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GOING THE DISTANCE

Elijah started smoking marijuana when he was 10. More than 10 years later, he's off drugs and on to a whole new life. By Zoë Kashner

Last November, Elijah Campbell, 21, crossed the finish line of the New York City Marathon, having run for 26.2 miles. He has come even further in his personal life. In the last nine months, he has gone from not caring about his future at all to having goals that he's pursuing with a passion.

NO GOALS

Elijah grew up in New York City in the Bronx and Harlem. He was an OK student until eighth grade. Then he started skipping school with his friends.

One day his mom, Lenora, found him outside on the street during class time. She was angry, but she couldn't change Elijah's **behavior**. Things just got worse.

By 10th grade, Elijah was kicked out of school. He started hustling—delivering drugs to users around the city—at age 16.

He wasn't worried about getting caught. "I didn't care," Elijah remembers. "If I got caught, either I'd go to jail or not. It made no difference to me."

Elijah wasn't thinking about his future. He had started smoking marijuana at age 10. Eventually, he began smoking enough to spend \$40 every other day on his habit. He was on drugs most of the time.

GETTING CAUGHT

When Elijah was 19, he had a job working security at a grocery store. One day, he was headed to work when a friend asked him to go do a drug deal with him. Elijah chose to skip work. He headed downtown to make the deal with his friend.

"As soon as we walked in, the police were all around us," Elijah says. It was a setup, and they were caught. Elijah was held

in prison for about a month.

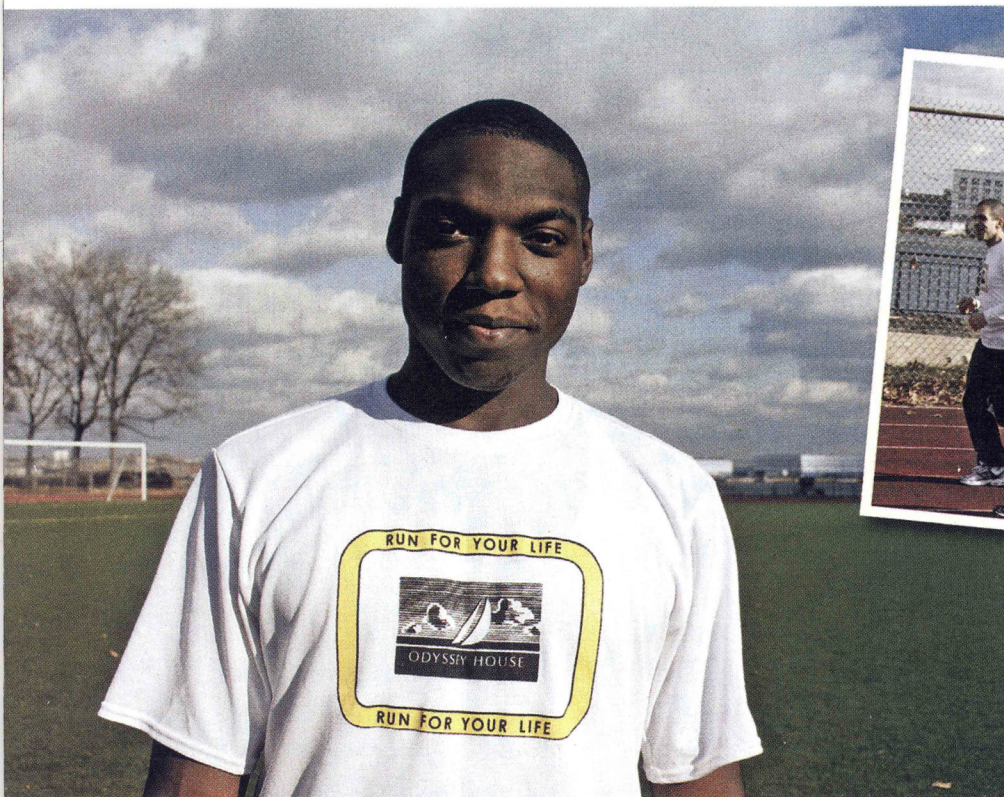
"Prison was really bad," Elijah remembers. "There was nothing to do but sit around all the time." It was lonely, **frustrating**, and boring. Then Elijah met someone from **Odyssey House**.

Odyssey House is a place where people who have been addicted to drugs can turn their lives around. They said that Elijah could come live there instead of in prison.

STARTING AN ODYSSEY

The **philosophy** of Odyssey House's program for teens is to allow them to slowly take control of their lives.

First, they learn how to follow the house rules. Then, they begin to earn **privileges** like going home for the weekend. Finally, they are taught to be house leaders. They organize



Left: Elijah's whole life has changed for the better. **Right:** Joining a group helped Elijah focus on his goals.

activities, follow a schedule, and study for their General Educational Development (GED) tests.

At Odyssey House, Elijah also joined a group that was training for the New York City Marathon. It was organized through the Achilles Track Club, a group for athletes with disabilities. Before the marathon, Elijah ran 6 to 20 miles regularly, to train his body.

RACE DAY

On the day of the race, Elijah waited for the start with about 37,000 other racers on Staten Island, one of New York's five **boroughs**.

"Here we go," Elijah thought.

"This is where it all starts." Elijah raced through Brooklyn. The roadway was packed with people cheering.

After 20 miles, he made it through Queens, part of Manhattan, and into the Bronx. There he heard a Marvin Gaye song being played by a group along the route. Elijah stopped running. He began dancing to the music. "I was energized, I was excited," he remembers.

Crossing the finish line was an amazing experience for Elijah. "I felt like—wow—I actually finished," Elijah says.

MOVING FORWARD

Elijah doesn't know if he will run the marathon again next year.

But completing it showed him that he can reach his goals. Now he has other plans he's looking forward to.

"I'm studying for my GED, and then I'll go to college," Elijah says. He plans to study music production and car repair. "I'm excited about the future," he says.

Best of all, Elijah's relationship with his family has gotten better since he has been in treatment and off drugs.

"My mom is happy that I am not getting in trouble anymore," he says. "She is really proud of what I have **accomplished** since I stopped using drugs and getting in trouble—running the marathon, studying for the GED, and making plans for my future." ■

WORD WORKOUT

bor•oughs: districts, areas

ac•com•plished: done something successfully