

## AEP “Run for Education in Africa” Team Triumphs at Marathon October 2004

The AEP “Run for Education in Africa” Team took on the Under Armour Baltimore Marathon on Saturday, October 16, 2004. Generous sponsors pledged a dollar amount for every mile the team ran. The team



successfully raised over \$1,500 for the AEP Scholarship Fund.

AEP team members were Nneka George, Petula Kwende, LaShay Rhodes and Kat Simon-Agolory. Team members Petula, LaShay and Kat had run together the previous year in the Trigon Bay Marathon in Virginia Beach, VA. Nneka was a first-time aspiring marathoner. Training for the marathon began in June 2004 with Nneka and Kat training together in Raleigh, North Carolina, while Petula and LaShay trained in Charlotte, North Carolina. “The training was hard. We ran anywhere from 3 to 20 miles a day. Some days we’d run for hours in preparation for the big day,” Kat recalls of the four months of training.

The AEP team drove from North Carolina to Maryland to join 10,000 other runners signed up to hit Baltimore city streets that weekend. The city's weekend-long running festival, highlighted by the Baltimore Marathon, consisted of 5 races: marathon, half-marathon, 4-person relay, 5K and kids fun run. Approximately 3,000 runners were scheduled for the marathon.

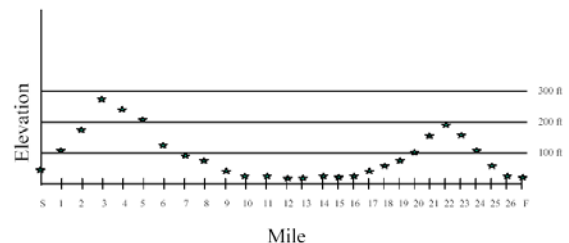
The AEP Team was up very early on Saturday morning to make their way to the starting area. TV helicopters buzzed overhead. Runners of all shapes and sizes prepared themselves for the 26.2-mile challenge that lay ahead. The starting shot



At the starting line of the marathon.

rang at exactly 8:00 AM and the AEP team was off.

The first three miles of the marathon were all uphill. Runners battled another uphill trek between miles 17 and 22. “The hills were the most difficult part of the race!” exclaims LaShay. The rest of the team agreed wholeheartedly. “Miles 3 and 22 were especially hard,” adds Nneka.



Topography Chart for 2004 Marathon Course

The marathon course took runners through the highlights of Baltimore including the Inner Harbor, Federal Hill and Fells Point as well as the varied neighborhoods of Baltimore. The course ran through Little Italy at mile 16. Mile 20 took runners through the tougher yet colorful neighborhoods of Baltimore. Residents were out on their stoops watching the runners past and waving occasionally. The race concluded with an inspirational finish through Camden Yards.



**The Baltimore Marathon Course.**

Many family members and friends cheered team members on as they triumphantly finished the race. “When I crossed the finish line I was so relieved. I finished!” Nneka recalls. LaShay adds, “I was so tired crossing the finish line but it felt so good!”

Baltimore runners raised more than \$630,000 for various charitable organizations. The weekend running festival pumped \$12 million into the Baltimore local economy and has generated a fiscal impact of more than \$41 million since the race’s inception in 2001, according to RESI Research and Consulting.

Besides finishing the race, team members agreed that the most memorable part of race was the people. “You meet all types of people along the way,” Nneka shares. “I ran most of the race together with a new friend I met. Then there was the woman running the relay the day after her father died. She dedicated the run to him. A spectator named Chuck would call out to me throughout the race to keep me in good spirits. Another group of guys encouraged me by calling me “yellow bird” because of my vest. And there was a lady who started to sprint right

at the end because she was trying to beat me to the finish line!” Nneka laughs as she happily reports that she beat her competitor to the finish line.

John Itati, 28, of Kenya won the men’s race finishing in 2:14. Ramilia Burangulova, 43, from Russia, won the women’s race finishing in 2:40. Each winner takes home a \$15,000 prize. None of the AEP team members’ finishing times were anywhere close to those but the point is that they finished. Each member took home a medal, a lifetime memory and the satisfaction that their accomplishment had helped the dreams of a less fortunate young person in Africa.



**Nneka (right) with her new found running partner.**



**LaShay leading the way.**



**Petula at the finish line.**