

MCRRC Intervals

March 2019

Newsletter of the *montgomery county road runners club*

On the Horizon

March 24

Piece of Cake 5K/ 10K
Seneca Creek State Park
Gaithersburg, MD

March 24

MCRRRC Annual Meeting & Awards
Banquet (following Piece of Cake)
SOLD OUT
AMP by Strathmore, Pike & Rose
Program starts at 11:00 AM

March 30

Spin in the Woods XC
Wheaton Regional Park
Silver Spring, MD

April 13

Capital for a Day 5K
Olney, MD

April 28

Pike's Peek 10K
Rockville, MD
www.pikespeek10k.org

May 4

La Milla de Mayo
Gaithersburg, MD

May 11

Kids on the Run
Bohrer Park
Gaithersburg, MD

May 12

Run Aware 5K
Cabin John Regional Park
Bethesda, MD

For complete details of MCRRC's races and programs, visit www.mcrrc.org

Board Meetings

Board Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month.

Winter Trails Gives Back

Winter Trails coaches serve breakfast to the homeless at Manna House in Baltimore.



Photo: Bruce Flanagan



Photo: Bruce Flanagan

The "Smurf Squad" is ready to serve!



For Club and Community

by Scott Brown, Editor

If you're reading this column, you probably already noticed that the photos on the cover of this month's issue aren't the usual sort of running and race action shots that we typically use. This month's photos showcase Winter Trails coaches (a.k.a. "Smurfs") serving breakfast last month at Manna House in Baltimore, which they sponsored using some leftover money from the Winter Trails program's budget.

I love this story for so many reasons—and not just because these may be the only known photos of the "Smurfs" not caked in mud. It gives me particular joy for exemplifying how our Club thrives by serving not just our members and the wider running community, but also the larger communities around us.

In that spirit, this issue of Intervals showcases the tremendous variety of what MCRRC offers and features some Club superstars who you may recognize as dedicated runners and volunteers at MCRRC events and programs.

First up, Mike Acuña offers his farewell address as his term as MCRRC President draws to a close. On behalf of the Club members, many thanks for your service and happy miles in the future! Also, be sure to come to the awards banquet later this month to recognize MCRRC's honorees and help elect the new Board!

On that note, Board Member Gretchen Bolton presents a summary of the results of the Club's membership survey that hopefully many of you took. It's an interesting way to take the pulse of the membership and Gretchen's article provides a fascinating snapshot of what MCRRC members love about the Club, where we can improve our offerings, and how the Board plans to address some of the feedback. So, thanks for speaking your mind and give it a read!

Speaking of Club awards and all that MCRRC has to offer, in this issue

Kristen Serafin provides an inspiring read of her running journey and involvement with MCRRC and the Club's community. In just a couple of years, Kristen participated in several Club programs, lopped nearly one hour(!) off her marathon PR, and was honored at last year's banquet as MCRRC's Runner of the Year and Most Improved Runner. Oh, and to put the icing on the cake, she broke 10 hours in her first 50-miler at Stone Mill last year!

In this month's Runner Profile, Lisa Reichmann interviews Keith Evans, another Club stalwart who you've probably seen most weekends volunteering at MCRRC's low-key races or coaching one of the Club programs. Keith is also an accomplished ultramarathoner and a fun guy to run a couple (or a hundred) miles with if you ever get a chance.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't mention that Lisa and fellow MCRRC member Julie Sapper have been producing Run Farther & Faster—The Podcast. While it's loosely geared toward training for this year's Boston Marathon, it features lots of familiar MCRRC members, plus interviews with experts on many running-related topics, and is great whether you're training for a spring race or just enjoy listening to interesting conversations about running. Check it out!

Wrapping up this issue, Brian Murphy writes about the Club's informal drop-in runs. These runs truly embody MCRRC's motto of "A place for every pace," so check them out if you haven't already!

Finally, a couple of corrections from the January issue: First, the header on the cover should've said "Stone Mill 50-Miler," not "Parks Half Marathon." Second, I mistakenly identified Lisa Reichmann as "Lisa Flanagan" in my column. The editor regrets the mistake and will run laps for punishment.

