

Glenda Moody and the Force Behind the D.C. Striders

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When they dash across the finish line in record breaking times, the D.C. Striders stand out brilliantly in their brightly colored uniforms emblazoned with the symbol of the Unification Church and silhouettes of three runners bursting forth from the middle. Sports reporters come up to Striders coach Glenda Moody and wonder quizzically, "Haven't I seen that symbol somewhere before?"

But Glenda has been attracting notice for her team ever since she, as a white, woman track coach, began working with predominantly black ghetto youths in 1968. Now the coaches who once laughed at her have to respect the fact that she has built her team into one of the best in the nation, with seven Olympic medal winners among them.



What has kept her going despite the obstacles has been her ever-deepening conviction that if you live by God's Principles, results have to come. But the results that she points to with pride are not the trophies and records, but seeing the young people she works with learn to have faith in themselves and in God. Both Glenda and her associate John O'Boyle are members of the Unification Church, and they believe and

practice the Divine Principle, a series of revelations by Rev. Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church.

"The Principle teaches us how to love," says Glenda. "I was 20 years old when I started and I certainly didn't yet have the depth of heart that I needed for this work. But I started putting the Principle into practice on the Team -- giving love -- and I saw some incredibly beautiful things unfold.

"I had been in the Church for two years when I got started with this work, and I was beginning to question some parts. I decided to test it out in life; if it could work, then it was real. The experiences I had were so amazing that I really started having faith in this Principle and over the years that faith has only been confirmed over and over again."



An outstanding example of the changes she has seen take place in hundreds of young men (and, more recently, women too) is the story of Maurice Peoples: "When Maurice graduated from college, he was a good runner, but a nobody, and he needed help. So he joined us and John and I trained him. He lived with the Unification Church members during that time. Maurice didn't like white people and he didn't believe in God. But people at the center were nice to him; I got him some clothes. Before he left for the Olympic trials, one of the white brothers hugged him good-bye and wished him good luck. This blew his mind. He realized there might be a God and he asked me to get him a cross. He has never taken it off his neck since then. This is what happened.

"Maurice had no faith in himself; his first race was against John Smith, who held the world's record. When he beat John Smith, Maurice said to me, "There must be a God."

"His mother told me," Glenda says, "I've never seen such a change in my son." Even for the, to see someone's life change so much in one month really confirmed the Principle for me.

Maurice went on to Munich with the Olympic team. A year later he won the NCAA championship and broke the world record. Other clubs offered him a lot of money and I urged him to accept, but he said, 'No, what's been given to me can never be replaced.' He stuck with us and helped to recruit other members for the team."



All members of her team pray before they run. At first they totally rejected the idea, but this changed and at a meet in Atlanta in 1972, whites and blacks crowded around them afterwards. They had never seen anything like that before -- runners kneeling to pray before the race began. One observer commented to Glenda, "We've been crying for years to get blacks and whites together (they sit in separate bleachers

usually) but it took a track team to do it!"

The Striders compete on four age levels: junior high school, high school, college age, and postgraduate. Those still in school participate from May to August, while the post-graduates compete all year at events sponsored by the two track and field organizations with which the Striders are associated, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) and the U.S. Track and Field Federation (USTFF).

"In the summer, when the college kids come home, they teach what they've learned to the high school and junior high school kids, and that's when I really see God's love expanding," Glenda says.

Soon after they started winning meets, colleges began offering scholarships to Glenda's kids, and that's how a unique part of her program got started. Now scholarship aid is an important part of the Striders program. About 300 students have been or now are on full four-year scholarships, and close to 100 have already graduated. Ninety-eight percent of those awarded scholarships graduate, an astoundingly successful rate compared to other programs.

Asked the secret of her success with the kids, Glenda says, "I just apply the Principle -- by loving them sincerely. I discipline them when they need it, and I praise them when they deserve it, just like a parent. In fact, in some cases the parents wouldn't sign their scholarship application forms, I had to take over guardianship to see that they got the break they needed. The first thing we have to do is get them to believe in themselves, in their self-dignity."

Each year Glenda gives out crosses to those kids that have given something of themselves to the Club, who have demonstrated maturity, etc. This tradition, too, is another incentive for them to learn new values.



