Staying the Course: Athletes Run Marathon for Urban Impact

In any challenge, there can be suffering in staying the course. For marathon runners, their bodies endure hours of stress during training and on race day. Afterwards their muscles ache, sometimes for days, because of the chemicals that have built up while running for so long.

When the challenge is living our lives for Christ, we’re tempted to take a detour or the easy way out. Philippians 3:14 says, “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

On May 15th, though they had a physical goal—the finish line—in sight, the 32 runners who ran for Urban Impact were also working towards the spiritual goal mentioned above. The runners helped to raise $12,860 in Urban Impact’s first year as a charity in the Dick’s Sporting Goods Pittsburgh Marathon. Athletes ran the full course, the half marathon, or the relay. They sought donations for Urban Impact from families and friends. The majority of runners received them via fundraising pages on Active.com. Kelli Watson, the top fundraiser, garnering over $1100, simply sent around emails and Facebook messages alerting her family and friends that she’d be running. “I think the thing about the fundraising that is personally blessing me the most is that it takes the focus of the marathon off of me and any personal or self-gratifying reasons that I had for running, and turns my focus back onto what it should always be on, honoring and glorifying God,” Kelli says about her motivation to participate. Unfortunately because of an injury, Kelli was not able to run on race day, but she still enjoyed the event as a spectator. Kris Anderson brought in the 2nd-highest amount, $787.

Urban Impact was blessed to have professional-caliber athletes alongside novice runners. At least 3 participants qualified for the 2012 Boston Marathon, meaning they’ve met or beat the time set for their age and gender. Ryan Smith, who made the best time of all UIF runners, was one of them. Then there was Bill Rodney who has run in every one of the 22 Pittsburgh marathons, making him what’s highly regarded as a “Sole Survivor.” Finally, Cindy Hatch ran the best time in her division.

It wasn’t just the runners who helped to spread the word about Urban Impact. Volunteers helped man the East Ohio Street fluid station. Others joined voices with the Urban Impact Choir near Allegheny Center Alliance Church (continued on next page)
as a race cheer-a-thon group, whose efforts won second place in the first half of the course. Board member Tim Daigle was integral to the success of the event. He and his wife Elizabeth were members of the leadership team responsible for planning the event, and they even organized a UIF running club.

Cindy Dell, Manager of Marketing and Communications, was the unofficial sports announcer for UIF runners; having subscribed to text message alerts, she was able to get periodic updates on everyone’s progress as they passed certain milestones.

Then when they crossed the finish line, Charity Village provided a place for respite, celebration, and family congratulations. Pastor Ed was there, too, to greet runners and share in the excitement.

Although this year’s race is over, the event formed relationships that stretch beyond the 26.2-mile course. First-time runner Larry Heiman, a professor at CMU, was inspired to assign his students a project in which they must design and implement an inventory database for Urban Impact’s Performing Arts Department. Runners formed a bond of their own. Many who united as the Urban Impact Running Club to train came together in solidarity on race day. Additionally, new relationships are even developing with the marathon office.

“We’ve signed on to become one of the new charity partners for next year’s event,” says Pastor Ed. Urban Impact will have greater visibility to the public alongside names like Livestrong and Team in Training. “This year’s marathon is a glimpse of the bigger picture,” Pastor Ed adds. “It’s part of our new focus on serving families and pushing for physical fitness.” This new focus will be kicked off at Health & Fitness Week during this year’s Summer Day Camp.

“Even though it seems early, we’re already recruiting runners who are willing to commit to run for us in 2012. We’ll need 125,” Pastor Ed notes. Urban Impact hopes more local churches will send forth athletes to run.

“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”
—Philippians 3:14

To put yourself on the calendar and run in support of Urban Impact, fill out the enclosed registration card and mail to Urban Impact, 801 Union Place Pittsburgh, PA 15212. This will also put you on the invite list for the Kickoff Party for 2012 runners, which will be held on July 20th. Hope to see you there!
Summer is a time for family reunions. With that comes the intergenerational exchange of laughter, love, memories and embarrassing moments. Most of all there is a sense of belonging. With the first-ever Options Reunion, Urban Impact hoped to create a place where the Urban Impact “family” could return to feel that togetherness even though they have graduated and moved on.

