

MCRRRC



Intervals

November 2021

Newsletter of the *montgomery county road runners club*

On the Horizon

Sunday, November 7, 8:15 am

Rockville 10K/5K

Rockville, MD

<https://www.rockville10k5k.com/>

Saturday, November 13, 6:00 am

Stone Mill 50 Mile Run

Montgomery Village, MD

www.stone-mill-50-mile.org

Saturday, November 20, 6:15 pm

Run Under the Lights 5K

Gaithersburg, MD

Saturday, November 27, 8:30 am

*Turkey Burnoff 5M/10M

Gaithersburg, MD

Sunday, December 5, 9:00 am

*Seneca Slopes 9K XC

Gaithersburg, MD

Sunday, December 12, 9:00 am

*Jingle Bell Jog 8K

Rockville, MD

Races with asterisks are permit pending.

Please visit our website for updates:

www.mcrrc.org

Board Meetings

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

A Full Slate of Fall Races



Photo: Kim Nonato

Amalendu Thakur is all business during Black Hills 10K XC.



Photo: Dan Greh

Mark Adams (60) and William Clem (798) place 1–2 in their division at Lake Needwood 10K XC.



Photo: Sandra Engstrom

Vicky Nathan, Maritza Haro, and Federica Conti soak in the perfect Parks Half Marathon weather.

Be Prepared

by Amy Lin

We all know that there's no way to guarantee ourselves a great race, but there are thousands upon thousands of ways to guarantee a bad one, or at least one that's more stressful than it needs to be. Every time I travel for a race, I check my long and thorough packing list before heading out the door, but I've still managed to leave something behind on occasion — sunscreen, Gu, and once, my running shorts! (Yes, I confess to breaking the first commandment: *Nothing new on race day.*)

Many races normally held in the spring, including local favorite Cherry Blossom Ten-Mile Run and the revered Boston Marathon, were postponed to autumn due to the pandemic, giving organizers and runners more time to get ready and to figure out how to handle COVID-related restrictions and new guidelines. However, the long gap also left some of us feeling a bit rusty in terms of practical race prep.

After a quick update from Brian Murphy on the latest pub run to join MCRRRC's weekly workout schedule,

this issue of Intervals looks at preparing for a run and finding ways to deal with the unexpected.

As the jam-packed fall racing season proceeds, Steve Andrews explains how participants can prepare themselves for anything to happen on race day, especially when weather adds extra difficulty to an already tough course. In our Coaches' Corner, Keith Ord discusses aging as a runner and how to adjust both the activities we do and the expectations we have.

This issue's Runner Profile spotlights Gina Acuña, who was set to run her twentieth Marine Corps Marathon before the race switched to a virtual format due to the pandemic. Finally, Kenny Ames writes about his strategies for a successful run-commute, both with and without a stroller companion.

We spend a lot of time training for a race to prepare ourselves for it, both physically and mentally. It's good to remind ourselves that we should also prepare logically.

Here's to a becoming a more organized runner!



MCRRRC Intervals

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Have comments or questions? Or want to help?
Contact us at Intervals@mcrrc.org.

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MCRRRC 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.



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

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Subscribe to our Yahoo Groups!

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

mccrrc-info for general news and information about club events

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

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

New District Launches New Pub Run

by Brian Murphy

In our previous issue of *Intervals* I wrote about how we wanted to expand our pub runs and were looking for a few volunteers to bring these fun social runs to more parts of the county. At that time, I didn't think I'd be writing an update so quickly.

As I mentioned in September, MCRRRC has had a great partnership with Astro Lab for some time. There's a wonderful community built around that weekly Tuesday run. Finding another consistent offering was something we've wanted to do for a while.

Not long after publication of that article, Bailey O'Leary, co-founder of True Respite Brewing Company and a longtime friend of the Club, reached out to me to ask Montgomery County Road Runners to hold a pub run to help kick off the Rock East District, a newly designated cultural district off Gude Drive in Rockville. The weekend of September 10, Rockville Economic Development, Inc. held a public launch of the district. Our event was hugely successful, with about fifty runners meeting on that Friday afternoon to enjoy a few miles around Lake Needwood or around the roads of Rockville. Then, of course, we went to True

Respite for a few beers together.

