



2025 Mary Mildred Sullivan Award Mrs. Betty Morgan Holcombe, Class of 1956

Each year, Winthrop recognizes an alumna for selfless dedication of time, energy and talent in service to Winthrop and others. The Mary Mildred Sullivan Award captures this high honor.

The 2025 recipient is Mrs. Betty Morgan Holcombe, Class of 1956, a teacher and philanthropist who is proud of her South Carolina roots and Winthrop education, and continues to give back to help others obtain a college degree.

Mrs. Holcombe earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Winthrop College in 1956. While attending Winthrop, Mrs. Holcombe earned academic distinction and was placed on the Dean's List during her junior and senior years. She received the James F. Byrnes Scholarship, an award presented to students in excellent academic standing who had lost one or both parents. Following her graduation from Winthrop, Mrs. Holcombe taught for several years at Campbell High School in Smyrna, Georgia, and for one year at Tyrone Junior High School in St. Petersburg, Florida, prior to moving to Texas with her husband, Milton, where he cofounded a successful electronics company. Mrs. Holcombe earned a Master of Liberal Arts degree from Southern Methodist University while substitute teaching and raising twin daughters.

Reflecting on her time as a Winthrop student, Mrs. Holcombe said, "I have always enjoyed the peacefulness and beauty of this campus, and especially enjoyed spending time in the library. It was during my time at Winthrop that I was exposed to opera and learned to truly love and appreciate the arts."

Mrs. Holcombe is a Clemson, South Carolina, native. Her husband grew up in Central, South Carolina, and they met at church. Mr. Holcombe graduated from Clemson University in 1953 and, since he started college before his wife, they had a "long five-year romance" before Mrs. Holcombe finished at Winthrop and they married.

Mrs. Holcombe has generously supported her alma mater through time, talent and treasure. She served on the Winthrop campaign cabinet from 1998-2003 for the first capital campaign. She is a charter member of the D.B. Johnson Society, which recognizes donors who have included Winthrop in their estate plans. Mr. and Mrs. Holcombe were spotlighted in the Summer 2005 edition of the Winthrop Magazine, "Dallas Philanthropists Lend a Hand to Higher Education," which highlighted her passion for her alma mater and giving back to her community.

In celebration of her 50-year Winthrop reunion in 2006, she established the Elizabeth Ernestine Carter Steedly Endowed Scholarship, which benefits education majors from Bamberg, South Carolina, in honor of her lifelong friend and former Winthrop roommate.



2025 Mary Mildred Sullivan Award Mrs. Betty Morgan Holcombe, Class of 1956

The Holcombes have also funded two additional endowed scholarships at Winthrop: the Betty Morgan Holcombe Endowed Scholarship, established in 1992, for Pickens County, South Carolina, liberal arts majors; and the Barbara Morgan Hay Endowed Scholarship, established in 2002 for education majors, in memory of Mrs. Holcombe's sister, who was a 1967 Winthrop alumna.

It was announced during the 2011 Alumni Reunion and Homecoming Weekend that the Holcombes had made a leadership gift to Distinction: The Campaign for Winthrop. Their gift established the Morgan-Holcombe Alumni Center and supported Alumni Association programming. The Winthrop press release stated that, "Until such time as the new Morgan-Holcombe Alumni Center is built, Winthrop University will dedicate its current Office of Alumni Relations as 'The Milton W. and Betty Morgan Holcombe Alumni Center.' The dedication of the Morgan-Holcombe Alumni Center in Tillman Hall commemorated Mrs. Holcombe's 55-year reunion. On Dec. 1, 2022, the Winthrop University Board of Trustees voted to establish the Morgan-Holcombe Alumni Center in the Stewart House on Eden Terrace. In 2023, the Alumni Association and Winthrop University Foundation moved operations to the Stewart House, which brought to life the realization of Mrs. Holcombe's leadership gift and wish for an alumni center at Winthrop. The Morgan-Holcombe Alumni Center at the Stewart House was formally dedicated on June 27, 2024.

Mr. and Mrs. Holcombe have been avid supporters and generous donors to Clemson University, Mr. Holcombe's alma mater. Their gifts established the Milton W. and Betty M. Holcombe Fund for Excellence that sponsors programs such as undergraduate research for seniors, improved graduate education, visiting lecturers, and faculty and student enrichment. In 1989, they established the first endowed chair in the College of Engineering, the Holcombe Chair in Electrical and Computer Engineering. Scholarships were also established in the names of Mrs. Holcombe's parents, James Robert Morgan and Bertha Alice Evans Morgan, to aid students from Central and Six Mile. The Milton W. Holcombe Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering was named in 2000. In 2023, the Clemson University Alumni Association elected Mrs. Holcombe as an honorary member to recognize her philanthropy and service on the Clemson University Foundation board.

In addition to being generous supporters of their alma maters, the Holcombes have a keen interest in historic preservation, especially regarding their native Pickens County. Through the Milton and Betty Holcombe Foundation, established in 1995, they purchased Mrs. Holcombe's great-uncle's home, gifting it to the Central Historical Society to become the Morgan House Museum. They also support many Upstate historical organizations.

Mrs. Holcombe is a longtime member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Jamestown Society, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, and the Colonial Dames of America, as well as the Old Pendleton Genealogical Society. She is also a charter member of the Canyon Creek Garden Club and a longtime member of the Richardson Women's Club, which supports college scholarships. Mrs. Holcombe has served as an officer in many of these organizations.



2025 Mary Mildred Sullivan Award
Mrs. Betty Morgan Holcombe, Class of 1956

The Holcombes reside in Dallas, Texas, but maintain a home in South Carolina. They have twin daughters, Kathryn and Karen, two granddaughters and one great-granddaughter.