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making it a reality.



Ciré Forman, a passenger in a single-car crash in Glassboro, died at 21 years old.

Anton Klusener / Staff Illustrator

By Sapna Bansil

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Before she died, Ciré Forman unwittingly left behind the plans for the sports foundation that would become her legacy.

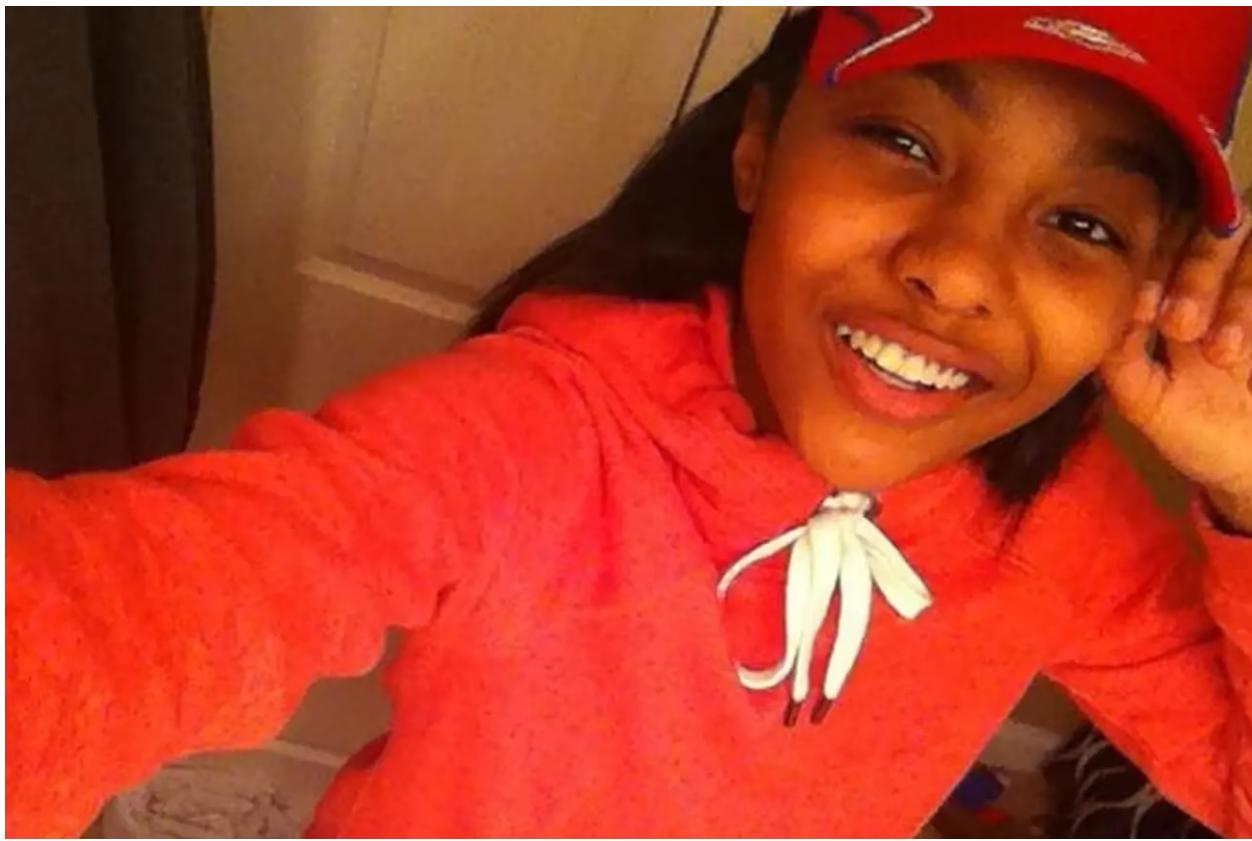
Ciré, a multisport athlete at Camden Catholic High School, often talked to her friends and family about starting a foundation that provided money and resources for people to play sports.