We had such a blast with this that we started a partnership with True Respite to host a weekly run from there every Friday evening. Check out our weekly workouts page for more details: <https://mcrrc.org/weekly-workouts/6pm-true-respite-pub-runs/>

We have a few suggested routes in our rotation, but what we've also seen is that members come to the run as a good excuse to socialize with some great people. Some people show up after the run just to have a beer with others. We wouldn't have been able to do this without the help of Bailey from True Respite and two really awesome Club



members, Holly Wittsack and Joel Wakesberg.

These kinds of social runs and year-round weekly workouts are some of the best ways to build community within MCRRRC and to help individuals find some amazing friendships. We're always looking to grow this aspect of what the Club offers, because it connects us even better with each other and the Club, attracts new members, and keeps members around longer.

Come out and join us for a beer sometime soon! Cheers!

—Brian Murphy is the vice president of MCRRRC and a member of the Competitive Racing Team.



Photo: Brian Murphy

Brian Murphy snaps a selfie before the True Respite pub run on October 15.

Ultramarathon Tragedy: Three Reminders for Runners

by Steve Andrews

On May 22, 2021, the deaths of twenty-one runners in the middle of the day and not even twenty miles into a 100-kilometer (62-mile) race in Gansu Province, China shocked the world. Since then, I have not been able to stop thinking about the disaster, or the later suicide of a local Communist Party official who helped organize the event.

Now, nearly six months later, I am still aghast at what happened. Typical of much of the misleading reporting on the race was a piece in *Outside* magazine titled “Why the Ultra-Race Tragedy in China Wasn’t Surprising.” The *South China Morning Post* ran a representative opinion piece asking, “Who is responsible for making sure the most extreme races are as safe as possible—the runners who enter them, the race organisers or the government?” and focused on the “extreme risks” and the need for more government oversight.

What transpired was surprising, and I believe it’s helpful to consider what happened without dismissing the race—considered by some to be one of the easiest ultras in China—as extreme, or simply blaming the event organizers and lack of government oversight. Below, I focus on three aspects of the disaster that I find useful for runners to consider.

I most definitely am not blaming the runners for what happened, but hope that the tragedy might be a powerful reminder as to the importance of safety and self-reliance for runners. In May 2011, I entered a 100-kilometer race in China and ended up being transported an hour by ambulance from an aid station to the nearest hospital, due to severe dehydration. In April 2021, I dropped out of the C&O Canal 100 (a hundred-mile race) in Maryland after fifty miles in a cold rain when I became nearly hypothermic.

Because I have made many mistakes and failed to finish a number of races, I wanted to share some thoughts on the reporting of this tragedy and to express my gratitude to all race organizers and volunteers, especially the ones who helped rescue me in the past. I would also like to

include my own simple recommendation to all runners—always consider carrying a rain jacket or emergency reflective poncho on long runs.

The fourth running of the Yellow River Stone Forest (Huanghe Shilin) 100K began at 9:00 a.m. local time, and many of the 172 participants were reportedly wearing shorts and t-shirts. By noon, however, runners encountered gale-force winds, hail, freezing rain, and thick fog as the temperature dropped and the course climbed 3,000 vertical feet between the second checkpoint at around Mile 15 and the third checkpoint at around Mile 20, which most runners never reached. Twenty-one runners ended up perishing, and an additional eight runners were hospitalized.

Three things that I believe are helpful for runners to reflect on about the disaster:

1) Even early in a race it is important to be prepared for bad weather.

Although the race had a twenty-hour cut-off, the first participant sent an S.O.S. message fewer than three hours into the race. Many of the participants had reportedly placed warm clothes in a drop bag in preparation for running at night, but the drop bags had been transported far down the course.

2) The fastest runners also need to be

prepared for emergencies.

Among the fatalities in the Gansu tragedy were five of the six runners in the lead group. The victims included Liang Jing, who had won the race the first three times it was held. Based on my experience, people running in the front of the race believe that they can be okay without a jacket or other gear carried by slower runners.

3) Safety gear may be of limited benefit.

During the race in Gansu, emergency blankets were ripped by the wind, and although runners were provided with GPS trackers that could send a distress signal, they were reportedly of limited use in the rescue efforts.

