



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Charlotte Service Organization Grants \$47,000 in Scholarships to Local Students**

*The Crown Jewels Chapter of The Links, Incorporated awarded scholarships to 8 high school seniors and recognized their outstanding community partners during annual Crowning Achievements recognition program*

**CHARLOTTE, N.C. (April 28, 2024)** – The Crown Jewels (NC) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated awarded eight (8) of Mecklenburg County’s exceptional African American high school seniors with scholarships totaling \$47,000 and recognized their community partners during the annual Crowning Achievements ceremony at the Harvey B. Gantt Center. Since 2016, the Crown Jewels Chapter has hosted this event, which serves to highlight the achievements of the community organizations it has partnered with during its program year. It also serves as a culmination of the chapter’s fundraising efforts for the year through the announcement of its annual academic scholarship recipients.

The community organizations and leaders recognized during the event were:

- **The Arts Empowerment Project** for their partnership and support of the National Poster Arts Competition, sponsored by The Links, Incorporated, which serves as a source of self-expression, healing, resilience, and empowerment for children impacted by violence.
- **Melanee Duncan Friday, Principal of Lawrence Orr Elementary School** for her 26 years of service as an educator and leader and her support of the Chapter’s Read-In and Family Wellness activities with the Elementary school.
- **Charlotte Sister Cities** for their work developing grassroots partnerships between Charlotte and cities around the world.
- **Brandon Rivers** for his work as Regional Director for “You Can Vote” which focuses on increasing civic participation of historically marginalized populations to educate, register to vote, and empower all.
- **Lisa Elam-Rice** for her support of the National Society of Black Engineers, Jr. (NSBE, Jr.) program at Phillip O. Berry Academy of Technology which the Chapter sponsors and supports.

“The Crowning Achievements Ceremony is a special time for the Crown Jewels (NC) Chapter because it is a celebration of service initiatives that we have completed throughout the year to impact our community with stellar partners and partnerships,” said Chapter President Tracey D. Watkins. “It is also a joyous occasion where we award scholarships to some of the City’s best and brightest



students to assist in their educational journeys. It truly is a full-circle moment for our Chapter where we're able to witness the results of our community service and fundraising efforts.”

This year's scholarship recipients were selected through a competitive process based on their academic achievements, community involvement, financial need, college acceptance and essay submission. The scholarship funds are a result of the Chapter's fundraising efforts during its annual Mardi Gras Gala. This year, the Chapter will award its newly initiated Mardi Gras King and Queen Scholarship, which is a \$20,000 scholarship presented by the 2024 Mardi Gras King and Queen – Malcomb and Tammy Coley.

The 2024 scholarship recipients are:

- **Simeon Atkins**, Mardi Gras King and Queen Scholar - \$20,000
- **Zoe Jones**, Royalty Scholar I - \$5,000
- **Jordan Howard**, Royalty Scholar II - \$3,000
- **Brianna Wells**, Royalty HBCU Scholar - \$3,000
- **Empress Voliton**, Links Scholar Award - \$3,000
- **Justin Acheampong**, Links Book Award - \$1,000
- **Alexandra Johnson**, Links Book Award - \$1,000
- **Mhakai White**, Links Book Award - \$1,000
- Two \$5,000 scholarships are earmarked for previous year recipients.  
(See photo below and attached.)

The Crown Jewels also awarded book scholarships to the following National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE), Jr. participants:

- **Leya Edwards-Headen**, NSBE, Jr. Book Award - \$500
- **Mandy Nguyen**, NSBE, Jr. Book Award, - \$500
- **Jaylen Rice**, NSBE, Jr. Book Award - \$500
- **Kaylie Vong**, NSBE, Jr. Book Award - \$500

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### ***About The Links, Incorporated***

The Links, Incorporated is an international, not-for-profit corporation, established in 1946. The membership consists of more than 17,000 professional women of African descent in 299 chapters located in 41 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, and the United Kingdom. It is one of the nation's oldest and largest volunteer service organizations of extraordinary women who are committed to enriching, sustaining and ensuring the culture and economic survival of African Americans and other persons of African ancestry. Members of The Links, Incorporated contribute more than 1 million documented hours of community service annually — strengthening their communities and enhancing the nation. For more information, visit <https://linksinc.org/>.



### ***About The Crown Jewels (NC) Chapter***

Chartered in 1993, the Crown Jewels (NC) Chapter has implemented targeted services to address the needs of the local community and the African Diaspora across the world. For over 30 years, the chapter has carried out national and area programming in each of five Facet areas: Services to Youth, The Arts, National Trends and Services, International Trends and Services and Health and Human Services. For more information, visit <https://www.crownjewelslinksinc.org/>.



*The Crown Jewels Chapter of The Links, Incorporated awarded scholarships to local students at the annual Crowning Achievements ceremony held Sunday, April 28, 2024 at the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts & Culture.*