In addition to playing basketball, field hockey, soccer, and softball, Ciré was the first girl to join her school's football team. After graduating in 2019, she coached the freshman basketball team at her alma mater to a 14-0 record and played wide receiver for the [Philadelphia Phantomz](#), a women's professional football team.

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Ciré formulated the vision for her foundation in the Notes app of her phone and solicited advice in family group chats on how to get started. But on June 4, 2022, before her plans came to fruition, Ciré, a passenger in a single-car crash in Glassboro, died at 21 years old.

In the months that followed, Ciré's family resolved to start the foundation that had long been important to her.



A selfie taken by Ciré Forman, who was killed in a car accident in 2022. Her family members and others have established the Ciré A. Forman All 4 Sports Foundation to help carry out her vision. Courtesy of Ciré Forman's family



Ciré Forman's family and organization members. From the left: Jamar Doggett, Gina Hutchinson, Debra Vaughn, Kay Vaughn, Trisha Forman, Lawrence Forman Jr., and Ingrid Forman.
Allie Ippolito / Staff Photographer

"She just wanted to help," said Ciré's mother, Trisha Forman, "and I don't have a choice but to do that for her."

The nonprofit [Ciré A. Forman All 4 Sports Foundation](#) launched in November 2022, paying the travel expenses for a women's football player, funding swimming lessons for children from single-parent homes, and hosting a youth basketball clinic.

"It means a lot [because] she always talked about [the foundation], and now it's actually happening," said Eliana Santana, one of Ciré's former basketball teammates.



Charniece Carney is a defensive back on the Philadelphia Phantomz, a women's professional football team.

Allie Ippolito / Staff Photographer

'Play for 8'

Ciré's family was in attendance when the Phantomz held an emotional ceremony in May to retire her No. 8 jersey. Throughout that afternoon's game against the Tennessee Trojans, the Phantomz implored each other to "play for 8." As if the scoreboard too was paying tribute, they led, 8-0, at halftime.

The Phantomz won, 22-7, their only victory of the season.

"I wasn't gonna go because I couldn't afford it. So that \$500 was exactly what I needed."

Charniece Carney

Charniece Carney, a Phantomz defensive back and Ciré's former teammate, thought that game might be her last of the season. Women's football players pay for their own equipment and travel, and Carney couldn't afford her share of the 19-hour van ride for the Phantomz season finale the following week against the Mississippi Panthers.

MORE ON THE PHILADELPHIA PHANTOMZ

North Philly's Star Wright, owner of the Phantomz, spreads her passion for women's tackle football to Africa

Star Wright, owner of the Phantomz, preached the game to willing students in Africa. "Who would have thought that Morocco would be such a big lover of American football? I never knew."

Then at halftime, Ciré's family announced that Carney would be the first recipient of a grant from the foundation. She received an oversized check for \$500, more than enough to cover her travel expenses.

"I wasn't gonna go because I couldn't afford it," said Carney, who was dealing that season with two injured knees, a torn rotator cuff, and her mother's cancer diagnosis. "So that \$500 was exactly what I needed."

After receiving the grant, Carney was inspired to volunteer with the foundation and start her own youth flag football team. In honor of Ciré, she named it the Relentless Eights.

“I was trying to do something for the youth — I just didn’t have any motivation or drive,” Carney said. “If it wasn’t for me knowing [Ciré] and meeting her family, I would have never got this umph to get up and do it.”

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Ciré's family hopes the grant will be the first of many that commemorate her experiences as a woman in a male-dominated sport. During her senior year, she made history as the first girl at Camden Catholic to play football. Regarded as one of the best athletes at the school, Ciré quickly carved out a role as a punt returner and defensive back.

“I was pretty caught off guard by the whole thing,” said Derrick Levine, who was the athletics director at the time. “It was certainly something that I wasn’t used to hearing. ... I thought it was a groundbreaking moment.”



Members of the Camden Catholic girls basketball team wrap their arms around each other during a ceremony to retire Ciré Forman's jersey in January.