I am always grateful for the opportunity to run and participate in organized events. Please always consider your safety when going for long runs, and have plans to rescue yourself. Also, a big thank you to all race volunteers—remember that it might be necessary for you to save a runner’s life.

—Steve Andrews ran his first ultra in 1999, and he is a five-time finisher of the MCRR Stone Mill 50 Mile Run. He was also one of the frustrated, but understanding, entrants in the 2018 MCRR Seneca Greenway Trail 50K, which was canceled due to high winds.



Photo: Dan Reichmann

View from the Stone Mill 50M course in November 2020



Age Happens

by Keith Ord

Around lunchtime most weekdays, a group of us would go out for a run. As we left the gym, we would see a bunch of old guys setting out for their workout. Then, one day we realized that we were now the bunch of old guys. Age happens!

Some folks age well and look forward to their next birthday ending in a five or a zero—a new age group. *I can ignore that young guy who always beats me!* But others tend to retreat. I recall finishing a group run and complimenting a young lady who had run well that day. I suggested that she should enter some Club races. She responded, “Oh, no, I’m too old to race.” Turns out she was fifty-one; I was in my late sixties at the time.

So, how do we age gracefully and continue to compete? As the years roll by, training and a good diet can only do so much. Sooner or later, you are going to slow down. American age-group records for men for the 5K (track) show a decline of about 12 seconds per year from ages 55 to 70; the decline accelerates thereafter. For women, the figures are slightly higher, around 15 seconds. Those numbers are based on around 18 minutes for men and 20 minutes for women, so if your 5K time is around 40 minutes, you should double those annual slowdowns. Why all the crazy math? Sorry, I’m a retired statistician and I love that stuff. However, there is a message in there. Instead of vainly pursuing a PR from years gone by, you can adjust your target each year and hopefully set a new TAPR (time adjusted PR), pronounced “taper.”

Keep in mind that these numbers

are only a rough guide. You may well hold your time for several years and then suddenly slow down. Many of us have experienced the feeling that our times just “fell off a cliff.” The drop-off may just happen, or it could be the result of injury. Sometimes, the knees, hips, and/or heart just say *Enough already*. What to do? Recovery may allow for adopting the Jeff Galloway run-walk approach; an interval timer is a good way to calibrate your efforts.

Time goes by, and maybe you can’t run anymore. Skip the period of depression; it’s not worth it! Try walking—race walking is well-recognized, but you need to develop the right technique; I still get disqualified quite often. Power walking, also known as speed walking, is easier; all you need to do is

to avoid becoming airborne. Most of the Club’s shorter training programs include a walking cohort, and you can walk however you wish, although we do try to improve your form.

At the end of the day, remember the immortal words of John “The Penguin” Bingham: “It doesn’t matter how fast or how far. Waddle on.” While we are doing that, we gratefully recall the MCRRC motto “A place for every pace,” and thank our fellow Club members on course-marshals duty for their patience.

—Keith Ord joined MCRRC in 2003 (or thereabouts!) and has participated in various programs from 5K to half marathon. He has been walking competitively since 2016. Keith is a co-director of the Winter 5K program.



Photo: Dan Reichmann

Members of the Fall 5K Program gather to tackle Cross Country on the Farm 5K.

Gina Acuña



by Lisa Levin

The announcement that the 46th Marine Corps Marathon, scheduled for October 31, would be canceled due to “security and safety precautions,” hit thousands of runners hard, especially after having been assured that the race was on track to take place in person. Club member Gina Acuña was particularly disappointed, as this year’s race was slated to be her twentieth consecutive Marine Corps Marathon. Gina didn’t miss a beat once the announcement was made, deciding to run the Indianapolis Monumental Marathon on November 6 to earn the miles for this year’s Marine Corps Marathon, hoping she can be back on the MCM course in 2022 to wear her twenty-year MCM patch. Gina, 57, lives with her husband, former MCRRC President Mike Acuña, in Montgomery Village, and works as a dental hygienist. They have two children, Kierstin and Brent, and two rescue pups, Brindle and Piper.

