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AAE students, others running L.A. Marathon

By KYLE GLASER

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The Los Angeles Marathon will have a little bit of a High Desert flavor this year.

On Sunday, 23 students ranging in age from 12-17 from the Academy of Academic Excellence, nine parents and one faculty member will participate in the 26.2-mile run that stretches from Dodger Stadium to Santa Monica Pier.

This will be the eighth year that students and other participants from AAE will be running in the marathon as part of Students Run L.A., an organization that sponsors junior high and high school students to run the L.A. Marathon and provides training programs and guidance.

Lydia Hudson, a 61-year old literature teacher at AAE, returns as the head coach of the team three years after stepping down.

A training program to get the runners prepared for the L.A. Marathon begins in August, and for the next six months the runners have to complete a number of races in order to be able to compete in the L.A. Marathon.

“We start with kids that have never run at all and we get them running around the block,” assistant coach Jennifer Medeiros said. “That first week we work up to one mile, and that’s a really tough week for a lot of these kids.”

By the time of the L.A. Marathon, the runners must have completed a 5K, a 10K, a 15K, two half marathons, a 30K and a 21-mile race in order to run. Of the 30 kids that began the program in August, 23 will be competing in the L.A. Marathon. “It just shows students that if they put their mind to something and they work towards something, they can be successful no matter how hard it is,” Hudson said. “We train in all kinds of weather. We’re in 95 degree heat, we run in the rain, the snow, the wind — everything from August to March.”

In addition to being an assistant coach who will participate in the race, Medeiros is the mother of one of the racers, her 16-year daughter Jacqueline.

It was Jacqueline who initially got Medeiros interested, when as a 12-year-old she came home one day and told her mom she wanted to run a marathon with the program at school. This will be the fourth year that Jennifer and Jacqueline will be running the marathon together.

“(I was in) disbelief,” Medeiros said. “I said ‘I don’t think you’re going to be able to do that and I don’t think your body can handle that physically.’ ”

But after going to a parent meeting and learning about the training program, Medeiros decided that she and her daughter would both participate, and eventually Medeiros became an assistant coach.

Hudson started out as a chaperone for the first couple of years of the event, watching the finish line to ensure that all of the kids made it. It was there that she was inspired to start competing at the age of 57.

“During the time I was a chaperone, I watched all kinds of people come across that finish line, people that were in way worse shape than I was in,” Hudson said. “I watched all those people coming in and I thought to myself ‘What’s your excuse? God has given you strength and health and you need to do something with that.’ ”

And so Hudson worked her way up to head coach. She stepped down but still competed with AAE, and now she trains the students once again.

The group from AAE will be dedicating the race to Steve Holifield, a former teacher at AAE who passed away this year from ALS and has two children running in the marathon.

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