

Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone Homecoming Ceremony
September 23, 2024
Mayor Jason F. Cilento

Good evening everyone and thank you for joining us at Columbia Park in New Jersey's Miracle Mile, Dunellen. As you know, we are here to honor one of our own, Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone. And what an honor it is to say, "Welcome home Sydney!"

I'd like to start by thanking our guests who spoke this evening. From members of the Dunellen community to our friends at Union Catholic to state representatives, it's clear that Sydney's impact extends far beyond this track.

This is a truly special occasion, with friends, family, and neighbors coming together to celebrate Sydney's accomplishments in the 2024 Paris Olympics at one of the locations where her journey began. While we recognize her accomplishments, we're also reminded of the countless hours spent on this track honing her skills and training relentlessly, guided by passion, dedication, and most importantly, faith.

Sydney has not only excelled as a world-class athlete but as a role model for youth around the world to look up to. A 3-time Olympian, 4-time Gold Medalist, and 6-time World Record Holder is a career that most athletes can only dream of, yet, Sydney continues to build on her legacy while showing that greatness is not just about winning medals, but about the journey, perseverance, and the ability to stay true to yourself through the highs and lows alike.

It is truly incredible to see how much she's accomplished since she was here in 2021. Two more gold medals and four more world records, and yet, she has never forgotten her roots. Despite her worldwide success, she's still the same person who grew up here, trained on this very track, and represented Dunellen with pride. Through each step of the journey, she continues to inspire us - not just through her athletic accomplishments, which are no doubt incredible, but through her character, humility, and strong sense of self and trust in her faith.

I will never forget the Dunellen community gathering at the historic Dunellen Theatre to watch Sydney compete in the finals of the 400m hurdles live. The energy in the room was electric from the moment she

appeared on the screen. We had all been keeping up with her run in the Paris Olympics, but there is no experience quite like watching history being made alongside your neighbors. Cheers broke out as soon as the race began and only got louder before absolutely erupting when she crossed the finish line to win the gold medal and break her own world record.

Sydney, there is no one better to represent our Borough, our County, our State, and our great Country. The Borough of Dunellen is incredibly proud of all that you have accomplished and we're so excited to see where your passion, dedication, and faith take you next. We will be with you every step of the way, praying for you, and cheering you on with unwavering support.

So with these congratulations and accolades, I'll conclude with this, Back in 2021, we renamed this track the "Sydney McLaughlin Track" in her honor. I joked at that ceremony that I had no idea what we were going to do next after she crushed it in Paris other than possibly naming the town after her. Well, here we are in 2024, and sure enough, she went well above and beyond, winning two more gold medals and setting her sixth world record. So, surprise, we have officially renamed Dunellen, no I am just joking,

renaming a town is actually a pretty difficult thing to do, and I think we would all agree we like the name Dunellen. But instead of renaming the whole town after you, I hope you'll settle for a key to the city on a beautiful plaque, an honorary street naming on Fairview Avenue, a proclamation honoring your continued success, as well as a joint proclamation from the mayors of Dunellen's sister cities in Italy, Borgonovo Val Tidone and Castel San Giovanni.

Welcome home Sydney, we are so proud of you! At this time, it is my honor to invite you now up to say a few words to our community.