

Getting ahead: Dave Bayo is using running to rebuild his life.

Homeless runner going the distance

Dave Bayo is getting back on his feet but still has miles to go

By **ROBERT NONEMAKER**

When Dave Bayo was in New Jerusalem Shelter, having lost his job and his home and waging a battle with drug addiction, he saw some other New Jerusalem members returning from the facility in sweats, having gone for an early morning run. It was the first time Dave heard of Back on My Feet, a nonprofit

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organization that promotes the self-sufficiency of the homeless population by engaging them in running as a means to build strength, confidence and self-esteem.

"Back on My Feet was the first piece of hope I had," Dave said. "Back on My Feet gives me a sense of community, friendship and it gives me positive goals to work toward – both in life and in racing.

"I've set a goal to be one of the best runners, member or volunteer, that BoMF has ever had."

Next month, Dave will take a giant step toward that goal by becoming the first BoMF member ever to compete in the Lone Ranger Ultra Marathon – a grueling event in which competitors run for 24 hours straight – during the Fourth Annual Stroehmann Back on My Feet 20in24, held on the Schuylkill River Course in Philadelphia July 16-17.

"Dave is a very hard worker and continually pushes himself to do his best," said Katie Pfiefer, program coordinator for the Philadelphia chapter. "He loves challenging himself for every race and working to achieve the goals he sets for himself."

Starting line

Bayo said the community he's found at BoMF changed everything for him, helping him journey from being homeless and feeling hopeless to a person who pushes himself to excel as a runner and is getting his life back. Before he entered New Jerusalem, he said, "I was on my own for a long time."

"In 2005, I got heavily involved in cocaine and over the next four years it led me to lose a couple of jobs and apartments," Bayo said. "I was never 'out in the street.' In September 2009, I got fired from my job with a printing company. I was already behind in rent and now had no income. On Thursday, November 16, 2009, my landlord told me I had to leave the following Monday. On Friday, I walked 10 blocks to New Jerusalem and talked to a staff member. He told me I can enter on Monday. They never turn anyone away. Monday morning, I gathered up what I

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David Bayo

New Jerusalem shelter resident who will run for 24 hours in the Stroehmann BoMF 20in24

could and walked to New Jerusalem, where I entered the program.

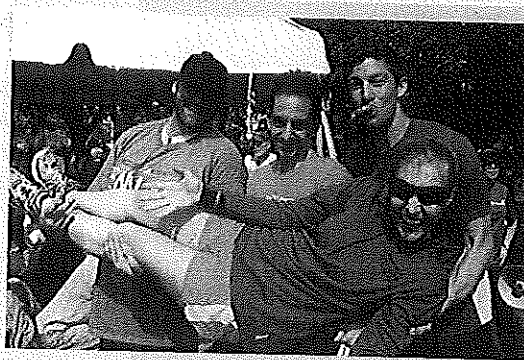
"I was okay because I was in a safe place but I was depressed about my situation and had little hope because it would be months before I would get back to work – I couldn't even think about saving for a new place.

"I would see guys coming back in the house in sweats on some mornings and they told me they were a part of BoMF. They said BoMF was an organization that works with recovery houses, and through participation and running, you can earn financial aid for housing, schooling and job placement, basically things to get me 'back on my feet.' By participating and keeping 90 percent attendance for nine months, I would have access to over \$1,000 that I could use for a security deposit on my new apartment. Knowing that I would have that, BoMF was the first piece of hope I had in New Jerusalem."

Bayo quickly became one of the best runners in the program.

"I was doing well and felt good during the morning runs," Bayo said. "After about six weeks, I participated in my second road race – a 5k (3.1 miles) race in Wilmington. It had about 250 runners and I came in 12th place! I could not believe it – to place that high against some of the best runners in the Delaware Valley. From there I was hooked, I figured this was my last chance to even do something special athletically, so I was out there pushing and training each morning. In the 18 months I've been with BoMF, I've run in about 25 races ranging from 5k to a full marathon and most times I can place in the top 10 percent of all runners."

Bayo now lives in the New



Fourth Annual Stroehmann Back on My Feet 20in24 Relay Challenge, Lone Ranger Ultra Marathon, Midnight Madness run and Pajama Loop July 16-17 Schuylkill River Course



Lone Ranger Ultra Marathon – This ultra marathon allows participants 24 hours to see how many miles they can run. \$3,000 cash prize for top male and female and \$1,000 bonus for breaking the course record (146.75 for males and 125.18 for females)

20in24 Relay Challenge - Philadelphia's only 24-hour relay race where teams of five choose one of four levels ranging from 8.4 miles to 33.6 per teammate. \$2,500 cash prize for top platinum team. Cash prizes for all other categories.

Midnight Madness Run - Held at midnight on Saturday, July 16, 525 people will run the 8.4 mile loop emblazoned with reflective gear.

Pajama Loop Run - Starting at 6:00 a.m. Sunday, July 17th, participants will run the 8.4-mile loop in their pajamas

For more information, go to www.20in24.com.

Jerusalem Advances House, which is for members who have at least six months in the program. He's back to work full-time with the IKON Corporation, is involved

with his church at the Broad Street Ministry and continues to train with Back on My Feet.

BoMF does not provide food nor does it provide shelter, but in-

stead provides a community that embraces equality, respect, discipline, teamwork and leadership. Much more than just running, BoMF is a comprehensive program that offers connections to job training, educational scholarships and housing assistance. The benefits of the program are earned through the currency of attitude, commitment, teamwork, respect, dedication and leadership.

Bayo competed in other 20in24 events last year, and volunteered at the water stations, helping runners cope with the heat. He ran last year as part of a bronze relay team, which is five runners running one lap (8.4 miles) each. Bayo's team came in third out of 24 teams.

He called the event "a very fun, carnival-like atmosphere and BoMF just takes over the Art Museum area for the weekend." But this year will be different, as Bayo's journey from a man with no hope to a competitor looking to push himself to the limit takes on a new direction.

"I feel that I've established myself with my times in the 5K races and the Blue Cross Broad Street Run, and it's time to conquer the longer, endurance races like the Delaware Marathon and the Lone Ranger," he said.

Running with distinction

While BoMF staffers and volunteers have competed in the Lone Ranger before, no current member has ever attempted it. Asked about his plan for the event, Bayo said: "Have fun and take it all in. You will remember this weekend for the rest of your life. Set a goal, have a game plan and go for it!"

Register for the Stroehmann Back on My Feet 20in24 Relay Challenge, Lone Ranger Ultra Marathon, Midnight Madness and Pajama Loop now at www.20in24.com. For volunteering opportunities, visit www.20in24.com/volunteers.html

Proceeds from the Stroehmann BoMF 20in24 will go directly to the BoMF program. Please visit www.backonmyfeet.org to learn more about their program and how BoMF is helping individuals experiencing homelessness move their lives forward.

Robert Nonemaker is the manager of communications at Back on My Feet