Around 30 students attended on June 3rd, along with 17 past and present UIF staff and volunteers. The themes for the night were to reconnect, remember, recognize, and refocus. Pastor Ed encouraged the past graduates on each of these points. One of the reasons for this reunion was to reconnect with each other and use this as an opportunity to network for the future. The graduates were urged to remember that they are all a part of the UIF family and no one should be left behind. It is also about giving back to where they have come from and sharing God’s blessings. The third point was about recognizing there is a great need and that they have the ability to help satisfy this need in their neighborhoods. Refocusing explains that after leaving Urban Impact, young men and women are faced with choices and inevitably their faith will be tried. The main goal of the reunion was to show students that no matter how they have strayed on their path with God, Urban Impact will always remain active in the lives of youth when they are ready to refocus their sights on Him. Also, as they grow, they have the chance to redirect their efforts toward Christ and “do good works, which God prepared in advance for them to do.” (Ephesians 2:10).

Dom Phillips, one of the reunion attendees, stated, “I knew how impacted I was by what the people at Urban Impact did for me and I want to be a part of something that changes lives.” As Options continues to grow, that impact will grow, too, as more and more youth return to Urban Impact.

The Play Ball for Kids Kickoff Luncheon was held at Heinz Field on May 10, 2011. Steelers players, Tyler Grisham, Doug Legursky and Ramon Foster, shown above with Jeff Hartings, were present to help launch a new PB4K season by bringing together veteran sponsors and potential “rookie” sponsors, motivating them to renew or commit to sponsorships this year ranging from $2,500 to $50,000. Last year’s sponsors were challenged to “double their impact” by each bringing in a new sponsor.

Pastor Ed Glover shared that Urban Impact’s vision is not just to impact the current generation but future generations as well. Young people who grew up in Urban Impact and graduated are now returning as interns and summer camp staff, impacting the generation after them. Play Ball for Kids sponsors are an integral part of this process through their giving, their prayer support and through their leadership as volunteers.

North Allegheny High School students hosted their 3rd annual fashion show to benefit Urban Impact. This year’s show had a jungle theme and was entitled, “The Runway’s a Jungle: It’s not Fierce, It’s Ferocious.” Proceeds totaled $3,335. Pictured with UIF Staff member, Ray Abel are (left to right) Maddie Jones, John Willard, and Lauren Lewis.
Arts Night showcases the students of the Urban Impact Choir (6th – 12th grade), as well as the Children’s Choir (1st - 5th grade) and Performing Arts Academy (1st - 12th grade). However, the real purpose is to equip students with the knowledge that if they will surrender to God, He can and will use all their gifts and abilities to communicate the good news of the Gospel and build His Kingdom.

That’s exactly what happened at this year’s Arts Night 2011. From comedy to deeply moving drama and dance...from exuberant praise song to contemplative, reflective songs of prayer...from the spoken word to the visual message, all was designed to bring honor to God.

And because of this, no night is more meaningful to Performing Arts students, volunteers and staff than Arts Night. Students are given the opportunity to usher in the Holy Spirit through dance, drama, and song.

The Holy Spirit really was present that evening. “Dear Lord,” a three year old girl whispered, while sitting on her father’s lap. She repeated the Sinner’s Prayer word by word after Pastor Ed. As the tiny child spoke, her father’s chest tightened. If his three year old daughter knew she was a sinner, how much more was he? His voice joined in with hers, “I know that I’m a sinner.” Moments later, mother echoed father and daughter and a whole family joined the family of God.

Just a few feet away 2 young boys who, minutes before, had sung in the Urban Impact Children’s Choir joined their voices with the others and were added as new believers.

