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Alumni Couple Establishes New Statewide Teacher Mentor Award

Winthrop University

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Alumni Couple Establishes New Statewide Teacher Mentor Award

Quick Facts

- The Jessie Williams Little "Leading the Way" Endowed Award will recognize a South Carolina educator who has made a significant impact as a mentor to future or beginning teachers.



Jessie Williams Little
and John Little

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – As South Carolina struggles with teacher retention rates, effective mentoring for current and future educators has become increasingly important. Jessie Williams Little '73 and her husband, retired physician John Little (M.B.A. '02), have created a **new endowed award to honor the state's mentor teachers for their efforts.**

The Littles have partnered with Winthrop University's **Richard W. Riley College of Education** and the **James and Susan Rex Institute for Educational Renewal and Partnership** to establish the **Jessie Williams Little "Leading the Way" Endowed Award**. The award will recognize a **South Carolina educator** who has made a significant impact as a **mentor to future or beginning teachers.**

Jessie, a 2005 College of Education retiree, said that she and John "share in the belief that a strong education is important for success in life" as well as a key component in the growth and vitality of South Carolina.

"Our hope is that this award will encourage more talented, experienced teachers to serve as mentors and positive role models to aspiring and beginning educators," said Jessie.

"Leading the Way" is open to **public school teachers in South Carolina** who are on continuing contract and **serve as mentors** in one or more of the following ways:

- Formal mentor to beginning or veteran teachers;
- Mentor teacher for pre-service teacher candidates in field experiences and/or student teaching; and/or
- Teacher Cadet instructor.

Nominees must be **practicing classroom teachers** with at least three years' teaching experience. Nominations are strongly encouraged for teachers who work in **high-need schools** and/or support others in developing skills to positively impact diverse student populations (though this experience is not a requirement).

"Leading the Way" will honor the recipient with a **\$2,500 cash award**, and the winner will become a member of a collaborative group of mentor teacher leaders working to improve education for South Carolina through the Rex Institute at Winthrop. The College of Education will **recognize finalists and the inaugural award winner** during a special event in February 2018.

Jessie earned a bachelor's degree in **elementary education** at Winthrop and a master's degree in elementary school administration and supervision at The Citadel. A former first-grade teacher in Summerville, South Carolina, she started her career at Winthrop in 1988 with the **Winthrop Child**

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Abuse Awareness and Prevention Project directed by former Board of Trustees member Sue Smith-Rex. She taught introduction to education courses and supervised the service-learning experiences for all students in the course. Jessie continued her work after the program expanded to include **Winthrop Involvement in Nurturing and Graduating Students (WINGS)**, a mentoring program for middle school male students in Rock Hill. She also supervised interns, assisted with a graduate reading course and, when Winthrop received the Governor's School for Teachers contract, served as site director for three summers.

To nominate a South Carolina mentor teacher, complete and **submit the application online** to Lisa Johnson, associate dean in the College of Education, at johnsonle@winthrop.edu by **Friday, Sept. 29**, or mail the completed application to:

Richard W. Riley College of Education
106 Withers/W.T.S. Building
701 Oakland Ave.
Rock Hill, SC 29733

For more information about the **Jessie Williams Little "Leading the Way" Award**, contact the College of Education at 803/323-2151 or johnsonle@winthrop.edu.

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