

MCRRC Intervals

January 2023

Newsletter of the *montgomery county road runners club*

On the Horizon

Sunday, January 1, 10:00 am
New Year's Day 5K
Gaithersburg, MD

Sunday, January 29, 8:30 am
Cross Country on the Farm 5K
XC
Derwood, MD

Sunday, February 12, 8:30 am
Kemp Mill (C)hills 5K/10K
Silver Spring, MD

Saturday, March 11, 7:30 am
Seneca Creek Greenway Trail
Marathon & 50K (\$)
Gaithersburg, MD

Sunday, March 19, 8:30 am
Piece of Cake 5K/10K
Potomac, MD

Please see page 8 for a complete list of MCRRC'S 2023 races, and visit our website for updates:
www.mcrrc.org

Board Meetings

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

Holiday Spirits Run High



Photo: Amy Lin

Timing team member Leonard Lee shows off some festive headwear while working Seneca Slopes 9K..



Photo: Dan Reichmann

Michelle Miller and Nicolas Crouzier accessorize their Competitive Racing Team singlets for Jingle Bell Jog 8K.



Photo: Ryan Wise

Steve and Michael Mager get into the spirit at Run Under the Lights 5K.



Looking In and Out

by Amy Lin

Happy 2023, MCRRC! All over the country, we're starting to see more and more running events return to normal. Numbers are up, and the new year promises even more participation in Club activities. Personally, I have races plotted out for the entire year and already seem to have overbooked myself...

In keeping with the gradual emergence of our races and members from COVID-induced hibernation, this issue of Intervals looks at how we can put our best foot (feet?) forward for both ourselves and others.

MCRRC's Executive Director, Ashley Zuraf, highlights ways the Club is working toward improving visibility in the community and increasing outreach to potential members, and lets us know how we can help.

For Coaches' Corner, FTM co-director Conroy Zien writes about the rewards of coaching with

MCRRC and what makes a good coach tick.

Catherine Howard offers a recap of her experience aiming for a big goal—training for and running Stone Mill 50-Mile Run as her first race back from pregnancy and childbirth, and how she learned that “stupid” ideas are sometimes the best ones.

Our Runner Profile features Alan Pemberton, a longtime Club member who not only looks to achieve new goals with his own running but also chairs the MCRRC Runner of the Year awards committee, which will be meeting (along with all the other award committees) soon to determine whom to recognize with annual awards.

We end the issue with a full list of our 2023 races for handy reference. Please mark your calendar, and I hope to see you out there either running or volunteering!

MCRRC Intervals

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Have comments or questions? Or want to help?

Contact us at Intervals@mccrc.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.



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Moving Ahead in 2023

by Ashley Zuraf

Thank you to all the members who attended MCRRC's Annual Business Meeting on December 15. With transmittable illnesses again on the rise and the holiday hustle and bustle, the meeting was held virtually for the third year in a row. If there's one thing the pandemic has taught organizations, it is how to work remotely and online to conduct business. While the board and staff truly enjoy seeing our members, we also recognize the convenience that the online format provides and how it allows more of you the opportunity to participate in these important discussions and decisions on issues such as the Club's annual budget.

While 2022 remained a rebound year for MCRRC, we believe the Club is on track to come back strong from the challenges faced during the pandemic. Race and program participation were both lower than we hoped for in 2022, but we expect an upward trend in the coming year. Participation in MCRRC increased significantly in the second half of the year, and despite the rebuilding the Club continues to do, the board was pleased to present a balanced budget.

After the losses suffered over the past few years, we as an organization need to start to think outside of the box to grow the club. MCRRC has had the chronic issue of marketing to ourselves, and this is not sustainable for growth within our community. In the past year, we have collectively stepped back to figure out *Where is our*

most obvious reach?—the lowest hanging fruit, if you will. For one, we noted missed opportunities at our larger races' packet pickups. As a trial, we welcomed the creation of the MCRRC Influencer Program. This is still new and very much needs to grow. By setting up at large race-packet pickups, talking to the public, and asking them if they are MCRRC members or are interested in hearing about the Club, we've been able to extend our reach. Community events, such as the Kemp Mill Community Days where Jeff Lunsford hosted a table, are also great places to talk about MCRRC. We have a newly designed information card and some small giveaway items as we hope to draw new members in. We have started (at the board level) sharing posts on neighborhood listservs such as Next Door, as well as in school community groups. The Cabin John Kids Run, for example, was widely shared, and the race saw double its usual participation this fall. Do you love MCRRC? Do you love to talk about running? We are always in need of new Influencers and fresh ideas. Reach out to the board today and let us know if you want to help.

