

MCRRC Intervals

July 2022

Newsletter of the *montgomery county road runners club*

On the Horizon

Friday, July 8, 7:00 pm
Midsummer Night's Mile
Gaithersburg

Sunday, July 10, 8:30 am
Country Road Run 5K
Dickerson

Saturday, July 16, 7:30 am
Matthew Henson Trail 5K
Silver Spring

Sunday, July 31, 7:30 am
Riley's Rumble Half Marathon
Boys

Saturday, August 6, 6:45 pm
Going Greek Track Meet
Gaithersburg

Sunday, August 14, 8:00 am
Groovin' Woodstock 7K XC
Dickerson

Saturday, August 20, 7:30 am
Eastern County 8K
Silver Spring

Please visit our website for updates:
www.mcrrc.org

Board Meetings

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

Humidity Doesn't Dampen Spirits



Photo: Ari Reichmann

Wesley Romans approaches the finish at Run Aware 5K.



Photo: Bruce Lemieux

Bitsiti Gernay finishes strong and happy at Run for Roses 5K.



Photo: Magui Garcia-Ripa

Dan Rubin (at right, with megaphone) gives the "G-word" for the return of Kids on the Run in May.

from the editor



The Many Flavors of Summer

by Amy Lin

Happy summer! The season is slowly ramping up for me as an FTM pace coach, and I also find summer to be a great time to tinker with my running routine.

Summer in our area is both intense and fleeting; whether yours is jampacked with plans or full of absolutely nothing, it's always fun to have experiments to do.

This issue of Intervals takes a look at many different levels of participation with MCRRC and things we can try to keep our training fresh.

In From the Board, MCRRC veep Brian Murphy advocates our low-key race series and its benefits to Club members.

Jim Cari recaps the final running of the Germantown 5 Mile and provides a bit of history on its two decades of existence.

For our Coaches' Corner, Brian Belonia offers several options for cross-training and explains the advantages of each.

In this month's Runner Profile, Lisa Levin gives us the scoop on Mike Edwards, a longtime MCRRC volunteer who oftens serves as a race sweeper.

Last but not least, Ciciely Davy kicks off our Where I Run feature by highlighting the Sligo Creek Trail and all its perks.

Here's hoping you find something out of your comfort zone to interest you this summer!

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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.



Racing Season

by Brian Murphy

I'm writing this while reflecting on my first time directing MCRRC's Suds and Soles 5K. At Suds, Pike's Peek, Germantown 5 Mile, and the many low-key races we've had in the past few months, it's been amazing to see many of you out, about, volunteering, and racing!

I moved to the area in 2013 and became an MCRRC member shortly thereafter. Something that immediately stood out to me was how many Club members always seemed to be training for marathons. I don't know if it's something about the area we're in and the high percentage of type-A personalities, the access to quality marathons in close proximity, the fact that our marathon training programs are really top-notch, or a little bit of all of that, but we really like the 26.2 distance.

Don't get me wrong; I find the marathon distance alluring as well—the desire to improve on the previous one, the drive to find that razor's edge of pushing yourself hard enough but still have enough in the tank to finish strong, and the joy of surrounding yourself with an incredible community. It's why, sometimes begrudgingly, I go back to them year after year. However, jumping into a few races this year ahead of and

after the Boston Marathon, I was reminded how great it is to race all sorts of distances. From 5Ks and 10Ks to 10 milers and half marathons, you get all those things I listed about marathons with the benefit of being able to walk normally the next day!

Another thing that stood out early in my MCRRC membership was the number of high-quality low-key races the Club holds—both on roads and on trails. You will likely find your next favorite race distance by showing up to a few of these. One thing I love about all these races is you can use them as springboards to larger goals. Not everyone can or should give a race effort every weekend, but you can incorporate these as a workout, practice pacing, or just enjoy being out with friends.

I encourage you to take a look at the MCRRC race calendar and join a race that you normally wouldn't. Our fantastic race directors work hard to make these happen. You might find the same love of racing and community that I have.

See you at a race soon!

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



Germantown

continued from page 4

Elena Orlova was a four-time winner of the race, and Gurmessa Megerssa and Kevin McNab each won it three times.

The Saturday race often lined up on the same weekend as the Capitol Hill Classic 10K in DC, held on Sunday, and competitive racers sometimes laced up for both.

One of the most memorable finishes in the Germantown race's history took place in 2010, when Megerssa and Mohammed Awol battled to a first-place tie, each recording 25:04, a blistering 5:01 pace. Talmage said that the two were neck-and-neck and race officials couldn't determine who won.

The next day in the Capitol Hill Classic, Megerssa and Awol each ran net times of 31:31, with Awol capturing the win by a tiny margin.