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Have comments or questions? Or want to help?

Contact us at Intervals@mcrrc.org.

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MCRRC is a non-profit, educational organization which promotes personal health and fitness through the sport of running. The club conducts regular running activities, including training sessions races, seminars, and social events.





Survey Says, Awards, and Thank You

by Mike Acuña

As I've been warned to keep my farewell speech at the awards banquet later this month under a minute, I thought I'd use this page to offer the unabridged version. As my term as your President comes to close, I just want to offer a sincere note of thanks for your support and more so your trust. It has been a pleasure serving with so many talented individuals on the Board with the greatest benefit getting to know so many of you and sharing ideas on how to make MCRRC the best it can be. So again, thank you!

Speaking of sharing ideas, the survey results are in, and fellow board member Gretchen Bolton offers a summary of your responses on the following pages; the full results will be posted on the Club's website. We thank you for your input and honesty as it provides an instrumental guide on the setting the direction of the Club and use of limited resources.

In one of my final duties as President, I have the honor and pleasure of announcing this year's lifetime achievement recipient, along with a few who will be recognized with President's awards. That said, it's a joy to share that long-time MCRRC member, Marathon in the Parks and Parks Half

Marathon Team Captain, former coach of the MCRRC competitive team, race director of the Going Green Track Meet, and overall MCRRC lifetime contributor Jim Whitnah is the 2018 recipient of MCRRC's highest honor. Deservedly, Jim joins the list of the distinguished few who have received this award in the Club's 40-year history. So congratulations to Jim, and I hope each of you will join us for the annual awards banquet and Club birthday celebration as we recognize Jim and all the award recipients for the past year, and elect the next MCRRC Board of Directors on March 24.

Again, thank you for your

trust, your support, and your volunteer contributions, which will continue to make MCRRC a place for all paces.

Happy Trails!

— Mike Acuña is the President of MCRRC. He can be reached at president@mcrcc.org.



Keep up with the latest news and information about MCRRC events and happenings!

Like us on Facebook – Montgomery County Road Runners

Follow us on Twitter - @MCRRC

Connect with us on LinkedIn - Montgomery County Road Runners

Instagram account - @MCRRC

Subscribe to our Yahoo Groups!

mcrcc-alert for breaking news alerts (track closed due to thunderstorms)

mcrcc-info for general news and information about club events

mcrcc-discuss for discussion with other club members about anything running or club related

<http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/mcrcc-info/>

MCRRC Survey Response

by Gretchen Bolton

We must be doing something right! The response to the recent survey was tremendous: nearly one-third of our members answered, with a great endorsement for MCRRC. This committed group of respondents also came through with lots of interesting ideas and comments that the Board will be following up on. I want to try to do at least as well in responding for the Board to a number of items.

First, the comments were representative of all the membership, from the back-of-the-pack run/walkers, to those who love the marathon programs, the speedsters who love XMP and strong competition, and to natural surface trail runners. You'll be amused that some in each group asked for more programs to meet their interests, more low-key 5K's, more track work near their homes, and more trail runs. I trust the results of the survey help the different groups get to know each other and the broad reach of the Club. Many people praised MCRRC's wide range of programs and called for more to meet particular interests.

Talking about near their homes, our membership comes from north county, south county and eastern county areas, and some in each group want more programs in their area. The statistics show that indeed the largest group of members (and the largest population pockets) reside in Rockville and south to Bethesda. We also find more facilities, parking, and running trails open to us in those areas capable of supporting large groups and programs. It's not surprising, therefore, that more of our programs are centered in Rockville and on the CCT in Bethesda. Except, of course, the natural surface trails in the Seneca Creek/Greenway network of parks that our trail runners inhabit.

Even then, we use trails in Rock Creek and over in Kensington, as well as Cabin John and along the canal.