MCRRC's new referral program, which debuted this fall, was greatly successful – and that was simply to ask you, our valued members, to talk to your family, friends, neighbors, and others about the Club and how it's enhanced your life. Now, as we begin the process of getting out those referral bonuses, we are pleased to let you know that this

program will continue in 2023. Anyone can be part of the referral program. Just simply talk to your friends about MCRRC. Encourage them to come to a weekly workout or a low-key race and try it out with you. And when they join MCRRC, ask them to jot your name on the membership form so that you get credit toward a referral bonus!

MCRRC's new year's resolution is to continue our journey on the path less taken by the Club in the past – a bit like the spur that leads you to a trail you've never explored, the running route you haven't taken before, or the race you never thought you'd run. We look forward to thinking beyond the walls we have safely stayed behind, and finding new ideas to spark new interest.

We can't wait to give our members a website with a more organized look and a fresh feel. And please join us in our efforts to grow, expand, and diversify. We welcome your ideas and your voice. And whatever your new year's resolutions are, we wish you a year of success, health, and happiness, and we thank you for your loyal membership.

—Ashley Zuraf is the Executive Director of MCRRC, which she joined in 2003. When she isn't managing the Club, she spends her time shuttling her sons to various activities, riding her Peloton, going for a leisurely "jog," and training Mo, the official spokedog of Parks Half Marathon.

Single-Momming Stone Mill

by Catherine Howard

Until November, my last race was a 50K “fat ass,” in July 2019, that I DNFed. It was a month before my final attempt at IVE, when I was incredibly fortunate to become pregnant. Before pregnancy I was a regular at Wednesday track workouts and low-key races. Throughout my pregnancy, and thanks to good health and inspiration by other athletic women, I was able to keep running, weight-lifting, and spinning.

In the later stages of my pregnancy, having a baby “got real,” and I had to prepare. COVID hadn’t yet arrived, and a running stroller was the purchase that I spent the most time fretting about. Ultimately I chose a BOB off Craigslist. With that and accompanying “baby insert” acquired, I was ready for the baby—because I didn’t plan to miss a single step!

In fact, I planned for my tiny person and myself to do a lot. I’d stay fit, social, and active with the Club with baby. He would sleep in the stroller while I ran track on Wednesday nights, and meet my buddies over pizza at Giuseppe’s; he’d come with me to low-key races, and my volunteering friends would keep watch over him while I competed, etc.

But as Neil Young said, “The devil fools with the best laid plans.” And the devil has been busy the last few years.

Despite all that, my perfect little human creation was born on Mother’s Day in 2020. Suffice it to say, the pandemic’s arrival modified my plans. But over the course of time, I built a small, trustworthy, reliable, COVID-cautious team of caregivers. So in early 2022, although I was still being very careful about COVID, I was ready to sign up for a race.

In selecting a race, I wanted it to be close to home and relatively inexpensive. So many things could go wrong, and I didn’t want to lose a lot of money, or mind too much if I had to cancel if I didn’t feel well or couldn’t secure caregivers. I also wanted it to be on trails (my love!) and at least marathon distance, because if I only got to do one race, let it be long and last a while. So, with those parameters, I chose

Stone Mill 50-Mile Run.

Choosing Stone Mill for my first race post-pregnancy and in a pandemic was stupid in most ways. I’d never run that far—the farthest being 34 miles, seven or so years ago—and now I’m a mid-forties single mother who does kegels. How do I train for a fifty-mile race? When do I have time to train for a fifty-mile race? How much is childcare going to cost me to train for this race? (I purposely decided not to calculate this.)

But stupid ideas sometimes stretch the concept of what’s possible. And that’s a healthy thing to do periodically.

I’ve never been one for training plans or GPS watches, but for this I needed a training plan and to track my distance. Outside online offered a four-month

about the other workouts. (Keeping up with my toddler and my community garden would count as workouts). My brother lent me an old GPS watch. And, as a single mother, I needed a team backing me on childcare; this turned out to be my son’s nanny and two absolutely amazing babysitters.