Most of the runners who have run the Germantown 5 Miler, however, likely won't remember their times or what place in their age group they may have finished. But they'll look back at it as a spring morning when they reached a goal, tested their fitness, or just ran for fun. And even though the race is no more, thousands of colorful Germantown 5 Miler shirts will remain in past participants' wardrobes for years to come. When those shirts make their occasional appearance, they're sure to draw the reaction, "I remember that race!"

—Jim Cari joined MCRRC in 2014 and is a regular participant in the Experienced Marathon Program (XMP). He runs several Club races each year, with Parks Half Marathon and Suds & Soles 5K as his favorites.

Germantown 5M Has Its Last Hurrah

by Jim Cari

The Germantown 5 Miler had a good run. Twenty of them, exactly.

Started in 2003 by the Seneca Creek Community Church, the race ran its last edition on May 21 on a morning that felt more like mid-July.

“It was great heat training,” said Bill Loomis of the MCRRC Competitive Racing Team; he was among the 163 finishers on the sun-soaked course through the Seneca Meadows Corporate Center.

Brian Flynn (25:43) and Kristin Lemos (31:11) recorded the last-ever overall winning times.

There also was a two-mile family fun run and a kids’ 1K race.

MCRRC decided to retire the race because the roadways on the course—and the May race calendar—got too busy.

“When we started the race, it was very much a quiet industrial area,” said Danny Talmage, the race’s founder and perennial race director, as well as a member of the MCRRC Race Committee. “Now with the Wegman’s and the daycare center, there is a lot more traffic.”

While the cars presented a safety issue, the multitude of races scheduled in May strained resources.

“Years before, we noticed that the Club had too many races in May, not counting the race management services we provide to other clients,” Talmage said. “We had trouble getting volunteers. Sometimes we had two races on a weekend.

“We’ve tried to space out some of our races so we don’t have a lot of races in one month and none in another month.”

The unseasonably hot weather of the 2022 race contrasted sharply from the chilly temps of the inaugural race in 2003. There were only 69 finishers that year,

with the church, of which Talmage was a member then, starting it as a fundraiser and outreach effort.

There were 304 finishers the following year, and the race settled into a popular annual event in the community. It has benefitted various organizations over the years, including the Boys and Girls Club, Germantown Help, and Sports Plus, a local non-profit organization that offers sports programs to children ages 5–17 with autistic spectrum disorders, ADD/ADHD, and other developmental disabilities.

The race sought to encourage the participation of young runners with its family fun run and 1K kids run, which this year included Sports Plus runners and, in the past, members of the Girls on the Run program.

When the church moved to Gaithersburg and the race found itself without a host organization, MCRRC took it over in 2008, with Talmage leading it ever since. Unlike many other races, the Germantown 5 Miler never missed a running because of the

pandemic. The 2020 race couldn’t be held in May—with the pandemic wiping race calendars clean that spring—but the Club was able to secure a county permit to run it in October in Black Hill Regional Park in Boyds. The 2021 race returned to May but was held again in Black Hill. Pandemic concerns limited the field and number of volunteers.

Those who ran the races at Black Hill will remember a particular feature of the course—the uphill last mile, which Talmage described as a “serious climb.”

Over its twenty years, the Germantown 5 Miler had 4,681 finishers, including many individuals who ran it yearly. It was a community race that drew runners of all paces and had its share of fast finishers. Michael Wardian, now renowned for many feats in the running world, was the 2004 winner. Steve Crane (24:29 in 2007) and Victoria Klimina (27:54 in 2004) hold the course records.

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Photo: Bruce Lemieux

Richard Jefferson (82) and Gail Edwards (126) tough it out at the hot Germantown 5 Miler.



Cross-Training Options

by Brian Belonia

When we discuss running fitness, we generally measure our respective times, distances, heart rate, and, if we have the right tools, VO2 max. But how do we improve it? Cross-training.

The benefits of cross-training include improving cardiovascular fitness, strengthening muscle groups neglected by running, injury prevention, and a mental break from running.

These are further refined by the specific goals we individually set for ourselves. Do you want to improve aerobic fitness? How about anaerobic fitness? Maybe you want to work on technique and coordination? Or, if you are like me, I want to come back from an injury.

Spending extra time at the gym doesn't sound appealing, considering we already spend hours training for our races, but a gym workout doesn't have to be relegated to dumbbells and machines. There are plenty of options, both outdoors and indoors, that can meet our individual goals.

