

---

BREAKING NEWS

Watch live: Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Jackson faces the Senate Judiciary Committee

ADVERTISEMENT

---

---

LIFESTYLE

## Meet the Ted Lasso of the L.A. Marathon

By continuing to use our site, you agree to our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). You can learn more about how we use cookies by reviewing our [Privacy Policy](#).

---



By continuing to use our site, you agree to our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). You can learn more about how we use cookies by reviewing our [Privacy Policy](#). [Close](#)

Paul Trapani, co-founder of Students Run LA. [@paultrapani](#)

BY MARY FORGIONE



**By Mary Forgione**

*Design and illustrations by Micah Fluellen*

Paul Trapani faces a task this Sunday that most of us would find beyond daunting: transporting 3,100-plus student runners to the start of the [Los Angeles Marathon](#) at [Dodger Stadium](#) by the early morning start time. Running bibs have to be distributed, gear bags stowed, 60 buses directed where to go, etc. He then has to reverse the process and pick them up — whenever they finish the 26.2-mile route — at the finish line in Century City. His day starts around 4 a.m.

“We have 200 school groups, as far north as Sylmar and as far south as Laguna Beach,” said Trapani, co-founder and program director of [Students Run LA](#), or SRLA, which has just five employees. It’s a remarkable nonprofit organization that trains middle-school students to run the L.A. Marathon. You heard right: middle-schoolers. How do they get kids to stop playing videogames and get running? The program relies on volunteer leaders (mostly teachers at partner schools) to motivate kids on increasingly harder training runs for eight months of the year. These students aren’t track stars or athletes; they often attend schools in underserved neighborhoods. SRLA provides free training runs plus footwear and gear; marathon organizers provide free entry (which currently costs \$209 for everyone else).



Eric Spears, left, Paul Trapani and Harry Shabazian started the student program in the 1990s.

(Paul Trapani)

ADVERTISING

By continuing to use our site, you agree to our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). You can learn more about how we use cookies by reviewing our [Privacy Policy](#).



There's not another program in the U.S. exactly like this, partly because Southern California's mild weather allows almost year-round outdoor training and partly because, well, it's hard to pull off. Not that Trapani thinks it's hard. He co-founded the program in 1993 and though he no longer runs the marathon, remains committed to keeping it going.

During our conversation, Trapani delivered this SRLA truth that could be straight out of a "Ted Lasso" episode with the same plain-sense-drawl of Jason Sudeikis: "We're not a marathon training program, we're a character building program," he said. "We're not training better runners, we're training better people." ([Read the group's mission statement here.](#)) That's why SRLA doesn't track which school group finishes first or which runners are the fastest. It's not what the organization is about. I think that's huge, considering how many kid sports, from soccer to baseball, center on winners and losers. Every SRLA student who completes the course wins — and receives a medal.

The student presence at the start line is mighty. Imagine 3,000 kids wearing identical bright SRLA shirts. I have seen SRLA runners on the route, sometimes running, sometimes walking, sometimes being encouraged by friends or teachers, but always moving forward.

One more marathon note: The 2022 Stadium to the Stars route starts at Dodger Stadium in downtown Los Angeles and continues to San Vicente Boulevard and Montana Avenue, where it doubles back through Westwood to finish at the Avenue of the Stars in Century City. [Here's a mile-by-mile map of the marathon course.](#)

## 4 things to do this week



The bloom at the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve in Lancaster on March 11. (Raul Roa / Times Community News)

**1. Curb your wildflower enthusiasm this season, but don't despair.** Wildflower season requires a bit of an attitude adjustment. Let's start with California poppies, the state flower. Southern California didn't get enough rain and optimal weather to produce carpets of blinding orange associated with superblooms. Still, poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) are blooming at the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve in Lancaster, just not in huge numbers.

Also, the show may be over in two weeks. The site include lacy phacelia at Vista Point Trail. [Check out the full list of wildflowers here.](#)

By continuing to use our site, you agree to our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). You can learn more about how we use cookies by reviewing our [Privacy Policy](#).

to see at each poppy field.

Aside from poppies, bush sunflowers, wooly blue curls, lupine, black sage, ceanothus and other plants are popping along trails in the Santa Monica Mountains. Two good places to check out in the western part of the range: the [Mishe Mokwa Trail](#) above Malibu and the Hidden Pond Trail/Coyote Trail in Point Mugu State Park. Find out more about what's blooming and where on the Theodore Payne Foundation Wildflower Hotline [online](#) or calling [(818) 768-1802, Ext. 7]. [Also, check out our guide to hiking in L.A. for more places to explore.](#)

Look for wisteria blooming in home gardens at [Theodore Payne Foundation](#). By continuing to use our site, you agree to our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). You can learn more about how we use cookies by reviewing our [Privacy Policy](#).

## 2. Ready for some wisteria h

lays claim to the world's largest blossoming plant. The Chinese wisteria planted in 1892 flourished in SoCal's mild community

weather, growing branches that measured 500 feet by 1994, the year [Guinness World Records](#) made the claim official. The vine covers an entire acre. Wisteria (specifically *Wisteria sinensis*) blooms in light lavender clusters with a pleasant, sweet smell. You'll find blossoms now draped on gazebos or gates in home gardens around L.A. Tickets are on sale for the [Wistaria Festival](#) in Sierra Madre from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. March 27, where you can take a shuttle tour of the community, see the vine and enjoy musical performances and classic car shows. [Tickets cost \\$10.](#)

(Hillary Kladke/Getty Images)

By continuing to use our site, you agree to our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). You can learn more about how we use cookies by reviewing our [Privacy Policy](#).

### 3. Take a Worm Moon group

Moon because it's a time when earthworms emerge and the soil warms up. We Explore Earth invites hikers to

the Worm



explore parts of Griffith Park (Captain's Roost and Griffith Observatory) and stay for an evening yoga session. Meet at 6 p.m., hike at 6:15 p.m. and take the yoga class (donation based) at 7:45 p.m. [Check out We Explore Earth on Instagram for details on how to sign up.](#)

(Mikki Paek / For The Times)

**4. Everybody needs a hack fi**  
to join a [California Now podcast](#)  
as well as some under-the-radar  
Pedro. I'm joined by chef and Food Network host [Jet Tila](#), who demystifies Thai Town, and [Smorgasburg Los Angeles](#)

By continuing to use our site, you agree to our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). You can learn more about how we use cookies by reviewing our [Privacy Policy](#).

to be asked  
rite hikes  
own of San