Describe your participation in MCRRC (e.g., training programs, volunteer roles, etc.):

FTM in 2002 was my first training program, followed by XMP two years later. I have also trained with Speed Development for at least the past ten years. Since joining MCRRC I’ve participated in volunteer roles that have included bringing my kids, and often their friends, to volunteer: bib prep for races, water stop captain, packet stuffing, course marshaling, and a few other support roles. I enjoy the social setting of volunteering with the Club, and it feels good knowing that I’m helping.

Did you run or participate in sports when you were younger?

No. Growing up I wasn’t encouraged to play sports and I didn’t participate in sports until playing intramural soccer in college. When Mike and I started running together in college, I could barely run a mile.

When and why did you start running?

I started running regularly after Mike and I were married, and eventually worked my way up to six miles. Mike and I started running together for fitness, and after enjoying the health benefits of running we now try to stay fit so that we can keep running.



Photo: Jeff Elkins

Gina Acuña finds her stride at Parks Half Marathon.

When did you run your first marathon? What do you remember most about it?

My first marathon was Marine Corps in 2002, and I remember being there

with my friends from my FTM pace group. Mike met me at several points along the course, and in the later miles I recall telling myself, *I will never do this again*. As I drew closer to the finish, I became excited and humbled by all the Marines there, knowing that I would be receiving a medal from a Marine. Most of all, I remember the camaraderie with my running group and how I loved the Club’s hospitality suite, walking to the start together, and seeing everyone back at the suite after the finish. It was also very exciting when, the next day, my boss told me that I was listed in the *Washington Post* among the top 1,200 finishers. I still have that newspaper.

What is it about the Marine Corps Marathon that motivated you to start, and continue, your streak of soon-to-be-twenty MCM finishes?

At first it was just my first marathon, then it was an easy decision because it’s a local race and one that I could run with my friends from FTM. At the same time, it’s a very motivating and humbling course as you recognize the volunteer staff of the U.S. Marine Corps, and running through the Blue Mile is always motivating and emotional. Before I knew it, I was running my fifteenth MCM, and I saw a runner wearing a twenty-year patch. I told myself that I wanted to work towards one of those.

What are your most memorable MCM experiences?

My first few MCMs, I was very focused on qualifying for Boston. With each MCM, I would get closer, even finishing ahead of Mike by a

minute in 2004. I finally qualified at the Frederick Marathon in 2006 and then again at MCM in 2007.

How has your training for MCM changed, if at all, over the years?
For the first fourteen years my only training was running six days a week, with track mid-week and a long run on the weekends. Around 2014, I started running with a Thursday morning group that would add speed work into the run, and I also started cross-training, as I decided to train for my first triathlon. Finally, around a year ago I started strength training in the morning, three times a week. I also keep weights and a mat in my car and try to enlist others from my group to work out after our weekly training runs.

What are the most notable changes in the marathon over twenty years?
Security around races has significantly increased over the years, crowd sizes have increased, and the MCM medal has become more elaborate from when I first ran the race in 2002.

What is your favorite part of the MCM course? Least favorite?
The excitement of the start with the Ospreys flying over and the howitzer firing is always thrilling. Running up the hill to finish and passing the Iwo Jima Memorial is always touching. The crowd support in Georgetown also provides a boost of energy. My least favorite part of the course is the stretch through Crystal City, where you're getting tired, wanting peace and quiet, and it's the exact opposite.

What did you do to complete last year's virtual MCM?

Initially I had planned to run the virtual MCM on the day MCM would have been held, but one Saturday in September I was out on a long run with friends and the weather was very nice, so around Mile 19 I told myself to go for it and run 26.2.

What advice would you give to someone running their first MCM?

Don't worry about those first few hills, don't push in the early miles, relax, take it in, and save your energy for the later portions of the course. The energy you save in the early miles will benefit you later when the miles feel longer. Most of all, enjoy what is an iconic race held in our nation's capital, from the monuments to the museums, the parks, the history, and the memorials to those who gave their most.

What other marathons have you run, and which did you like the most?

In 2006 I ran the Frederick Marathon, finished second in my age group, PR'd with a 3:45, and got my first BQ. Mike and the kids were there waiting for me at the finish. That was a one-of-a-kind experience that I'll always remember. I've also run Boston, Pittsburgh, Philly, Steamtown, Wineglass, Myrtle Beach, Marathon in the Parks, Rehoboth, Richmond, Ottawa, and Mt. Charleston.