Another young man, mentally unable to grab hold of reality around him, became lucid during the songs and Pastor Ed’s ministry. Awestruck parents watched as their son leaned forward, hungrily taking in every word and then with perfect clarity and understanding repeated the Sinner’s Prayer.

As they run the race of life set before them, these new believers may be shaken at times. But they’ve taken the first step and given their lives to Christ. The Urban Impact Performing Arts Department is truly thankful to have introduced them to Jesus. It is their prayer that when they face trials, these new believers will remain as faithful as they were in this life-changing moment, keeping their eyes fixed on Christ.

Global Impact Makes a Local Impact

This year’s Global Impact event happened on May 7th at Christ Church at Grove Farm. During the day students had an opportunity to engage in worship and listen as speaker Dr. Sameh Sadik focused their attention on how to be salt of the earth for Christ. Afterwards they stayed on course throughout the day by going into Pittsburgh to make a local impact in the community at 10 service sites:

- The Mexican War Streets Committee
- Kilday Way Committee
- Urban Impact and Pine Valley Baseball Carnival
- Storehouse for Teachers
- World Vision
- The LIVING Ministry
- Christ Church’s Uganda Well Drilling
- City View Church
- The Pittsburgh Project
- Allegheny Center Alliance Church

After returning to wonderful meal that was prepared by a team of over 20 volunteers and provided by Spaghetti Warehouse, they were headed down the home stretch.

The evening service, led again by Dr. Sadik, was focused on international missions. Pastor Ed Glover gave a call to response after Sameh’s powerful message and over 200 students expressed a call to commitment to Christ, full-time ministry, or deeper discipleship in their lives. The evening concluded and another Global Impact event made a local impact on the city of Pittsburgh.
Urban Rocks Concert Rocks Heinz Hall

Many performers sing in the hopes of filling the house and earning rounds of applause. But Johnny Angel had a different desire in mind when he thought to hold a concert for Urban Impact: the desire to draw a crowd that would support Urban Impact’s mission of transforming youth on Pittsburgh’s North Side. After all, it’s where he grew up.

One thousand eager fans attended Urban Rocks, an oldies concert held at Heinz Hall on April 2. The Choir opened the show with a rousing rendition of “Who is Like the Lord?” Johnny Angel and the Halos (pictured below) then took the stage. Performing oldies from the 70’s and 80’s, they featured guest performers Freddie Johnson and Kenny Mitchell. Eddie Holman (at right) filled the remaining first half of the concert with his unmatched tenor voice, noted most for his hit, “Hey There Lonely Girl.”

The second half of the concert featured headliner Jerry Butler, (pictured on left.) Pittsburgh Steelers Coach, Mike Tomlin, honorary chairperson for the event, (below right) was met on stage by current and former Steelers Centers, Maurkice Pouncey and Jeff Hartings. Mike Fraser from 3WS radio emceed the show.

The event was fully underwritten by sponsors Ladies Hospital Aid Society, Dollar Bank, Starkist, and Highmark. Thanks to the performers and the underwriters, Urban Impact raised over $30,000 in just one great evening!

Moms and Dads Go the Extra Mile
After PAA Parents Night

One person, one family, one block at a time — it’s Urban Impact’s motto. Every staff member, volunteer, and supporter hopes that what they do will not only affect one person, but ripple into families and communities. Oftentimes it’s not easily seen, but on April 28th the ripple effect was very evident at the Performing Arts Academy’s annual Parents’ and Performance Night.

Over 70 students took the stage at Allegheny Center Alliance Church to display their God-given gifts and to give Him the glory. More than 150 parents, family, and community members came out to support the students’ achievements. It was beautiful to see how the hard work put in during weeks and month of classes came to life on stage and on canvas. For over 90 minutes, Urban Impact students portrayed the Gospel of Christ using dance, song, visual arts, comedy, and drama.

An after-dinner reception recognized students and their friends and families for their dedication. It was amazing to see moms and dads congratulating their sons and daughters, asking, “How could you ever memorize so many lines?” or “Could you show me that dance move?”