We know that transportation can be difficult for some, and that others make use of carpooling opportunities, but mostly members are pleased with the variety of activities and locations. We have tried to expand offerings in the eastern county areas in recent years, but there are limits as to what's available in contracting for track facilities, for example.

Thank you also for your many suggestions for program improvement and outreach to new and potential members. Each complaint is also taken seriously. We'd like to respond to as many as possible and let you know what the Board is doing to continue making the Club a friendly place with a "place for every pace!"

Yahoo Groups: We love to hate them. This clunky older system garnered no positive comments, with its frequent delays in passing on messages and with difficulties in opening and using a complex site. We do want to remind folks that you don't have to go to the site every day; you can sign up once at the site for messages to go directly to your personal email address, which doesn't have to be a Yahoo address. Having said this, some of our training programs have already migrated to Google, which does the same thing with better facility. We are working to set up a convenient communications system for all and expect to have a new standard soon.

Tracks: Several people begged for more track workouts near their homes and less crowding of several programs into one track night. We'd like to say this problem is easy to solve, but it's not. For groups of our size, on borrowed or rented tracks, it's hard to get accommodation. We

are very pleased that Montgomery College continues to host us, but their insurance does not allow non-MCRRC members and kids under 18 on the track, for example. We also must provide our own lights for night track work, another issue we seek to improve upon. Over the years, we've done track workouts at Wootton, Richard Montgomery, Whitman, and Rockville high schools as well, and happily used their lighting. We still have usage of Rockville and now Gaithersburg high schools, though there have been various limitations at each of these locations, especially the need to give way to night-time school activities and spring track meets that always take precedence. Some schools host us and we continue to work on relationships to expand access to tracks year after year.

Better presentation of race results/age group results/masters awards: We'll work on these issues!

Race and training program pricing: A bafflement. Some say races are getting more expensive, some say they are a bargain. We have free low-key races for our members, 29 of them! Compared to elsewhere, our few bigger paid races are really cheap. The First Time Marathon training program is one of the most expensive training programs, but also the crown jewel of training and camaraderie! We'll always keep your concerns in mind on pricing, but we are encouraged by the praise received as well.

Beer runs: Ha! We now have Pub Runs twice a month on Mondays; look for it!

Trail running: This is a growth area, and yes, we have had a short introductory spring trail series for

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56 Minutes

by Kristen Serafin

Anything can change in slightly less than one hour. For me, 56 minutes is the magic number within which I got married, moved to the suburbs, got a new job, adopted a hellion of a dog, found a huge new network of friends, made the decision to get divorced, and rediscovered my personal life mission. People say that when you find yourself losing your faith in humanity, you should go watch a marathon. For me, participating in one brings out the best in humanity, in my community, and myself.

It's hard to believe that three years ago, on October 25, 2015, I crossed the finish line of my first marathon: Marine Corps. If you've ever completed a race of any distance, you know the feeling. You've trained for months to accomplish a goal, worked through everything, both good and bad, that life throws at you, and it doesn't even matter what happens during the race as long as you finish it. For me, it was four hours, seven minutes, and 54 seconds of complete and total awe. My parents had come to spectate, and I distinctly remember stopping at mile 14 and telling them "this is WAY too long." But I fell in love with everything about racing: the spectators cheering for random strangers, my parents loyally trudging around an unfamiliar (swampy) city to see me, my friend capturing a video of me charging the hill at Iwo Jima, the power of the Blue Mile, and the Marine who handed me my medal as I cried/sweated all over him at the finish.

I did as many marathons as I could after that: two in January, one in April, Marine Corps again in October, and one in December. I couldn't get enough. I trained completely alone in downtown D.C., using whatever research I could find on the internet. It wasn't that I didn't have the opportunity to train with a group, it was just that I felt that I didn't need to. I didn't mind running alone, doing the work by myself. Also, as an asthmatic with horrible acid reflux, I was embarrassed that some

days I had to completely throw my workout or my expected time out the window. I didn't want to feel like I was holding others back or weighing them down due to my medical issues. I fell into a comfortable training routine, with a goal-oriented attitude, pushing myself with every workout. It was frustrating that I couldn't seem to shave the almost eight minutes I needed off of my time to break four hours, but I kept at it relentlessly. Three marathons passed, then four. What the heck was I doing wrong?

