



2027
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Dream Keeper Scholarship Awards



Recognizing Community Involvement, Social Responsibility and Human Service

“We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.”

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. *“The Purpose of Education”*

Winners will be announced at the City of Columbia’s annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration on Monday, January 18, 2027, at 4 p.m. at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and Community Center, 2300 Greene Street. Applications must be returned to the City of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department, 1111 Recreation Drive, Columbia, SC 29203. **Entries must be postmarked by Friday, December 4, 2026.**

For more information, please contact Doug Elliott, Deputy Director for Recreation, at (803) 545-0456 or Douglas.Elliott@columbiasc.gov.

The Dream Keeper Award was established by former Councilman E.W. Cromartie, II. The award recognizes exemplary displays of committed service to the tenets of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The ideals of social responsibility, political empowerment, diversity, racial harmony, nonviolence, and unselfish service must be demonstrated voluntarily by the nominee in support of his or her community and fellow citizens.

Nomination Criteria

1. Demonstrated public service

The nominee must have provided extraordinary assistance to a resident or agency within their community. Through documented work with volunteer work programs, charitable service, and/or leadership roles in the community, the nomination letter should include details of the nominee's service.

2. Nominee's effectiveness

An evaluation of the nominee's effectiveness shall be judged by his or her impact on individuals, groups, or organizations served. The nominee must have demonstrated a constant drive and aspiration to provide support to others in the community for at least 12 months.

3. Documentation

Nominations must include comprehensive documentation of the candidate's public service contribution. The **nomination should include a statement of 150 words or less** explaining the nominee's community service activities.

4. Requirements

The nominee **must** be age 18 or younger and enrolled in a Richland County School District One grade school (elementary, middle and high school) with a minimum 2.5 grade point average. Nominees **must** attend the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration on Monday, January 18, 2027 at 4 p.m. at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Park and Community Center, 2300 Greene Street. Winners will be announced at the ceremony.

NEW GUIDELINES:

- If chosen as a winner, the student cannot apply for another scholarship until he or she has entered another category grade level (elementary, middle and high school). For example, if you apply for a scholarship while in elementary school, you cannot apply again until you reach middle school. If you win in middle school, you cannot apply again until you reach high school.
- To be eligible for the \$1,500 scholarship, high school students must have a 3.0 GPA or higher.

The award recipients will be selected by an impartial host of judges. Scholarship winners will not be selected by City of Columbia staff or the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Foundation Planning Committee.

Scholarship Levels

High School Awards (9-12) 500 words:

1st place- \$1,500, 2nd place- \$1,000, 3rd place- \$750, Honorable Mention-\$200

Middle School Awards (6-8) 250 words:

1st place- \$500, 2nd place- \$425, 3rd place- \$350, Honorable Mention-\$100

Elementary School Awards (k-5) 100 words:

1st place-\$250, 2nd place- \$225, 3rd place-\$200, Honorable Mention-\$100

Dream Keeper Scholarship Nomination Form

Nominee Information

PLEASE PRINT

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: _____

Grade Level: _____ Name of School: _____

Parent Name: _____

Home phone: _____ Work _____ Cell _____

Email: _____

College/University Information (if applicable)

Name of Institution	Accepted Applied Pending	Intended Major

Nominator Contact Information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____

Home phone: _____ Work: _____

Email: _____

2027 MLK Dream Keeper Scholarship Checklist

Please review the following checklist to make sure that your application is complete. The following items must be included in the application packet:

- The **nomination form** from page 3 of this application. Please print required information.
- A **statement of 150 words or less from nominator** explaining the candidate's volunteer service, most outstanding achievement, and contributions made to his or her community.
- **Documentation of public service** to include certificates, volunteer log, letter from organization documenting service, etc. Please list all memberships in community organizations, honors and awards.
- A **transcript from your school or school report card** noting grade point average or grades.
- A **letter of recommendation** from personnel from the applicant's school or community organization. The letter must explain why this candidate should receive the Dream Keeper Scholarship Award (Signed letters of recommendation must be given to the applicant in a sealed envelope to be included in the completed application package.)
- A **short essay (100-500 words)** describing how you have attempted to emulate or mirror the ideals and philosophies (social responsibility, political empowerment, diversity, racial harmony, nonviolence, and unselfish service) of Dr. Martin Luther King into your life.

Nominations must be postmarked by Monday, December 4, 2026, in order to be eligible.

Mail nominations to:

City of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department
Attn: Douglas Elliott
1111 Recreation Drive
Columbia, South Carolina 29203

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