

NEWS

LA Marathon: Nearly 2,500 'Students Run LA' participants jam the big race

The nonprofit marathon-training and free mentoring program aims to help underserved students with character-building, hitting its peak with the big run



Students Run LA, a nonprofit marathon-training and free mentoring program that aims to help underserved students with character-building, was one organization that



By **BRENNON DIXSON** | bdixson@scng.com | Pasadena Star-News

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Equipped with youthful energy and bright neon shirts that lit up the race track, thousands of local students from throughout Southern California took to the race course on Sunday, March 20, to participate in the 2022 Los Angeles Marathon.

Students Run LA, a nonprofit marathon-training and free mentoring program that aims to help underserved students with character-building, was one organization that allowed nearly 2,500 students an opportunity to run the 26.2-mile “Stadium to the Stars” route from Dodger Stadium to Century City.

More than 95% of the SRLA participants who attempt the marathon complete the 26-mile, 385-yard course, according to Cassidy Smith, the marketing and communications associate for the free marathon training program offered at more than 185 public schools in the Greater Los Angeles Area.

Malicka Taffa said she was inspired to join SRLA because she didn't want her heart condition to restrict her from doing everyday activities and was motivated to try something new and different.

Meet Malicka! Malicka is a 9th grader at Venice High School. She was inspired to join SRLA because of her heart condition. She didn't want to let it restrict her from doing everyday activities, and was motivated to try something new and different...

<https://t.co/HxklTuxWyi>



— Students Run LA (@SRLA) March 19, 2022

“I had always been insecure about running because of my heart condition,” said Malicka, a 16-year-old who attends Venice High School. “I couldn’t be like everyone else because I had to slow down. But this year, I felt an overwhelming urge to put myself out there in the unknown and see how it goes.”

Eight cadets from LAPD’s Southwest Division joined the team, departing from their homes around 3 a.m. Sunday to make it in time for the start of the big race.

The group was one of many who were unable to participate in last year’s race because of coronavirus-related restrictions, said Capt. Isbeidy Cruz.

Running virtually, she said, wasn’t the same.

“If I’m being completely honest sir, running it virtually wasn’t that fun, sir, because there was no motivation. We were just running in a bunch of crowds,” Cruz said.

“But out here we have more people who are going to be cheering us on. They’re going to tell us to keep going and I feel like it’s a better experience than virtual.”

Itzel Acevedo agreed with the sentiment during an interview a few hours ahead of the marathon’s start.

“Everyone is really energetic today, because we’re coming back after a pandemic and other virtual races,” Acevedo said. “So it’s just like nice seeing new people and new faces.”

The group of eight, who will run alongside four officers who serve as mentors to the group, have been training for a few months to prepare for this weekend’s race.

In addition to running, cadet Maria Rodas said, “we really help each other one way each other and grow as a person overall.”

The group encouraged others to get involved as well by visiting [lapd_southwestcadets](#) on Instagram.

“It’s great opportunity,” Rodas added.



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Brennon Dixon | Reporter

After graduating from Long Beach State in 2017, Brennon began working as an intern at the Long Beach Press-Telegram before moving to the Torrance Daily Breeze to serve as a news assistant.

He departed the group to cover education at the Santa Clarita Valley Signal and recently worked in Santa Monica before settling into his current position. He considers himself a community journalist, first and foremost, and enjoys gardening or hanging with his German Shepherd-Huskies when he's not covering a meeting. Say hi if you see him out in town.

bdixon@scng.com

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