In late 2016, I moved with my then-fiance to the suburbs. Open tracks are a little bit harder to come by in Montgomery County, and so when I found a running club that had a reserved track close by, I was thrilled. The only downside? It was strongly advised that I register for a program, as most folks don't just join the club and run free track. I hated the idea of running with others, but signed up for Speed Development with Tom Brennan, figuring that if I didn't like it, I could always drop out. At my very first workout, I met Andy Jerome and Pete Wergin, friends that I am extremely proud to still have today. I grew used to working hard with a diverse group of folks who were singlemindedly focused on one goal—running hard while having fun. I loved every second of it, and it started to show in my race times. In my first four months of training with a group, I dropped 11 minutes from my half marathon and six minutes from my 10-mile PRs, and was awarded the Most Improved Female Runner in the Speed Development Program.

From there I signed up for XMP with Harold Rosen, and my network continued to grow and strengthen. It meant so much to be able to surround myself with others who were continually pushing me to be a better version of myself, and who had more confidence in my abilities than I did. I qualified for Boston 2018 solely because of Ken Trombatore and the others in my XMP pace group, who encouraged

me to sign up for Erie at the last minute in order to qualify for 2018. My pace group members Dave Handel and Peter Costa then even signed up to run the marathon with me, and they and Will Etti travelled with me for support (don't worry, I'll forgive you all for the horrible Boston weather someday).

Eventually, meeting up with my running friends began to matter as much, if not more than, the running itself. And the more I actually enjoyed running, the better I seemed to get at it. My marathon time dropped from 4:07 in 2015 to 3:23 in 2017 at Erie, then this past year to 3:11:18 at New York City. Before I knew it, I had shaved a whopping total of 56 minutes off that first marathon time. It took me a long time to realize that I had improved by almost an hour; not because I'm bad at math (which anyone in my pace group can tell you), but because I was



Photo: Run Washington

Kristin Serafin

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Keith Evans



by Lisa Levin Reichmann

Keith Evans is a familiar face in the MCRRC running scene. A Road Runners Club of America (RRCA)-certified coach since 2011, Keith has been both a participant and coach in most of the Club training programs, including the 10K Program, Beginning Women Runners, Summer 5K and Advanced Marathon Training. He also volunteers as a coach for the MCRRC Run Performance Lab (RPL). The RPL (formerly the Stride Clinic) has been a member benefit for the past 20 years. For a nominal fee, participants in the monthly RPL sessions are screened by a panel of experts, including coaches, podiatrists, physical therapists and shoe experts. As a coach with the RPL, Keith draws on his many years of experience as a coach to advise participants on running form and training approach. When Keith isn't volunteering as a coach or training/racing at the ultra distance, you can often find him volunteering on the course or behind the scenes at one of the Club races. Keith, 62, is a physicist and lives in Olney with his wife (and fellow runner/MCRRC runner and volunteer) Laura, their two kids, a dog and a cat.

Describe your athletic background. Did you play sports/run growing up?

I wasn't very athletic at all. I was more of a nerd. I busted my jaw on the trampoline in high school. I started playing intramurals in college, including flickerball, flag football, basketball, softball and tennis, and I would run on rare occasions with a friend. On one of those runs, two girls mooned us one night.

How (and when) did you start running?

I started running in 2006 when I was almost 50. Laura, my wife, had

been running for a few years, so that's how I knew it was a real thing. It took a couple years of running before I got hooked, though.

What (and when) was your first race?

I did the Rock 'n' Roll half-marathon in Virginia Beach to celebrate my 50th birthday instead of going to Las Vegas or something.



Photo: Dan Reichmann

Keith Evans

Philadelphia. Back then, the route was a 3.5-mile loop, then three 15.5-mile loops. On the first 15.5-mile loop, I was running and talking with a lady named Stacey. All of a sudden, we passed some people we had already passed and knew we shouldn't have been passing them again so quickly on a 15.5-mile loop. We knew we were lost, but couldn't figure out how or where. We kept

running and saw the U-turn that we missed the first time. With that missed turn, it ended up being a 52-miler.