Also, at the conclusion of the Performing Arts Academy’s third full year, it’s amazing to see the growth that many students and families experience. Several students from the academy will have opportunities this summer to dive deeper into programs like Urban Impact Shakes, UI Singers or Monday Nights. These programs will allow staff and volunteers to continue to mentor and deepen the relationships that began during the Performing Arts Academy.

The response that flooded the Urban Impact offices in the weeks following Parents Night was unexpected; not only did parents want to sign their children up for the fall semester, but they themselves wanted to get involved as volunteers. Thanks to all parents and families for supporting their children through this year’s Performing Arts Academy and now over-shooting the finish line with their willingness to give even more of their time.
Urban Impact Baseball Winds Down

Urban Impact Baseball will have completed its fifth season in the month of June. Five teams, ranging in age from 7-12 years old, participated in the Old Allegheny Baseball Association this year.

The main purpose of all Urban Impact programs is to facilitate opportunities to demonstrate and communicate the love and truth of Jesus Christ. The nature of playing little league baseball can easily cause the leaders to get distracted from spiritual formation and make baseball skill development the main purpose. In order to avoid this, a spiritual formation leader was assigned to each team this year to help keep everyone on the right course.

Chad Braunersrither, Sports Program Assistant, admits, “Even I have a hard time remembering that baseball is about teaching the youth of the North Side from the Word and not all about the final score of the game.” Though it’s fun to ask how many home runs are hit and who is playing well, the real prize is revealed when staff and volunteers share stories about the boys and girls who have accepted Christ into their lives.

This year, over 65 students participated in baseball. Every student had several opportunities to “respond to the Good News of Jesus Christ.” The new spiritual formation leaders taught 6 devotions from the book of Jonah with the theme being “answer the call.” The students were challenged to memorize 6 verses. It is exciting to report that almost half the students were able to recite the verses by the end of the season.

Each team awarded two players with the Christian leadership award. This award went to a student who consistently exemplified Christ-like character by creating a loving atmosphere, taking his/her spiritual formation seriously, and having high attendance at all activities. It was often easy to get discouraged and distracted during games if things weren’t going well, but this year’s baseball teams stayed the course despite the temptation to spend more time developing baseball skills than time spent developing Christian character.

This year’s program brought a particular player to commit his life to Christ. Chad says, “I know this young man and I’m so happy that instead of the coach telling me he went 3-4 with 3 RBIs, the coach let me know that when I’m in Heaven I can look over and see him and I can remember the day he made a decision to follow the Lord. This is why we do baseball!”

Victory on the Court and in Their Hearts

This past winter, over 125 young men representing 10 teams from across the City of Pittsburgh participated in Urban Impact’s Middle School Boys Basketball League. Not only was the league a safe, loving environment where youth could develop skills on the court, but more importantly, it was a place where boys were challenged to keep their eyes on the prize, and develop into responsible followers of Jesus Christ.

Each Saturday the word of God was proclaimed unashamedly, with this season’s teachings centered around Romans 8:37, that in Christ we are ‘more than conquerors through Him who loved us.’ In addressing big issues such as God’s intention for sex, forgiving those who’ve wronged us, and conquering strongholds of sin in our families and communities, Urban Impact hoped God’s Word would convict and penetrate hearts, setting in motion the type of transformation that tears down strongholds and breaks the cycle of generational sin so prevalent in the lives of urban youth and their families.

While two teams emerged victorious the final week as champions of their respective divisions, the true conquerors were the fifteen youth who responded to the Good News of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
Urban Impact sees a number of outstanding examples of Pittsburgh youth. Tevin Washington is one of them. He’s a 12th grade student who’s been a part of Urban Impact for many years. He participates in choir and also plays on Urban Impact basketball teams. He’s consistently been an honor roll student throughout his career at Oliver High School.

