

## OLYMPIC RUNNER

### Erin Donohue runs her way to the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games

My family and I moved into my house in Haddonfield, New Jersey, in May 1983, the same week that a girl was born to Beth and Ed Donohue. Erin is a runner, and as long as I have been hearing about her, she has been a runner. Last week a Haddonfield paper reprinted a picture of a 9-year-old Erin coming in 4th in an annual adult race.

The highlight of my son Miles' middle school career was a 6th grade race in which he claims to have beaten Erin. He may have, he was born 6 months before Erin and his teachers were always telling me about his untapped potential. Running consistently and training was never as appealing to him as pulling apart computers and computer software and building robots that could smash other robots. Miles is starting a new job in robotics this week. However, Erin is traveling to China to represent the United States in the Olympic Games and Haddonfield, Ustawi International, my family and I are delighted.

My son Angus was 2 years ahead of Erin and Miles, and he was a runner throughout highschool. I remember a time he came home every week and handed me medals he had won, and for a time, when one boy graduated and another was sidelined for injury, Angus was the fastest long-distance runner in the boys' team. Which was extremely slow compared with the girls' team that won every race, because of Erin. Angus was disdainful of how the other girls ran, wearing fancy sports tops and shorts and shoes. He told me that Erin just put on a tee-



shirt and ran. That was how to do it. Just run.

Angus and Miles have continued to run, but only for fun. Angus is now a lecturer of medical writing and a medical writer starting a new job next week in the pharmaceutical industry. Me, I am going to Kenya.

This will be my first trip to Kenya, and I am traveling on behalf of Ustawi International because my work as a life scientist, as a medical writer, as a publisher, as a physiologist and biochemist with a doctorate of philosophy from a medical school, has led me to care deeply about health and to dedicate the rest of my life to overcoming the greed and lack of accountability of European powers who settled their citizens and management in Africa, took over the land, the water, the air and demanded that African humans (those they had not sold into slavery) buy back their own land from them. Or pay rent in perpetuity. Ustawi has heard of a presidential palace from which Paris continues to collect rent.

Kenya has an educated elite of professionals such as Ustawi International CEO Dr Macharia; these pages will be filled with stories about these professionals and their achievements in the months to come. The single-minded pursuit of Dr Mac's vision to increase the life span and improve the health of Kenyans took him through Kenya, France, Harvard hospitals to Haddonfield to start Ustawi International and is sending me to Kenya the day the 2008 Olympic Games start in China.

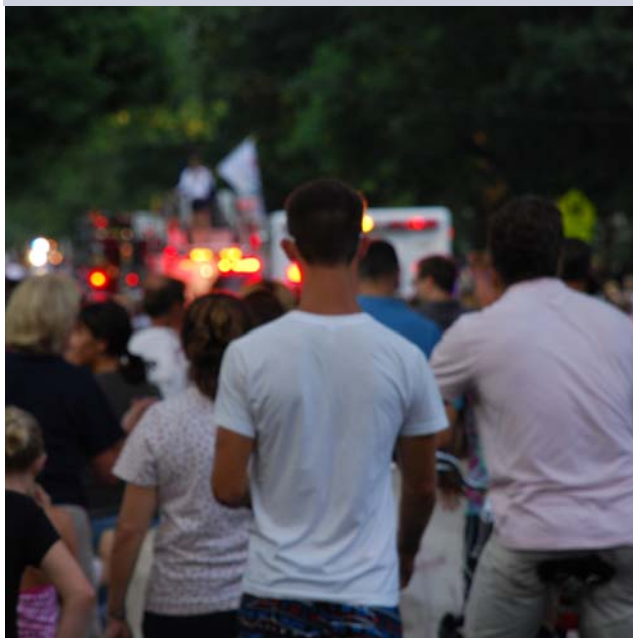
Kenyan runners will be at the Olympic Games and the whole world is expect-



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*Erin chats before the parade and the Mayor of Haddonfield, Mrs Tish Colombi (red jacket) stays close. Below left, crowds follow Erin riding on the firetruck. Below right, after the parade the highschool stadium is packed for a send-off ceremony for Erin over which the mayor presided. Next page, the parade starts*





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ing them to do well, because they always do well. These runners mostly run to get out of poverty and ill health. They have been doing this spectacularly for some decades.

What makes an Olympian like Erin Donohue? Hearing stories about her over the years has convinced me that single-minded pursuit is most important. Haddonfield threw a parade for her on 31 July, I took these pictures before and after the parade. I discovered that in the 300 years this town has been around, Erin is our first Olympic runner. Not a single runner in Haddonfield ever wanted to run every day morning and night in the cold of winter and the heat of summer, no-one ever wanted this enough.

I wrote that Haddonfield was delighted. Haddonfield was ecstatic, beside itself with glee. The parade started at 7pm, first with a band, then a huge American flag, then a crowd of children carrying flags, then cars filled with "Erin's parents", "Erin's brothers and grandmother", "Erin's highschool coaches". The coaches looked startled, they did a good job not stopping her, what else did they do? If they knew, they would have coached other affluent children to Olympic successes.

After the supporters and the flags was Erin herself on top of a fire truck, waving. And then the supporters waving flags, banners, cheering, followed her on the road all the way down the highway to the high-school, cheering her.

God has blessed Erin. She runs because she has not been stopped. My prayer for Erin is that no-one will stop her, not from running, not from anything, not ever.

*By SJ Dodgson PhD*