

By Mindy Raye Friedman

Church Magazines

*Finishing a 195-mile race isn't
so bad when you do it as a team.*

Running



Together



For a group of young men in Nevada, a journey of 195 miles started with service. It ended with goals accomplished, lessons learned, and bonds formed.

The idea for running the 195-mile relay race came when the young men, as a Scout troop, volunteered to set up and man some stations at the race the previous year.

"We thought it was pretty cool that people were running just for fun," says Carter M., 17. "Our group thought we wouldn't mind doing something like that."

A few months later, their Young Men president, Jon Wayne Nielsen, got serious about the idea and asked the boys if they really wanted to run the race. "He thought that would be something fun for us to do and something that would be a good experience," Andrew B., 18, says. The young men agreed and decided to participate in the race.

Training Time

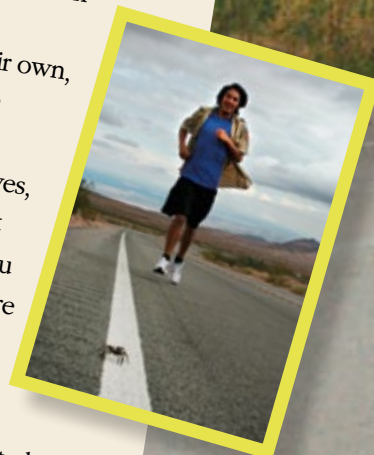
Many of the young men had never run long distances before, so they began training a couple of months before the race. They would train most days of the week.

"Starting out we would do 25 minutes, 30 minutes, or an hour," says Michael W., 13. "Then we started running 3 to 8 miles. Two weeks before the race, we did a qualifying run that was 10 miles, which we had to complete in order to run the race."

Some of the Scouts did the training on their own, and others ran together. "Having other people helped a lot," says Carson M., 15. "A lot of us thought that when we were running by ourselves, we were doing this all on our own, and it didn't really matter. Having your team running with you is more of a motivation, because you know you're going to be running with them in the race."

Race Day

Finally, the day of the race came, and Carter started off their two-day run at 7:30 a.m. on a Friday morning. Their team of 12 included 10 members of their Scout troop and 2 of their leaders. Each runner completed three legs of the race, ranging between 3 and 12 miles. They all ran in their Scout uniforms.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF JON WAYNE NIELSEN



THE RACE OF LIFE

The race of life is not optional. We are on the track and running, whether we like it or not. Some see dimly the goal ahead and take costly detours which lead to disappointment and frustration. Others view clearly the prize for running well and remain steadfast in pursuit. This prize, this lofty and desirable goal, is none other than eternal life in the presence of God."

President Thomas S. Monson, "The Lighthouse of the Lord," *New Era*, Feb. 2001, 8.



When these young men weren't running a leg of the race, they traveled together in two vans. The experience brought them closer together and taught them how to support one another.



They traveled in two vans when they weren't running. After 34 hours of running day and night, the Scouts finished the race on Saturday afternoon. The young men say the race was hard, but they enjoyed it. They were especially impressed by all the support they got from the other teams in the race.

"We were the youngest group to ever do one of these races," Andrew says. "So it was cool to see all these people who are good runners and do this all the time come up to us and say, 'It's cool that you guys are doing this.' It felt really good."

Lessons Learned

The other thing that felt good was the sense of accomplishment the young men had from training for and completing this race.

"I think the race helped me learn that I can set a goal and actually do it," Michael says. "It really helped me learn that I can do hard things instead of sitting around playing video games."

The race also helped the young men get closer to the other members of their troop and their priesthood quorums. "It's just cool to have fun with people who are members of the Church," Andrew says. "We all got a lot closer as a quorum, as a priesthood body. That was a bonding experience for us. We all hold the same priesthood, and we all felt our struggles together."

Along with getting to know one another better, the young men also learned to help and support each other. "We were always there supporting each other," Carson says. "Everything we did there, we worked as a team. We cheered on everybody as a team."

"The most important thing I learned from that race would be to care for others around you," Carter says. "If others need help, you help them out, because you're going to run into people who want to hear the Lord's gospel, and how you care for them and others will affect them."

It may have seemed like just a long race, but these young men learned valuable lessons and skills that will help them in a more important race—the race of life. **NE**