Tevin has participated in Monday Night Outreach Basketball Program throughout his high school years. He shows up each week and is always able to “create a loving atmosphere.” Whenever a coach or one of the UIF leaders asks him to do something, he is always respectful and willingly does what he’s asked to do. He always shows self control even when other students do not. Tevin always seems to be receptive to the Word of God during devotion times. He shows that he is serious about trying to put Christ at the head of his life.

Tevin decided not to play for the Oliver High School basketball team this past winter so that he was available to play on two Urban Impact teams. When Tevin joined the winter league team, his presence had an immediate impact. The team went from a middle-of-the-pack team to a championship contender. His basketball skills were a definite boost but his character was what made the biggest impact. He was definitely a leader on the floor. No matter what happened on the court, he was able to remain focused and keep the team focused.

The season’s defining moment was when Urban Impact fell behind by 12 points going into the 4th period of the championship game. The guys felt uncertain that they had a chance to win the game. Tevin however, remained calm, scored 14 points and played ball-hawking defense that brought Urban Impact within two points of winning. Though they didn’t win the game, they won in spirit because they never gave up. Tevin’s drive and determination nearly led to a victory.

Coach Nehemiah says of Tevin, “He is a young man that I am very proud of and I know that he will do great things for Christ throughout his life. Tevin graduates from Oliver High School this June and I can’t wait to see how God uses him to make an impact for Christ on this world.”

Because of kids like Tevin, who is a role model for all Urban Impact athletes, Urban Impact is able to maintain focus on creating devoted followers of Christ and teaching them how to stay the course on life’s journey.
CALENDAR of EVENTS
June 2011—September 2011

June 16thru August 11  Summer Day Camp
June 20 thru August 1  Monday Nights at ACAC 5:45-9PM (except July 4)
June 26  Pastor Ed preaches at Butte Bible Fellowship, Chico, CA 10:15AM; UIF update 6:00PM
July 3  Pastor Ed preaches at the Evangelical Free Church of Chico, CA 8:30AM & 11:10AM
July 6  Urban Impact Baseball field trip to Pirates game
July 10-15  Urban Impact at Pine Valley Bible Camp
July 11  Urban Impact Singers perform 5:30PM at Mt. Lebanon United Presbyterian Church
July 14  Del McCoury Band, Mt. Lebanon UPC – a significant portion of proceeds go to Urban Impact
July 17  Urban Impact Singers perform and Pastor Ed preaches 9AM & 11AM South Hills Assembly
July 20  Kickoff Party for 2012 marathon runners 6:30PM; place TBA – check website for details
July 20  Bistro to Go 6PM Performing Arts volunteer meeting
July 23 & 24  Urban Impact Singers perform, Lancaster, PA
July 25  Pastor Ed preaches at Maple Grove Mennonite Church 10:30AM
July 28 & 29  Shakes 8PM at ACAC 2nd floor Whiteside
July 31  Urban Impact Singers perform 9:00 & 11:15AM Christ Church at Grove Farm
August 5  Shakes 8PM at Christ Church Grove Farm Rally Room
August 6 thru August 12  Pastor Ed speaks & Urban Impact Singers perform at Maranatha Bible & Missionary Conference, Maranatha, MI
August 7  Urban Impact Singers perform Akron, OH
August 15  HS Boys and Girls Basketball Travel Teams volunteer training at ACAC
August 17  Urban Impact Performing Arts Choir Promotion Party 6PM for all 5th graders
August 22  HS Boys and Girls Basketball Travel Teams begin
August 25  Soccer grades 6-8 volunteer training at ACAC
August 29  Intramural Basketball volunteer training at ACAC
August 30 & 31  Urban Impact Performing Arts fall semester parents meeting 6:30PM
September 1  Soccer ages 4 thru grade 5 volunteer training at ACAC
September 1  Soccer grades 6-8 begins
September 6  First day of Urban Impact Choir rehearsal 5:45PM
September 8  HS Boys Basketball League coaches meeting
September 10  Soccer ages 4 thru grade 5 begins
September 12  Intramural Basketball & HS Boys Basketball begin
September 23-24  Flag Football Fest