Spring turned to summer, and summer turned to fall. Through the seasons, my semi-whisper of “I signed up for my first race since having Greyson” changed into “I signed up for a fifty-mile trail race.” Similarly, the responses of “Good for you!” turned into “What did you say?” I was gaining confidence.

On my long runs, the things I really value about the Club came to mind regularly: the friendships, the community, and accomplishing things together that are unimaginable separately. Alongside my increasing confidence in thinking maybe I really could do the distance, there was an increasing desire to spend a day relishing what I’d missed for so long: the good vibes that are MCRRC and VHTRC.

On race day, [Stone Mill director] Barry’s promise of good weather turned out. My brother was there from Boston, and a good friend unexpectedly showed up at 5:30 am to see me start. One babysitter showed up at 4:30 am to watch Greyson. His nanny and her husband would relieve her later and bring Greyson to the finish line.

The race was an adventure, and I relished the long day seeing friends I hadn’t seen in ages. With every step, I got more excited to carry my little boy across the finish line. And while, training-wise, I probably should have signed up for a fifteen- and not a fifty-mile race, I completed it. Maybe next time I’ll be stricter on the training plan. Until then, I need to figure out my next stupid idea. Because, sometimes, they really are the best ideas.

—Catherine Howard joined MCRRC in 2009. You can find her running the Western Ridge Trail in Rock Creek Park, and that’s pretty much it these days.



Photo: Barry Hauptman

Catherine Howard crosses the Stone Mill 50M finish line with her son, Greyson.

plan—I’d registered in May, so I had six months to train. A couple months’ buffer sounded good, and the plan looked relatively flexible. I decided the back-to-back long-run days would be the most important, and I wouldn’t worry much



Why Do Coaches Coach?

by Conroy Zien

You've probably seen groups of runners, all bunched together, running along the Rock Creek Trail, CCT, or any of the other numerous running routes where MCRRC training programs meet for training runs. You've probably also seen one (or more) member of those groups, perhaps wearing a brightly colored shirt, near the front or back, keeping the group together. Chances are that individual is a pace group coach. But have you ever wondered how or why this person became a coach?

MCRRC has many different training programs, ranging in distance from 5K to marathon and in experience level from beginner to seasoned veteran. Each training program has requirements for its coaches, and those may vary greatly depending on the distance and target runner of the program. But one thing is true for coaches in any program: It is an extremely rewarding experience.

Pace group coaches are often veterans of the programs they are coaching—today's newbie may someday become tomorrow's coach. As director of the First Time Marathon (FTM) program, I know that all of our pace group coaches started as participants in the program. Our coaches all believe in our program's philosophy and serve as ambassadors for not just FTM but for MCRRC and the entire running community.

If you ask a coach, "What made you want to coach?" you'll probably receive a wide array of responses, but one common theme is giving back to the Club and spreading the joy of training with the program. What they probably won't mention are the sacrifices they make in order to coach.

As runners, we all have personal goals. Whether it is a distance goal, time goal, or an activity goal, goal-setting is a major component of why we run. Coaches are no different, but a coach's personal goals often must take a back seat to a coach's responsibilities.

On the surface, coaches lead runners on group runs, following the

route or workout for that run, and generally shepherding their runners to a successful finish. But there's a lot going on behind the scenes you may not be aware of. Coaches constantly pay attention to their runners, observing and making sure nobody is struggling too much, having a bad run for whatever reason, or in danger of suffering from a medical emergency. Coaches also constantly engage with their runners, providing instructions, motivating, encouraging, and doing their best to ensure participants are having fun and enjoying their experience in the training program.

As much as we want every group run to go without incident, there are times when issues arise, requiring additional attention from a coach. A runner may trip and fall, roll an ankle, get stung by a bee, or just be having a bad day and need to drop back. This is when you'll see a coach fall back with a struggling runner and walk or run slowly with them, sometimes for miles at a time. This is when coaches sacrifice more than simply their time. This is when coaches exhibit the special qualities that make

them good coaches. You may never hear a coach complain about these sacrifices they make, but the sacrifices they make are plenty. We ask coaches to coach pace groups slower than their usual training pace because they need to be able to easily run their coaching pace regardless of the weather, conditions, or any other reason that would require them to fall back and need to quickly catch up with the group.