Two who are now seniors in high school had been planning to quit school in their sophomore year because they felt they had no purpose to go on. "When they started feeling some value as individuals, they realized they could go on to college, get a good job, and get their families out of the ghetto. They started making long-range plans, and for ghetto kids who live from day to day, this is unusual. Now both are on the dean's honor roll and are planning to go to college."

Glenda and John don't have to teach doctrine to get their kids to believe in God. "They learn by seeing our actions," Glenda explains, and "by seeing how much we care. Sometimes I get so frustrated I cry right in front of them. They know I care. In fact, they're jealous if I spend time with anyone else."

Reasonably enough, Glenda wasn't immediately accepted by the black community in which she worked, but she won their trust. For instance, one night she was standing on a corner in a rough section of town, waiting for a cross-town bus. A group of kids approached and she heard them say,

"Let's get her." However, as they attacked her they saw the Striders emblem on the back of her jacket and immediately one of them said, "Hold it!" It turned out that one of his best friends was a Strider. The boys picked her up, brushed her off, saw her home to her apartment, and two of those boys are now teachers.

"We are probably one of the most respected black programs in the D.C. community," Glenda now says. "People are amazed by our success, but they're willing to put money into it." The Striders also receive donations from the Unification Church.

One reason that high-caliber athletes like to run with the Striders, even though they could possibly make more money with another team, is that they know for sure that Glenda and John are fair and that they're honest. They never try to take advantage of their members or to use them. Rather, they are totally dedicated to their work. "I love what I'm doing," says Glenda, "because I see so many lives changing overnight. Seeing this happen just deepens my faith."

There are now about 300 Striders ranging in age from 14 to 27 and they include people from Antigua, Ghana, Jamaica, Trinidad, and England who live in the Washington, D.C. area. About 81 percent are blacks.

"My ideal," Glenda says, "is to be able to express Reverend Moon's heart, his deep concern for humanity. Our team is composed of different races, different nationalities, all working together and showing it's

possible -- like a microcosm of the world we want to build. By our helping these athletes from other countries we're putting into action Rev. Moon's desire to help and serve the other nations of the world."

Some D.C. Striders Victories

SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA (December 1975)

Event	Place	Name
600 Meter	1st	Fred Sowerby (World Record)
500 Meter	1st	Fred Sowerby (Meet Record)
400 Meter	1st	Cuthber Jacobs
400 Meter	3rd	Leon Pullum
Mile Relay	2nd	

CYO MEET, COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND (January 9, 1975)

60 Yard Dash	2nd	Alice Annum (Women's)
60 Yard Dash	4th	Dr. Del Merriweather (Men's)
5000 Meter	3rd	Ron Martin
Mile Relay	2nd	

PHILADELPHIA CLASSIC (January 23, 1976)

60 Yard Dash	1st	Alice Annum (Women's)
60 Yard Dash	5th	Dr. Del Merriweather (Men's)
Mile Relay	1st	
500 Yards	1st	Fred Sowerby

MILROSE GAMES, MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, N.Y. (January 30, 1976)

60 Yard Dash	1st	Alice Annum (Women's)
60 Yard Dash	4th	Dr. Del Merriweather (Men's)

Mile Relay	1st	
3000 Meter	2nd	Ron Martin

MASON-DIXON GAMES, LOUISVILLE, KY. (February 6, 1976)

500 Yards	2nd	Fred Sowerby
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TORONTO MAPLE LEAF GAMES (February 13, 1976)

500 Meters	2nd	Fred Sowerby
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WINNIPEG, CANADA (February 14, 1976)

Mile Relay	1st	
500 Meter	1st	Fred Sowerby
3000 Meter	1st	Ron Martin (Canadian Record)

OLYMPIC INVITATIONAL, MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, N.Y. (February 20, 1976)

Mile Relay	1st	(Meet Record)
60 Yard Dash	2nd	Alice Annum (Women's)
5000 Meters	1st	Ron Martin

NATIONAL RELAY, MADISON SQUARE GARDEN (February 27, 1976)

Mile Relay	3rd	
600 Meter	1st	Fred Sowerby
60 Yard Dash	2nd	Alice Annum (Women's)