Courtesy of David Goodman

'Keeping her name alive'

Out of all the sports Ciré played, basketball was her favorite. It helped her blossom at Camden Catholic from a shy freshman to a senior co-captain known for her intensity, pinpoint passing, and friendships with her teammates. Before she died, she made plans to play collegiately at Rutgers-Camden.

Ciré was raised by a single mother, but her great-aunt, Debra Vaughn, always chipped in to drive Ciré to practices, retrieve forgotten sneakers, and buy pregame meals. Her grandparents cheered from the stands. And her basketball coaches, Christine Palladino and Christine Matera, served as mentors and tutors who held Ciré accountable academically.

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“If not for the help of a lot of people, she might not have been able to do all the things that she was able to do,” Ciré’s grandmother, Kay Vaughn, said. “We all contributed.”

The foundation is helping children who come from similar backgrounds and share similar interests as Ciré but don’t have the same support. This summer, Ciré’s foundation paid for five children raised by single mothers to receive swimming lessons. It also held a free youth basketball clinic in Palmyra, where attendees included children from foster care and single-parent homes.

Kito Burroughs brought his four kids, ages 9-13, to the clinic, which he said ordinarily would have cost him thousands of dollars.



Photos of Ciré Forman sit on a table where her family gets together to discuss plans for their organization, Ciré A. Forman All 4 Sports Foundation.

Allie Ippolito / Staff Photographer



Trisha Forman wears a necklace with Ciré Forman's photo.

Allie Ippolito / Staff Photographer

"A lot of what [Ciré] represented, my daughter kind of follows in that," Burroughs said. "My daughter loves basketball, and she loves the WNBA. ... I said, 'We have to be a part of that.'"

Among those who coached Burroughs' kids through shooting drills and friendly competitions were Ciré's former high school basketball teammates, including Lindsay Bednarek. Volunteering for the clinic was one of the ways she has tried to remember her close friend.

"Anything under Ciré's foundation is obviously super meaningful to me," Bednarek said. "It's helpful just to know that I'm making her proud. I'm keeping her name alive as much as I can."

"It's definitely been an emotional journey, but it was something that we wanted to do to honor her."

Christine Matera

In January, Camden Catholic established a scholarship in Ciré's name and held a ceremony to retire her No. 1 basketball jersey.

"I think every one of our kids broke down that day, and they broke down when we had Mass here in honor of her after she passed," Matera said. "It's definitely been an emotional journey, but it was something that we wanted to do to honor her."



Debra Vaughn (left) and Greg Osby (right) laugh with family at the Ciré A. Forman All 4 Sports Foundation. They held a basketball camp for young kids at the Palmyra Community Center in Palmyra, N.J. in July.

Allie Ippolito / Staff Photographer

'She's still here'

Although the foundation emerged from a place of grief, it remains a way for her family to celebrate Ciré's life during painful moments. In March, her family honored what would have been Ciré's 22nd birthday by holding a skate party fundraiser, which brought in nearly \$3,000 for the foundation. To mark the one-year anniversary of her death, they organized a field day where kids and volunteers took part in flag football, kickball, and other sporting events.

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“It’s like somebody turned out the lights on all of us,” Debra Vaughn said of Ciré’s death. “This work we’re doing is just us trying to keep the lights on.”

Over the next few months, Ciré’s family plans to focus on [raising the money they need](#) to support the foundation’s initiatives. Eventually, they want to provide opportunities in sports for kids with autism, like Ciré’s 14-year-old brother, Jojo.

“I feel [Ciré] with me a lot, pretty much every day,” Debra Vaughn said. “And yeah, we all want it to be different, but she’s still here. Her spirit is too strong.” 

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Staff Contributors

Reporter: Sapna Bansil

Editors: Maria McIlwain and Gary Potosky

Photographer: Allie Ippolito

Illustrator: Anton Klusener

Additional Photographs: Courtesy of David Goodman and the family of Ciré Forman

Layout: Luke Reasoner

Digital Editor: Matt Mullin