

**WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH**

# Women's History Month Honors Mentors and History-Makers

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON MARCH 27, 2023



## Gardner-Webb Trailblazer Fredia Lawrence-King Celebrates the Women who Made a Difference in Her Life

The celebration of Women's History Month is not only a time to reflect on famous women of the past, but also provides an opportunity to honor those who quietly make a difference in their own communities. One of Gardner-Webb University's history-makers was Fredia Lawrence-King, a trailblazer in women's sports. While reflecting on her accomplishments, Fredia said the two women who impacted her life with their integrity, character and Christian beliefs are Lola Lawrence and Karen Smith.



- ▲ Fredia Lawrence King was honored along with other Gardner-Webb Basketball Alumnae at Hoopscoming in February.
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Fredia, a native of Lawndale, N.C., was inducted into the Gardner-Webb Athletics Hall of Fame in 2002. Competing with the 'Dawgs between 1988-1992, she finished her basketball career as the top scorer in school history with 2,201 career points and 1,220 career rebounds. She was a three-time All-South Atlantic Conference selection, and is the only female GWU basketball player to have her jersey retired.

Her grandmother, Lola, not only instilled a love for basketball in Fredia, she was her encourager and cheerleader. "My grandmother completed the 11th grade but was very smart," Fredia described. "Married at a young age and blessed with 11 children, she worked as a housekeeper for many years and for a paint company until her retirement. She also raised a number of grandchildren in the home as well, including myself. She was a very passionate and loving person that always believed you must have more than a high school diploma if you want to be successful."



▲ Lola Lawrence



▲ Karen Smith

Fredia added that her grandmother's most precious gift to her was being there in the stands, in the car, and at home. "She invested a lot of her time in me by transporting me to all AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) practices and games, and never missing any of my high school or college games," Fredia explained. "She just always made sure I was doing what needed to be done in the classroom and on

the court so that I could have a better opportunity in life than what she had. She believed in me and always told me that I could do and be anything I wanted to be. She was my #1 fan!”



▲ Fredia Lawrence-King in 1992

Karen is Fredia’s friend and mentor, who pushed her to excel academically. “Karen graduated in the top five of her high school class and was the class president,” Fredia related. “She was also a graduate of N.C. State University, a chemical engineering major, and she worked as a chemist for a pharmaceutical company. She always encouraged me to not just be an athlete, but a student-athlete. The greatest advice she gave me was to not leave Gardner-Webb without my degree, because it would be something that no one could ever take from me.”

After graduating from Gardner-Webb, Fredia worked 27 years with the N.C. Department of Public Service. In retirement, she lives in Kings Mountain, N.C., and continues to work with young adults and their families to assist, encourage, and make them aware of college and career options that are available. She frequently returns to the GWU campus to cheer on the Runnin’ Bulldogs women’s basketball team and recorded a good luck message to the team before their first round game in the NCAA Tournament on March 17.

Fredia was featured on a Basketball All-Star Panel in March 2022. Listen to the discussion, [here](https://youtu.be/YGw_HBPOQ-w) ([https://youtu.be/YGw\\_HBPOQ-w](https://youtu.be/YGw_HBPOQ-w)).

*Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina’s recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to nine colleges and schools, more than 80 undergraduate and graduate majors, and a world-class faculty. Located on a beautiful 225-acre campus in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb prepares graduates to impact their chosen professions, equips them with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspires them to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. Ignite your future at [Gardner-Webb.edu](https://gardner-webb.edu) (<https://gardner-webb.edu>).*