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Evans LPN's life is a marathon

By Jeff Troth, MEDDAC PAO



For one Evans Army Community Hospital Soldier the journey from his home in Kenya to Fort Carson has been a long one, but just as with his marathon running, it has been one step at a time.

"Life is a lot like running," said Spec. Samson Mutua, a licensed practical nurse assigned to Evans Obstetrics and Gynecology Clinic. "Both are like a staircase. You can't get to the top of the staircase without first stepping onto the first step."

Mutua's first step was in Meru, Kenya, about 140 miles northeast of his country's capital of Nairobi. After graduating from high school in Kenya his application to study in the United States was approved. But before he could make the trip to Utah Valley University, located just north of Provo, he needed help from his friends and neighbors.

"In Kenya we have harambee, a fund raiser, when people come together for one cause. If someone needs a place to live, someone comes with a log, someone else comes with nails," said Mutua. "That is how I got the money for the airfare to come to the states."

At that time he had no plans of joining the United States military he was just wanted the chance to help people.

During his first semester at Utah Valley University the track coach noticed him running on campus and asked him to join the university's track team. Prior to this Mutua never thought about running as a sport, it was just something that everyone did back home.

"Commuting in the states is different from where I grew up," said Mutua. "In Kenya we do everything on our legs, cars are a luxury."

Although he was more than 9,000 miles away from home, and had seen more cars in his first week in Utah than he had ever seen in his entire life in Meru, his hometown was still giving him direction and pushing him toward his next step.

"I wanted to be a doctor," said Mutua. "This ambition was driven by the fact that I grew up in a remote area where we had no access to medical care and I saw devastating health issues and preventable deaths on a regular basis."

Because Utah Valley didn't have a medical program Mutua transferred to the University of Utah. They didn't have a track team so Mutua participated in several local runs, normally five miles or less, but in 2009 he ran the Salt Lake City Half Marathon, finishing the 13.1-mile course in just over an hour and 16 minutes.

"Whenever I felt like I had too much pressure on my shoulders I would just go out and run," said Mutua.

In 2010 Mutua graduated from the University of Utah with a Bachelor of Science in Medical Laboratory Science. He then applied for medical school, but because he was not a U.S. citizen he wasn't qualified to get a scholarship. So instead of giving up on his dream, he took a side step and continued his education until he earned a Master of Public Health degree.

Since the United States had given him so much, Mutua wanted to give back to his adopted country. He visited a local Army recruiter, and was told that since he was not a U.S. citizen he couldn't become a medical officer, but was eligible to enlist for training as a licensed practical nurse

His first step in the military was April 2014 when he arrived at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for basic training. He then went to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, for phase one of the yearlong Advanced Individual Training for LPNs, which consisted of classroom training. Phase two hands-on-training for Mutua was at William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso, Texas.

"When I got orders that my first duty assignment was going to be Alaska, I was like 'wow, from Kenya to Alaska that is too much'," said Mutua. "I was in Alaska three days after graduating from AIT. But a week later I was boarding another plane to Miami for a trauma course. The experience I got at that training was the best, it was priceless."

The rush to get him to the trauma course was because six weeks after the course, Mutua deployed to Afghanistan with his unit.

While in Afghanistan he continued his running, but had to adjust his work out time to 4:30 a.m. to beat the heat. His early morning running caught the attention of the base's two-star commander who requested that he participate in runs on behalf of the forward operating base.

A month after returning to Alaska he headed to Washington DC to compete in the 2016 Army Ten-Miler. He finished the course run in 54:33 minutes.

"I am focusing on races that are 10 miles and more now," said Mutua. "I have run five marathons. I have won every one that I have run except my first one. I plan on running a marathon every month the rest of this year.

In March Mutua competed in the Bataan Memorial Death March marathon at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico. In 2015 while at AIT, he ran the Bataan marathon and finished in just under 3 hours and 9 minutes. This year he shaved more than 21 minutes off his previous time, crossing the finish line at 2 hours, 48 minutes and 29 seconds, the second fastest time in the 28 years of the run.

As his run times improve, he is quick to help others improve their run times, both at races and for their Army Physical Fitness Test.

"People ask me how I can get my running better all the time," said Mutua. "I see people want to go out and do a long run in one day, I have to tell them that is not possible. They can't just start running five miles one day, they have to start small and work their way up to their goal."

His help to others extends beyond reaching a goal on the track. Mutua not only sends money home each month to his family in Kenya, he has also adopted four children from his hometown of Meru.

"It has really taken God and my community to get me where I am today," said Mutua. "Someone gave me a chance so that is where the adoption idea came in. I want to at least give them hope that there was something better out there for them."

Mutua is paying for them to attend a boarding school.

To show his adopted children that anything is possible, Mutua gained his U.S. citizenship in September 2014. This accomplished, and along with recommendations from his leadership in Alaska, Mutua was accepted into the Army Medical Department Enlisted Commissioning Program. AECP provides Soldiers the opportunity to complete a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and then receive a commission in the Army Nurse Corps.

Last fall Mutua was accepted to the Colorado State University-Pueblo's nursing program. For this reason he transferred from Alaska and arrived at Evans hospital in November.

“He has been a great asset to our clinic, always willing to help out whether it is with patients or inventorying equipment,” said Sgt. First Class Michelle Linden, noncommissioned officer in charge of the OB-GYN clinic. “I am glad that he got picked up for AECF, I know he will be fantastic at it. He has so much more to offer the Army and this program is just one more step for him.”



Spec. Samson Mutua leads the way as he takes first place at the Bataan Memorial Death March marathon at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, March 19. He crossed the finish line at 2 hours, 48 minutes and 29 seconds, the second fastest time in the 28 years of the run. (Courtesy photo)