

Fair Oaks

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August 2026



Running with the Steinhausers:

**MEET THE MOM MAKING
POETRY IN MOTION**

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Running with the Steinhausers: MEET THE MOM MAKING POETRY IN MOTION

BY LAURA I. WINN | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ISABEL OLLINGER AND COURTESY OF THE STEINHAUSER FAMILY



When Maria Steinhauser runs across the American River Parkway, rhythms and words appear in her mind. Inspired by the sounds, smells and scenes of nature all around her, she forms first lines, composes couplets and paces her meter. As she runs faster and farther, her mind opens to work through her problems and workshop her poetry. "I process life through running," she said.

For the 43-year-old middle school English teacher, what began as a way to exercise and connect with other moms has become an integral part of her life, marrying a love of movement and competition with nature and literature.

Eleven years ago, Maria moved to Fair

Oaks Village with her young family. Looking to meet friends, she joined Moms Run This Town Citrus Heights and Fair Oaks (MRTT CHFO). "I had just had my babies and wanted to get back in shape," Maria explained. "I was a stay-at-home mom, and it was a way to get out with my girls. I was running with a double stroller on the Parkway."

With two tots in tow, Maria first joined stroller events and then began rising early to run while her daughters, Ana and Iris, slumbered in bed. As she gained speed and endurance, a passion ignited, and she began competing.

A decade later, Maria is an accomplished ultramarathon runner. She has conquered six 100-mile races, including the Tahoe Rim Trail Endurance Run, where she finished second

in her age group and third among females.

A testament to her talent and track record, Maria was chosen as a pacer to lead a group of runners through the California International Marathon (CIM). "My favorite part of CIM is running through my neighborhood in Fair Oaks Village around mile 10 and seeing so many friends, students and community members who come out to cheer," she said.

Maria's drive to compete and tackle greater distances has boosted her confidence to overcome obstacles in life that seemed too challenging at first. "You realize you can do hard things," she said. "It's a life lesson I keep teaching myself over and over."

Through racing, Maria models that mantra for her 7th- and 8th-grade students at Orangethorpe Open K-8 School. "Even in my 40s, I

Maria at Chicken Run



Iris & Maria at Chicken Run



Ana at Chicken Run



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can be a strong female athlete,” she said. “It shows my students it’s realistic to do these big challenges that seem crazy at first.”

Passing along that competitive spirit and can-do attitude to her daughters, the family runs the 5-mile Fair Oaks Chicken Run every May. “It’s a wonderful gathering of community and showcases the beautiful trails we have right here in Fair Oaks along the river,” she said.

Describing her daughters as “budding athletes,” Maria said 14-year-old Ana has inherited her love of running. As an incoming

freshman, she will compete in cross-country and basketball at Bella Vista High School. So far, 12-year-old Iris has not caught the running bug. She lights up on the volleyball and basketball courts.

Both violinists since age 5, Ana and Iris also share a flair for the dramatic, acting in school plays at Orangevale Open. Most recently, Iris portrayed Mal in *Descendants*, and Ana starred as Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*. Maria volunteered her time behind the scenes.

“I have been a parent and a teacher at the school for the whole time my daughters have been in school, so we spend a lot of time active in our school community,” Maria explained. “As a single mom, I am busy with parenting first; then my other hobbies fill in the rest of my time. I like to be busy and active.”

One way Maria stays busy is through her support of the San Juan Unified School District’s literary magazines. She helped pilot the creation of the middle school’s publication and worked with the high schoolers on theirs. “I love literature and the written word, and I love sharing it with young people,” she said.

Maria, who recently earned a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing, Poetry, also shares her poetry with the local community and beyond. In addition to stepping up to the open mic at area cafes, she has been a guest of *Dr. Andy’s Poetry and Technology Hour* on the Davis-based radio station KDVS 90.3 FM. The forthcoming Spring/Summer 2026 issue of the longstanding

American literary journal, *Cimarron Review*, features one of her works.

Penning poetry in motion, Maria sometimes journeys three hours into the mountains to experience 25 miles of breathtaking landscapes in one day. Other times, she writes verse as her feet pound a well-traveled path close to home.

“One of the things I love about running in my neighborhood is that I occasionally strike up a conversation with neighbors after running past and waving for years,” Maria said. “I feel like I know a lot of my neighbors. That gives me a great sense of belonging and community.”

“If you ever see me out running, wave me down and say hi.” ■

Ana & Iris



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