When and why did you become a running coach?

When Don Shulman was asked to coach the 10K program in 2011, he approached me about helping with the faster pace groups. MCRRC offered to reimburse me for my certification course with the understanding that I would coach Club programs for a few years in return.

When and why did you start participating in the Run Performance Lab?

I joined the RPL staff in 2013, mostly because I wanted to learn more about running from collaborating with the other participants in the clinic. I have learned so much and still continue to learn.

As an experienced coach, what is your role in the RPL?

Along with the other experts who volunteer at the RPL, as a coach I watch participants run, either on the treadmill or outside, to observe their form and identify any obvious issues that may need attention. We also discuss training and how the participant may be able to tweak their training to address their concerns and goals.

How do you think the RPL can be beneficial to Club members?

The advice that we are able to offer as a group of experts is intended to allow the runner to be able to keep running for the rest of their life.

Do you have any memorable race moments of your own?

Qualifying for Boston when I ran my first marathon (after my birthday that moved me up an age group).

What is your proudest running-related accomplishment?

In college, I was in Air Force ROTC. In the summer between sophomore and junior year, we went to Air Force summer camp. During camp, we had a track meet and I was seventh runner on an eight-person one-mile relay team. When I took the baton, my team was about 30 feet behind the lead runner. When I finished my run, we were 30 feet ahead. We won the race, needless to say.

Do you have one or two pieces of must-have running gear?

As an ultra runner, a good backpack is key for carrying things like toilet paper!

Do you have any favorite running routes?

It used to be the point-to-point run from Bethesda to Union Station after going around the Capitol building (for 12 miles). Given that most of my training is for ultras now, that 12 miles is a relatively “short” run now, so my favorite for a longer run is the three-bridges run (20+ miles).

What do you enjoy doing when you are not running?

I play bass guitar, play softball in the summer and read books(!).

Tell us about your goals for 2019.

I am hoping to run the Umstead 100 (April 6) in under 24 hours. I would also like to finish the Vol State 500K in July (I’m on the wait list at present).

— Lisa Levin Reichmann is a member of the MCRRC racing team, sponsorship coordinator for the Parks Half Marathon and Pike’s Peek 10K, and an RRCA-certified running coach and co-founder of *Run Farther & Faster*.

Survey

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new trail runners, as well as our Winter Trails training program for longer distances. MCRRC organizes two significant races, drawing participants from all over: Seneca Creek Greenway 50K and Marathon in the early spring and the Stone Mill 50 Miler. And all of our cross country series of shorter low-key races are on natural surfaces. In addition, we have a partnership with MyMuddyShoes, a group of natural surface enthusiasts who are mostly from the Club and have three weekday evening trail runs. Check out the mymuddyshoes.org website or Facebook page and Yahoo Group. In offseason for our trail training programs, these folks also arrange Saturday morning group runs (distances are your choice) all over the county and host trail PhatAss events for less competitive, informal “races” and outdoor partying afterward.

We are eager to have trail runners volunteer to help Montgomery County maintain and expand the glorious trail networks and parks that we are so lucky to have for use. The Club participates in the regional Trail Running Coalition to ensure that trail runners’ interests are represented by Park and Planning here and in Prince Georges County, Howard County and Northern Virginia.

Friendliness: So many of our members just “love, love, love MCRRC” and the friendly atmosphere. We tabulated three single-space pages of loving comments, though there were also responses that some find the Club “clique-ish” and/or “intimidating.” Likewise, we want to ask everyone to reach out to newcomers in all groups as well as ask that newcomers identify themselves. We’ll try to find new and better ways to reach out to you, too. It’s a Club with friendship groups that include all ages. Don’t be shy, there’s a place for everyone!

