.

2006 **Kathryn Naugle Goodyear** of Moncks Corner was recognized by the South Carolina Bar as the 2023 Solo and Small Firm Section Award recipient.

**Heidi Inman** of Rock Hill became co-owner of TWrecks Smash Rooms in Rock Hill.

**Brooke Henson Schmidt** of Greer was promoted to director of family programs for the Center for Developmental Services.

2007 **Rachel Thomason John** of Columbia was promoted to firm associate at BOUDREAUX.

**Alison Rauch** of Greer received a key to the city from Greer Mayor Rick Danner for her extensive volunteer work.

2008 "Praise," a poem by Rock Hill resident **Angelo Geter**, debuted in March as a choral music piece, which was composed by Trevor Weston.

**President Edward Serna** '02 was surprised with his very own Winthrop ring during the April 10 Spring Ring Ceremony. Former First Lady Gale DiGiorgio was on hand to present Serna with his ring. DiGiorgio served on the ring design committee more than 20 years ago.

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## CLASS NOTES

**Shelley Price** of Great Falls was named the 2024 chair of the Chester County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

**Stephen Taylor** '08, '13, of Lexington was recognized in Industry Publication's 40 Under 40 list.

**Vilissa Thompson** '08, '12, of Winnsboro received New Disabled South's Outstanding Advocate Award.

2010 **Jackee Lynn** of Hartsville was appointed to the South Carolina State Board of Education.

**Melissa Crawley Roomsburg** of Portland, Oregon, received a Bronze Stevie Award in the Female Employee of the Year category at the 20th Annual Stevie Awards for Women in Business.

2012 **Punam Patel** of Columbia was highlighted on the 2023 Best

& Brightest 35 and Under list in Columbia Business Monthly. She also was named a 2023 Woman of Influence by the Columbia Regional Business Report.

**Sara Sconyers** '12, '19, of Rock Hill is an assistant principal at Rawlinson Road Middle School.

2014 **Ryan Harder** of Summerville was promoted to brand manager of ZMan Fishing Products.

**Jeff Robinson** '14, '20, of Inman was appointed executive director of the South Carolina Arts Alliance.

2015

**Brandi Geurkink** of Washington, D.C., was named the inaugural executive director of the Coalition for Independent Technology Research.

2016 **Joseph Ferguson**, formerly

of Charlotte, North Carolina, joined the Washington Post video team as a TikTok host and producer.

**Emily Furr** of Charleston presented a solo art exhibition at the McEachern Art Center in Macon, Georgia.

**Whitney Helton Shea** opened Green Space Plant Co. in Rock Hill.

2017 **Janay Reece** became a general assignments reporter for WJZ in Baltimore, Maryland.

2021

**Madison Mott**, formerly of Surfside Beach, was named Elementary Teacher of the Year at York Preparatory Academy.

2022 **Eleanor Vereen** of Clio was selected as a MUSC Health Finance Spark Award winner, recognizing high achievement in the organization.

## IN MEMORIAM

1940s **Helen Hair Gordon '44 Jewell Pyatt Bounous '45 Mabel Merchant Hinson '45 Barbara Dunlap Wilkerson '45 Marjorie Lancaster Blake '46 Frances (Rebecca) Hall McKown '46 Virginia Osborne Fram '47 Sarah Ann Snead Wise '47 Sophia Friedheim Beers '48 Mildred McInnes Jones '48 Gwendolyn Howard Mathews '48 Evelyn Sizemore Davis '49 Betty Sexton Williams '49**

1950s

**Martha (Bettye) Hinson Rawls '50 Margaret Ergle Tenet '50 Ann Reeves Blalock '51 Lucille Bass Lipsitz '51 Frances Gandy Pearman '51 Lillie (Magdalene) Trammel Bradey '53**

**Mary Kathryn Free Crosby '53 Martha Dailey Goode '53 Carolyn Way Pettigrew '53 Harriet Powell Murphy '55 Joan Anderson Sheheen '55 Peggy Seastrunk Wingate '55 Mary (Patricia) Nungezer Stone '56 Barbara (Ann) Stephenson Coleman '57**

**Catherine (Kitty) Cahill Harley '57**

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**Dorothy (Dottie) Burton Tobias '57**

**Peggy Ola Moore '58 Patsy Brehmer Grout '59 Laura O'Neal Latham '59 Lucretia Kemmerlin Pate '59**

1960s **Patricia Rea Hollis '60 Mary (Marcy) Bryson Turner '60 Jeanette Smith Williams '60 Dimples Davis Zipperer '61 Julia Burgess Kirby '63 Rose Newman Pack '63 Charlotte Williams Deaney '64 Eda (Florence) Scurry Loftis '65 Mantha Spruill Peeler '65 Susan Fogle Dewitt '66 Linda Gallant Cothran '67 Harriet Heath Ferguson '68 Harriet Roche Rickert '68**

1970s **Karen Dowds Coste '70 Grace Linda Rikard '70 James Hugh Sanders Sr. '70 Laura (Jane) Lewis Allen '71 Linda Marie Kelly '71 Susan Lutz Stephenson '71 Juanita Alicia Schutt '72 Barbara Holmes Harrell '73 Sally Hoover Nunn '73 Jane West Myers '74 Osbey Roddey '74**

**Alfreda Mouchet Thompson '74**

**Lyndsey Duggan Ryan '12, a boy, Henry Ryan**

**Sarah Reuter Reed '08, a girl, Rylan Kenna Reed**

**24**

**Abigail Miles Miller '17, a girl, Amelia Miller**

MARRIAGES

**Joulais Michelle Jubert '15 to Javon Fulton**

**25**

**Margaret Stanton Boyd '75 Mary Harris Grant '75 Donna Nicks Barnes '76 Lisa Chapman Carter '76 Karen Wardlaw Ford '76 Tony Elwyn Plyler '76 Virginia Kendrick Bjorlin '77 Janie Horlacher Moore '77 Sandra Graham Thomas '77 William Wise Floyd '79 Dellgratia Nichols '79**

1980s **Alexander (Jim) Joseph Craig Jr. '80**

**Sherri McCarrell '81 Jacqueline Birkes McElrath '81 Deanna Huddleston '82 Elizabeth Edens Barringer '83 Gregory (Greg) Kapageridis '83 James Alan Longshore Sr. '84 Bret Ardin Wyant '84 Elizabeth Joy Balkcom '85 Sidney Cave Gaines Jr. '85 Jeffrey Scott Hall '88 Susan Russell Hollister '89**

1990s

**Jonathan Mark Cook '90 Stephen Carr Reynolds '92**

2000s **Raj Matthew Karottukunnel '06 Danny Ray Memolo '08**

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