

NEWS

Students set goals in LA Marathon that can be applied to life itself

2,500 young folks who call their race 'Students Run LA' are buoyed by 500 adult mentors



John F. Kennedy High School students and faculty leaders prepare for the L.A. Marathon in Granada Hills, Monday, Mar 13, 2023. 2,500 students will be running in the Los Angeles Marathon as a part of Students Run LA. They will be accompanied by nearly 500 adult volunteer mentors, who will be running the marathon alongside them. (Photo by Hans Gutknecht, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)



By Marianne Love, Correspondent

Some of those running in the [LA Marathon on Sunday](#) may wear their favorite shirts or shoes, but for Brayan Rodriguez-Torres, a sophomore at Carson High School, his lucky charm will be his cochlear implants.

Without them he is completely deaf.

At first the 15-year-old found training last summer for his first marathon a bit confusing. “It was complex to figure out how I was going to do the miles and I was shy at first meeting people,” he said through his interpreter Rachel Ramirez. “I feel good now.”



Brayan Rodriguez-Torres, Carson High School student. (Photo by Martin Barajas)

Brayan will be among about 2,500 students competing in the LA Marathon as part of the organization [Students Run LA \(SRLA\), made up of 185-plus school groups](#)

Nearly 500 adult volunteer mentors will run alongside the students during the 26.2-mile competition trek from Dodger Stadium to Century City as it winds through some of the region's most iconic neighborhoods including Chinatown, downtown L.A., Echo Park, Hollywood, West Hollywood, Beverly Hills and Brentwood.

Many volunteers are teachers and administrators from schools where the students are enrolled. SRLA'S philosophy is about setting short-term and long-term goals that can be applied to the classroom and, in general, to life itself.

For the students, the marathon is about more than a medal.

It's proof they can do anything they set their minds to, the culmination of seven months of hard work and dedication, according to SRLA spokesperson Cassidy Smith.

Standard uniforms for SRLA teams are bright neon shirts, black shorts and a marathon bib. Benjamin Bravo, dean of student discipline at Carson High School in Carson, said his team will be in neon yellow.

“We are the brightest thing out there on marathon day,” Bravo said. “We call ourselves the breakfast club because we show up (for training) early in the morning at breakfast time.”



All the runners at Twin Lakes Intermediate School in El Monte with their new running shirts, March 2023. (Photo courtesy Twin Lakes)

Cecilia Alcantar, a 16-year-old junior at John F. Kennedy High School in Granada

“I thought, oh my gosh this was so cool I should do this, because it was such an amazing accomplishment that I want to do it too,” Cecilia said. “I remember hearing about a three-mile run and I thought, oh my gosh that’s so long, I don’t know how I’m going to finish this. And little did I know doing all these other runs which leads up to the marathon ... gave me a sense of family, because so many people around you are with you. We are all this together.”

Cecilia said she doesn’t necessarily plan to beat last years’ time. Her goal is always to finish the race.

Gabriel Cedillo, a school accounting clerk and one of three marathon leaders at Kennedy in Granada Hills, said Cecilia is one of about two dozen mostly female students who trained twice a week after school and went on long runs on Saturdays.

In late August, the Kennedy High students progressively trained for one race each month leading up to their first half-mile run in December — when it rained all day.

“It was brutal to run 13.1 miles, but it was a unique experience,” Cedillo said. “We were soaking wet, our shoes and everything, we were just cold and wet. But at the end of the race it was just a great experience overall. Everybody finished.”



Carson High School Run LA Students. (Photo by by Martin Barajas)

At Twin Lakes Intermediate School in El Monte, the married team of Kristi Dorf, a teacher on special assignment from Orange Unified School District, and David Dorf, a 7th grade history teacher at Twin Lakes, oversees a team of 21 seventh- and eighth-graders.

“We do cross-training with the kids; it’s not just long-distance running,” said David Dorf, adding that the members of the group bonded with each other.

The Dorfs said some Twin Lakes students will try to break 4 hours, while others will take 6 ½ to 7 hours to complete their runs.

“We never ever focus on time, because that’s not what this program is about,” Kristi Dorf said. “The program is about developing them as leaders, developing them to become positive role models ... figuring out who they are and how strong they really are. When one of our slower runners comes in, they cheer for her. They don’t care how long it’s taken her.”

Amber Phan, an eight-grader on the Dorf’s team, is running for the second year and has a plan to finish in five hours. She has learned through experience that if she can finish a 26.2-mile marathon she can do anything.

“I’ve never been a runner much in my past life,” the 13-year-old El Monte student said. “I feel it’s made me more productive and I think now I’m more interested in running in high school and sports. A marathon has changed my mentality and how I do things.”

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