56 Minutes

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having so much fun along the way. It still seems like just a happy coincidence that my race times keep getting better. Getting faster is now a byproduct of an enjoyable pastime, instead of it being the ultimate goal.

At the end of the day, it doesn’t matter whether your PR has improved by five minutes, or 55 minutes, or even hours. It’s the journey along the way that matters so much more than pacing, a race clock, or a PR. I feel like I’ve discovered a hidden gold mine in the running community, and my personal life mission is to help others discover the same. This year, I volunteered as a Sherpa in MCRRC’s partnership with the Cancer to 5K program, an unbelievable program that helps reintroduce cancer survivors to physical activity. I also pace coached in the Half Marathon program, which provides an amazing and incredible opportunity for runners to succeed at a difficult distance (and shout out, I’m the AD in 2018—come join us!). Along the way, I was voted MCRRC’s 2017 Runner of the Year and the Most Improved Runner. For me, these honors just reaffirm that when you’re doing the right thing for the right reasons, success is just a byproduct.

As one final note, this year, at the encouragement of my friend Barry Hauptman, I ran the Stone Mill 50 Miler. I kept trading places with a gentleman who is part of MCRRC but does not train with any of the Club’s programs. At the finish line, after we had both staggered into the cafeteria and sat down, he clapped a hand on my shoulder and said “Who ARE you? Are you famous? EVERYONE knows you.” He was right. At every single aid station, there were people cheering for me and encouraging me. I teared up and honestly didn’t know what to say. In the end I managed to sputter out: “That’s just my running club. I’ve done a lot of training programs.” And in that moment, I wasn’t the most proud of my 56 minutes. I was most proud of my Club, my training partners, and my support system.

Drop in on MCRRC's Drop-in Runs

by Brian Murphy

There's a great Outside article ("It's Okay to Be Good and Not Great," by Brad Stulberg) I read recently. There's a lot of good life lessons in the article, but I like the way it followed my attitude toward running. A great takeaway from Brad is: "Research shows that sustainable progress, in everything from diet to fitness to creativity, isn't about being consistently great; it's about being great at being consistent. It's about being good enough over and over again."

Don't get me wrong, there is benefit to going out and crushing those 10x400s or hill repeats (physiologically or psychologically). But more than anything, consistency matters. We can't go sign up for just the Experienced Marathon Program or Speed Development Program each year and expect huge performance gains. More than just specific workouts, or even three months of them, consistency matters. In Twitter speak, #KeepShowingUp

The Club's weekly drop-in runs can be a great way to keep that consistency in your training throughout the year and see continued success. This could be in setting new PRs or just running healthy longer. It could be even more simple than that. It could be a great way to remain connected with your friends in MCRRC or even make new ones.

Something I've always enjoyed about our Club are the number of weekly, drop-in runs MCRRC offers. I got started running with the Club by showing up on a Wednesday at Montgomery College and was welcomed by Denis McDonald, who was more than happy to walk me through the workout (it was the ladder that day and I was humbled quickly), then invited me to get pizza and beer after. I was hooked and came back week after week (maybe it was the promise of post-workout beer). Shortly after that encounter at the track, I learned about the Club's Sunday long run offering. I showed up one Sunday morning at Ken-Gar park just before 8:00 a.m. and was welcomed just as warmly by Larry Cynkin as I was at the track.

These were my introductions to the Club and my involvement in the Club only grew from there—from races, to volunteering, to happy hours and friendships. With support from the Board, we've started working a way to better highlight these offerings and work with other Club members to offer additional weekly run options. Soon, you should see all of the Club's weekly drop in runs presented in one, easy to read place on the Club's site with a detailed description and a person to contact to join the fun. If you see a hole and would like to fill it with a weekly run of your own, let me know (bmurph83@gmail.com) and we'll work to get it incorporated into the Club's weekly offerings. I'd encourage everyone to check that out and drop into one of these runs. Whether it's the Thursday morning Kemp Mill run or the Thursday evening easy runs, you'll find a great group of people at different paces ready to welcome you.



Photo: Brian Murphy

Ready for the Sunday morning KenGar run.