With the summer weather upon us, hitting the pool is a great way to improve lung capacity in a low-impact way. It helps with breath control, essential for us runners, and aids in injury recovery. A 1995 study from the *European Journal of Applied Physiology and Occupational Physiology* reviewed the effects of sports-specific versus cross-training on running performance. It was found that swimming significantly improves running performance in well-trained recreational runners over general cross-training and over increased running training. Just keep the recovery period shorter between laps than you would with running intervals, because it is low-impact.

Maybe you are into shorter interval

work, which builds anaerobic fitness. Cycling is the way to go. It's another low-impact activity which engages different leg muscles, and I found myself hitting the bike to keep my fitness level up. Make sure that the heights of the handlebars and seat are well adjusted to avoid strain on the knees. A general target for a session should be around 90 RPMs. Like swimming, the low-impact nature of cycling will require a longer period on the bike for the equivalency of a 30-minute run.

The cousin to running, the elliptical or cross-trainer, offers the same motion as running and has the same benefits. You can even follow your same warm-up and cool-down routines as if you were running. That includes mimicking an interval running session (with shorter recovery periods) but with less stress on the joints and bones. In a 2010 article of *Journal of Strength and Conditioning*, it was found that at same perceived effort the same amount of oxygen was being used on treadmill and elliptical.

There are many options to consider. Rowing machines focus on technique. Climbing strengthens the lower body. Want to increase max power? Look into volleyball, which engages hips, quads, hamstrings, glutes, and calves. Circuit training focuses on core strength—try planks, dead bug, pushups, tricep dips, and the ever-popular burpee. Need some recovery time to stretch those muscles? Do yoga or Pilates. It was designed to help soldiers build core strength, and has been proven to increase VO2 max levels and improve 5K times. Do you like doing squats, deadlifts, or lunges in the gym? Weight-lifting increases overall strength, improves running form and efficiency, and makes you more resilient. But focus

on the technique whether you do more reps with lighter weights or heavier weights with low reps. Going fast does not help!

A few key things to keep in mind about cross-training: As competitive as we runners are, cross-training is there to support your running goals, not to overachieve or replace running entirely. In a 2012 study, "The Impact of Replacing Run Training with Cross-Training," a control group of runners was measured against a group of cross-trainers in an off-season training session. The study found cross-trainers held VO2 max and lactate threshold as measured during treadmill running but did not preserve running performance levels, with significantly slower 3K time trials than their original.

Avoid high-risk activities, such as heavy-contact sports or constant changes in direction that can cause injury. Football and soccer are both out. (Sorry, sports fans.)

Don't skip your rest days. Your body needs to recover from running, cross-training or both. Don't get sidelined because you have back-to-back-to-back sessions.

Finally, do try mixing things up to see what cross-training or other sport works for you and your goals. It might take some time to adjust, but the dedication to stick with it might be the mental break you need to get back to the sport you really love.

—Brian Belonia has been a member of MCRRC since 2019. He currently coaches in the First Time Marathon program.

Mike Edwards



by Lisa Levin

If you've ever had the opportunity to see the back of the pack at a Club race, chances are you've seen Mike Edwards, who in addition to being an accomplished ultra distance runner, MCRRC coach, and active volunteer, has the distinct honor and responsibility of being race sweep for many Club races, including Stone Mill 50 Mile Run and Pike's Peek. A race sweep is not only the last person to finish a race, but the volunteer responsible for picking up course markings, keeping the course clear of litter, communicating with the race director, acting as a medical spotter, and generally serving as the eyes and ears on the course. Mike, 59, started running as a child when his mother "encouraged" him to run around the block to get rid of pent-up energy. He ran track and cross-country in high school, but then took a break from running until the end of 2009. A member of MCRRC since 2010, Mike completed the First Time Marathon program and Marine Corps Marathon, then quickly started looking for more challenging and longer distance races. A native of Albuquerque, Mike now lives in Bethesda and enjoys the company of his partner in crime and fellow

MCRRC member, Adeline Ntam, as well as his daughter, Grace.

What is your favorite race distance?

Currently my favorite race distance is anything 100 miles or longer.



Photo: Mike Edwards

Mike Edwards (right) often sports a kilt when sweeping for Stone Mill 50 Mile race director Barry Hauptman.

Do you have any favorite races? If so, what makes them stand out in your mind?

My all-time favorite race is the retired Tarheel Ultra, an eight-day, 378-mile self-supported race through North Carolina from the Virginia state line to the South

Carolina line, along the Outer Banks. The race was held off-season, so potential aid stations are closed for the season. Along the way, there are three ferries that the runners need to time just right so they don't spend the night waiting outside a locked fence for the next day's ferries. Currently, my favorite race is the Swammie Shuffle, which is similar to the Tarheel race, just 158 miles shorter.

