

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gloucester County Board of Commissioners Honors Charisma Jones for Bringing Girls on the Run to Gloucester County

PAULSBORO, N.J. — July 15, 2026 — The Gloucester County Board of Commissioners issued a proclamation honoring Charisma Jones as the first person to bring Girls on the Run, a positive youth development program, to Gloucester County. The proclamation was presented by Deputy Director Jim Jefferson during a session of the Board of Commissioners at the Gloucester County Courthouse.

"This honor truly means a lot to me," Jones said. "It's about giving back to the community and helping to make a difference in those coming behind us."

A longtime member of the South Jersey Black Girls Run running group, Jones set out with several running partners to make their races count, personally challenging herself to complete 51 state races — including Washington, D.C. — by age 51. She finished the goal on December 6, 2025, running her final race to raise money for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

By profession a school social worker who works with pregnant teenagers, Jones said the milestone left her wanting to combine her passion for running with her career supporting young people into something lasting for her hometown. Her work with teens facing early pregnancy has shown her firsthand the impact that early intervention, mentorship, and confidence-building can have — the same principles at the core of Girls on the Run, which is widely recognized as a risk-prevention program that helps girls build the self-esteem and decision-making skills to navigate peer pressure, low self-worth, and other risk factors before they take hold.

"Paulsboro raised me to be successful, to go to college and land a great job," Jones said. "I want to help the children who are where I once was."

Noting that Paulsboro offered strong athletic opportunities for boys but little dedicated to young women, Jones reached out to Girls on the Run's Philadelphia office, which oversees the Paulsboro area. The organization told her it had never had a program in Gloucester County and had been looking for someone to launch one.

Jones then contacted Loudenslager School Principal Moore-Cook, who gave her the opportunity to start the county's first Girls on the Run program in March. More than 30 girls in grades 3 through 6 took part, learning character development, self-confidence, life skills, and physical fitness. In May, the group completed a 5K fun run alongside more than 51 schools from across the Philadelphia area — the only New Jersey school represented.

Jones plans to expand the program to more schools throughout Gloucester county. This fall, she is launching Heart & Sole, Girls on the Run's program for older girls, with 7th and 8th graders at Paulsboro High School. That group will complete a 5K on December 6 at the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

"It's my prayer to reach at least one girl," Jones said, "and then I know my work won't be in vain."

Girls on the Run Philadelphia

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