You also compete in multisport (triathlon) races. Which came first, triathlon or running?

Running came first, and I became inspired to attempt a triathlon after reading my friend Andy Steinfeld's race report of his first Ironman. I haven't

been swimming and biking much lately, though plan to start that again after MCM/Indianapolis to train for Eagleman next June.

When you are not running, biking, or swimming, what are your favorite ways to relax?

I love to be outside, reading on my deck on nice days, walking our dogs, strength training, and enjoying the local beer farms and wineries.

What are your goals for 2022?

I want to work harder on strength training, get back into biking and swimming, and continue running, though with more focus on form and quality runs versus mileage.

—Lisa Levin has been with MCRRC for more than a decade. She is a member of the Competitive Racing Team and co-founder of Run Farther & Faster.



Photo: Gina Acuña

Gina Acuña's collection of Marine Corps Marathon medals awaits its next addition.



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Planning is Essential for the Run-Commute

by Kenny Ames

As many workers return to the office, the runners in us may be afraid of losing time to run. Fortunately, some of us may have the option of running to and from work. For the last five years, I have become an expert in the run-commute. When I became a father, my schedule changed, and the only way I could fit in the time for a proper run was to get my miles to and from the office. And sometimes, I have had to commute by pushing the jogging stroller.

Early on, I discovered that the key to the run-commute is planning. The considerations are: what do you have to bring with you (clothes, laptop, towel, toiletries), how are you going to bring it (backpack, drawstring, stroller), do you have a shower at work (is it just a shower or does it have towel and toiletries?), and can you store clothes at work? At work, I have a drawer where I store clean clothes, hooks and hangers for my suits and shirts, and even a dry cleaner onsite. I have a gym where I can shower and that provides towels and soap (I keep toiletries in a drawer with my clothes), and if the gym is closed (which it has been due to COVID), a shower. Put your bag together the night before so that when you are rushing out in the morning, you are prepared and can leave on time.

Prior to COVID, I would run into work with a backpack that contained my laptop, clothes, and lunch. For a backpack, weight is everything. If it bounces around too much, you'll get chafing. Carrying a computer or heavy objects increases the chances of chafing. Since it needs to fit

snugly, I use a drawstring shoe bag, one of those that you might get as a giveaway at a race. Inside, I use a plastic bag to keep my clothes and food dry because sweat will seep through the bag. I tie it tight to give no slack and cross the strings over my shoulder, so it makes an X across my chest. Remember that it could restrict your arm swing and gait, slowing your pace, but that small reduction in speed is acceptable to fit in the run.

I have done two types of run-commutes: backpack and stroller. My son's daycare is at my work, so I run with him in the stroller. It has a compartment underneath where I store items listed above, and



Photo: Kenny Ames

Kenny Ames poses with his son in front of the U.S. Capitol during their run-commute.

snacks for him. Sometimes I break it up by hopping on the Metro for a few stops. On the way home, we always Metro to stay on our bedtime schedule.

I am partial to the BOB stroller brand. I have the BOB Blaze single and the BOB Ironman double strollers. I mostly use the single for the run-commute, but the double gets used on weekends to get the boys out of the house while providing my wife the quiet to do her own workout. I serve as their pilot and steward, handing out snacks and drinks upon demand. Sometimes I provide in-run entertainment with an iPad. I have run-commuted them to daycare and soccer practice. The weather shield is a great investment, as it protects against the cold and wet. When it is cold, blankets keep heat in, so while your fingers will freeze due to cold air, kids stay warm. You can run faster with both hands holding the stroller's handle than with just one hand.

Once at the office, I have plastic bags for sweaty clothes, especially in the summer. I also have air fresheners and a Glade tree, as well as Arm & Hammer odor buster balls that fit inside my shoes. The run-commute has enabled me to continue to run at the volume I want, since having kids restricts available time to be away from them.

—Kenny Ames is a certified running coach who joined MCRRCC in 2021. He is originally from Boston and has completed his hometown marathon seven times. His favorite trails are Sligo Creek and Metropolitan Branch, which he frequently runs while pushing his sons in BOB strollers.