What does a race sweep do, and why volunteer to be a race sweep?

Serving as a race sweep gives a runner the opportunity to see the course and runners from a different perspective, while helping the race director pick up the course markings and trash. It also gives me the chance to motivate runners and keep them apprised of aid station and race cut-off times.

How can someone interested in serving as a race sweep get involved?

Generally, a person volunteers for the position. I first started helping at the Club's Stone Mill 50 Mile race when Barry Hauptman took over as race director.

What qualities make a good race sweep?

Being able to pay attention to your surroundings, and knowing the course forward and backward. It's also critical to have the ability to remain calm and encourage lost runners to get back on course, even after they time themselves out.

What do you enjoy most about your job as race sweep?

It is really inspiring to come upon a mentally defeated runner and help them complete the race and realize their goal.

What do you find most challenging about sweeping for a race?

I understand people have bad moments during the race, but it's still a real challenge when they take out that frustration on volunteers or race officials. Also, it's upsetting when runners intentionally throw trash on the course because they cannot carry an empty cup or food wrapper to the next aid station or finish line.

Do you have any particularly memorable moments from your job as race sweep?

Yes, helping lost runners get back on course is always memorable.

One example: I was coming out to a road crossing at sunset when a stranger handed me a cell phone. On the other end was his lost wife who was crying, with a nearly dead cell phone. Through tears, she told me that she was on a blue blazed trail, going up a hill next to a tree. After having her stop moving, I had her describe how she got to her current location. I figured out she was about 3/4 of a mile away and a few minutes later was able to find her. Or getting a call from lost runners (also trail races) who somehow found a coffee or fast-food shop, miles off course, and helping them get back on course.

What advice would you give others interested in volunteering as a race sweep?

A sweeper needs to understand to always stay behind the last runner, and stay in contact with race officials about late starters, lost, or injured runners. Bring extra food, water, and if possible, warm clothes for the runners they might come upon. Tell aid stations and course marshals that you are the sweeper and no one is behind you. Carry a trash bag for course markings and trash. Be a good talker and listener to help the last runners get to the

finish line.

—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: Glen McLeod

Mike Edwards (left) poses with Tarheel Ultra race director Henry Luton at the finish line..



Where I Run: Sligo Creek Trail

by Ciciely Davy

The leafy, shaded oasis known as the Sligo Creek Trail, which meanders through the approximately ten-mile stretch from Wheaton to just beyond New Hampshire Avenue, seldom gets its due attention. Aside from attracting runners, bikers, families, and various critters for its beautiful foliage, the Sligo Creek Trail is an ideal location for summer long runs, especially for those in northern Silver Spring.

Lucy Slovan says of the trail, “Lots of bridges, trees, and relaxing scenery abound.” Still, Sligo Creek is not sparsely populated enough that runners do not see another person for long stretches of time.

The water is packed, sunscreen is generously applied, and the weather report reads a blistering forecast in the 90s. The sun’s rays don’t beat down on the runner through the thicket of the trees in Sligo Creek, instead offering a cooler path of pavement sheltered by a canopy of broadleaf trees and a habitat pristinely maintained by a community non-profit, Friends of the Sligo Creek. The grassroots efforts to upkeep the trail results in what Ashish Gupta describes as “beautifully shaded midday runs.”

The beloved trail, offering a gradual hill and road closures on weekends, is oft traveled. Partial road closures are enforced Friday to Saturday, and since the pandemic there have been road

closures along University and Dennis on weekends. Less crowded than the Capital Crescent Trail, albeit narrower than Beach Drive, the trail serves as home to a diverse array of animals including salamander, foxes, bats, and turtles at various points throughout the day.

There are several MCRRC programs that center on the Sligo Creek Trail or include runs which begin on the trail. Ideal times to be there are after sunrise and before sunset for visibility. The trail has amenities of restrooms and recreation areas, and proximity to Silver Spring, Kemp Mill Shopping Center, Holy Cross Hospital, and Adventist White Oak Medical Center make trips for water or a bite after a run

manageable.

For those seeking to add more variety to their runs, Terri Scadron suggests using the track at Sligo Creek and Wayne Avenue for speed work, or connecting the Sligo Creek Trail to Wheaton Regional Park for additional mileage. Change of scenery, mild hills, and ease of out-and-back runs make the Sligo Creek Trail a backyard treasure for anyone down-county or in east county and a refreshing weekend getaway for others living in the northern region of the county.

—Ciciely Davy joined MCRRC in 2021. She is a native of Montgomery County and she enjoys reading classics and learning Spanish.



Photo: Ashish Gupta

The Sligo Creek Trail offers both shade and scenery.