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Donors Rename Endowed Scholarship to Memorialize Late Alumna Janiva Willis '05, '08

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Donors Rename Endowed Scholarship to Memorialize Late Alumna Janiva Willis '05, '08

Quick Facts

- The Janiva Willis Endowed Softball Scholarship supports softball student-athletes.
- Willis passed away April 12 during her cross-country bicycle tour.



Janiva Willis, who passed away April 12, had just begun a cross-country bicycle tour to raise funds for mentoring initiatives in Rock Hill and other cities.

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – **Janiva Willis** '05, '08 never called herself a trailblazer, but the facts speak for themselves: executive director of nonprofit **I Dream in Colors**, philanthropist, athlete, mentor. She died tragically on April 12 during the **Dream Challenge Tour**, a cross-country bicycle tour to raise funds for mentoring initiatives in Rock Hill and other cities. To commemorate her legacy of service, donors **Ann and Vernon Terry** have renamed their **endowed softball scholarship** after Willis.

Established in 2011, the newly renamed **Janiva Willis Endowed Softball Scholarship** supports softball student-athletes who display leadership qualities within their team and in the Winthrop community.

Longtime Winthrop supporter **Ann Terry** said that she and Vernon decided to rename their endowment to celebrate Willis' contributions to Winthrop and the surrounding communities of Rock Hill and Charlotte.

"Vernon and I admired Janiva in so many ways, especially when she set out on her mission to mentor children through I Dream in Colors. We will miss her presence, but we will always honor her

spirit," said **Terry**. "If this scholarship can help someone else to dream and achieve, then her memory will indeed live on forever."

At the time of her death, **Willis** had embarked upon the 3,700-mile **Dream Challenge Tour** from San Diego to Charlotte to raise funds for and awareness of the importance of mentorships in the lives of area youth. She was scheduled to arrive in Rock Hill on June 9 and then depart for Charlotte for the final stretch of her journey on June 11.

Willis, a native of Irishtown, New Brunswick, excelled during her years at **Winthrop** as both an **athlete** and a **student**. She was a four-year All-Big South performer, was selected the **NCAA South Carolina Woman of the Year** in 2005 and was a top 10 finalist for NCAA Woman of the Year. She

went on to play for the Canadian National Team in 2005 and 2007. In 2012, she was inducted into the **Winthrop Athletics Hall of Fame**. As a student, she was voted to the 2005 CoSIDA Academic All-America Third Team, and she was a 2005 Arthur Ashe Scholar recipient. In 2013, Willis was invited back to her alma mater to deliver the [Winthrop Convocation address](#) to the incoming freshman class.

Terry noted that **Willis** was “one of the first players we came to know when we began our relationship with Winthrop softball.” However, Terry added that **Willis** was “so much more than a softball player.”

“She was a leader on and off the field, and she earned the respect and admiration of so many people as she made her way through life. Her passion for helping others, particularly children, was infectious,” said **Terry**.

To make a gift in support of the **Janiva Willis Endowed Softball Scholarship**, visit <http://www.winthrop.edu/give>.

For more information, contact the Office of Communications and Marketing at 803/323-2236.

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