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# Late Bennie Bennett '81, '88 Awarded 2016 Dream Keeper Award on MLK Jr. Day

## Quick Facts

- Bennett has worked as a physical education teacher, basketball coach, athletic director, assistant principal, principal and school superintendent.
- The Dream Keeper Award recognizes exemplary displays of committed service to the tenets of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



Bennie Bennett

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – Dedicated educator, standout coach and former athlete, consummate dreamer – the **late Bennie Bennett '81, '88** was a man of many gifts who played a vital role in the York County community. For his legacy of community involvement and service, he received the **2016 Dream Keeper Award** posthumously at the **Jan. 16 Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast** in Rock Hill.

Bennett's wife, **Frankie Wright Bennett '81, '84**, and his children, **Kelly and Brittany**, accepted the award during the annual breakfast. Sylvia Berry, director of teacher recruitment for **Rock Hill Schools District 3**, presented the award and noted that **Bennett** always "capitalized on opportunities for impact."

"Establishing first a reputation built around sports, then a legacy of educational excellence and community engagement, **Bennie Bennett** touched the lives of thousands of individuals in and around York County," said Berry. She added that his life "remains an inspiration."

**Bennett**, the former superintendent for the Newberry County School District, met his wife at Winthrop, where he was a **member of the first men's basketball team** and was the **first male player to score 1,000 points**. As a player, Bennett earned numerous accolades and was selected as team captain his senior year. His **jersey was retired** at a special ceremony during Winthrop's 2016 Homecoming & Reunion Weekend in November.

The New Zion, South Carolina, native earned two degrees at Winthrop: a B.S. in physical education (minor in leisure services) and a M.Ed. in education administration and supervision. He began his post-Winthrop career as a physical education teacher and junior varsity basketball coach in Clover, then moved to Fort Mill High School to continue teaching and coaching basketball at the high school level. Later in his career, **Bennett** became head basketball coach at Clover High School (CHS) before being appointed assistant principal, athletic director and principal at CHS.

**Bennett**, a member of the York County Sports Hall of Fame and the Winthrop Athletics Hall of Fame, was named Regional Basketball Coach of the Year five times. Winthrop's **Department of Physical Education, Sport, & Human Performance** awarded Bennett **Distinguished Alumni** honors in 2000, and he was a member of the Winthrop Varsity Club. The South Carolina Department of Education selected him as a mentor principal, and in 2009 **Bennett** was named the South Carolina Association of Athletic Administrators' Superintendent of the Year.

The Newberry, South Carolina, resident also stayed active within his community. He was involved in United Way, and he served as a volunteer mentor in the Big Brother program and a member of the York County Board of Disabilities. Bennett was a member of the Epsilon Gamma Gamma Chapter of Omega Psi Fraternity, Inc., and an active member of Pineville AME Zion Church.

[\[Back to Previous Page\]](#)

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<a href="#">A-Z Site Map</a>	<a href="#">Board of Trustees</a>	<a href="#">Disclaimer</a>	<a href="#">Finance &amp; Business</a>	<a href="#">Office of the President</a>	<a href="#">Site Feedback</a>
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<a href="#">Alumni &amp; Friends</a>	<a href="#">Directions</a>	<a href="#">Employment</a>	<a href="#">Library</a>	<a href="#">Records &amp; Registration</a>	<a href="#">Visit the Campus</a>
<a href="#">Arts</a>	<a href="#">Directory</a>	<a href="#">Family Programs</a>	<a href="#">Majors &amp; More</a>	<a href="#">Residence Life</a>	<a href="#">Visitors Center</a>