



Six for six: Youth finish first MacLaren marathon



Victor M., the first to cross the finish line, receives a bracelet from running club facilitator Jorge Pelinski while facilitator Scott Palmer looks on.

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Six MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility youth set out the morning of April 30 to run their first marathon. Within six hours, all six of them had crossed the finish line — the culmination of more than half a year of pushing their minds and bodies further than they thought possible.

Congratulations to the young men who now hold the title of marathoner:

1. Victor M.
2. Kelli I.
3. Josif W.
4. Casey A.
5. Christian B.
6. London W.

Hawks Running Club facilitators Shannon Wilhelm, Scott Palmer, Jeff Mekkers, and Jorge Pelinski dubbed the event Mac-athon, and they believe it is the first marathon held inside the fence of a U.S. youth correctional facility.

Staff and volunteers did all they could to make the event special for the runners, from bringing in an



Christian B. during the race.



Josif W. gets some support from volunteer Joska Rettig.



London W. runs alongside Olympian Ian Dobson.

inflatable start/finish line, to packing aid stations with snacks and drinks, to giving the youth wristbands labeled “26.2” after they crossed the finish line.

Multiple volunteers and staff members — including OYA Director Fariborz Pakseresht and U.S. track and field Olympian Ian Dobson — ran or walked sections of the race alongside participants who needed encouragement. One volunteer, Sarah Marcotte with HOPE Partnership, ran and walked almost all of the second half of the event alongside one youth. Several family members also visited to cheer on the youth.

It was a long, hard day for the runners, but they persevered, logging one of the biggest accomplishments of their lives — something they will never forget.



OYA Director Fariborz Pakseresht ran several laps with Casey A.



Victor runs near the administration building.



Kelli I. after finishing the race.



London after finishing the race. Volunteer Sarah Marcotte ran/walked most of the second half with London.



Josif receives his post-race bracelet from Scott Palmer.



Casey celebrates post-race with running club facilitator Jeff Mekkers.



London during the race.



Palmer joins Kelli for a lap.



Mekkers presents Christian with his bracelet.



Staff congratulate Victor after his finish.



Casey poses for a post-race photo with Pakseresht and Palmer.

Crossing the Finish Line



Victor M.



Kelli I.



Casey A.



Josif W.



Christian B.



London W.