A coach's reward is seeing the smiles of all their runners as they achieve their running goals. The genuine gratitude and appreciation expressed by trainees far outweighs the sacrifices a coach makes. And the experience of many of these runners keeps replenishing the coaching pipeline with new coaches wanting to give back to MCRRC and the programs that have given them so much.

So, if you have participated in one of MCRRC's amazing training programs, please be sure to say THANKS to a pace group coach!

—Conroy Zien joined MCRRC in 2007 and has been directing the First Time Marathon program since 2012.



Photo: Sumi Rajendra

FTM's 11:00 pace group celebrates the end of the season with their coaches, Tom Carter (center back) and Vicky Shi (second from the right).

Alan Pemberton



by Lisa Levin

Each year in January, the MCRRC Runner of the Year (ROY) Committee, composed of previous ROY award recipients, meets to select the next class of ROY inductees. For the past seven years, Alan Pemberton has chaired the committee, overseeing the selection process. Alan was the winner of the 2008 Masters (40+) Male and 2013 Grandmasters (60+) Male Runner of the Year awards. A member of the Club since 1995, when he joined to take advantage of the hospitality suite for the Marine Corps Marathon, Alan is also a founding member of the Dojo of Pain, a group of runners who meet to train together in DC. Alan, who entered a new age group this year (70–74), lives in Silver Spring with his wife, Miriam, with whom he will celebrate fifty years of marriage in 2023. They have two daughters and four grandkids, and now spend a good amount of their time in Alton, New Hampshire. When Alan is not running, he is an attorney who chairs the pro bono committee at Covington & Burling LLP, where he spent several years as partner and senior counsel.

When did you start running?

I made many unsuccessful starts at running in college and grad school, and got a lot of injuries (shin splints, stress fractures), because I would always run too hard. When my kids were little, in the mid-1980s, I started jogging around the neighborhood after dinner and after the kids were in bed. Running slowly like that apparently let my legs adapt enough that I was able to build mileage and speed gradually, and I've been running pretty continuously since then.

What do you remember about your first race?

I remember a 600-yard fitness run in

junior high school that was the most dreaded event ever. It seemed like an impossibly long distance, and I was breathing so hard I burned my airways.



Photo: Marathon Photo

Alan Pemberton cruises down the finish chute of the 2013 Marine Corps Marathon.

What are your proudest running accomplishments?

1. Starting the Dojo of Pain, an open-source running club that has grown into a nice anarchically governed group, which has welcomed many an MCRRC runner
2. Age-group wins at the Boston Marathon in 2009 (2:46:33 at age 56) and 2013 (2:57:52 at age 60)
3. A USATF age-group marathon championship at Twin Cities in 2008
4. A 4:58.5 mile at the Midsummer Night's Mile in 2009

Do you have any particularly memorable race experiences that stand out in your mind?

The 2008 Twin Cities Marathon, run in a hellacious thunderstorm, with lightning strikes, as we ran over a causeway over a lake. Also, running near Joan Benoit Samuelson in Cherry Blossom one year, and passing her on that last hill.

What is your favorite race distance? Has this answer changed over the years?

The marathon. The answer hasn't changed, but it's gotten less enthusiastic.

Do you have any favorite local races?

Cherry Blossom, the Midsummer Night's Mile, and the Parks Half Marathon.

How has your training changed over the years?

The main change was switching to the Hansons-Brooks system of marathon training in 2007 or so. I used their system of speed early in the cycle, and fairly specific (half-marathon pace or marathon pace) runs at the end of the cycle, though I did more mileage than they typically recommended. As I've gotten older, I do much less mileage and don't do such linear workout progressions, mainly because I can't.

Do you prefer training solo or with others? With others, definitely.

On my own, I tend to regress to what I call my "self-pity pace." Running with others keeps me accountable.

Do you have a favorite training route?

Hains Point. That's where most of the Dojo of Pain workouts happen. We've got four miles of road marked in 400 and 200 increments.

Tell us about the origins of the Dojo of Pain, and how it has evolved over the years.

Dan Yi and I and a few other people from the law firm where I work started running in the mornings before work in 2005 or 2006. In 2007, we started following training schedules that I drew up based on the Hansons-Brooks training philosophy. More people, not just lawyers, joined us as they learned about the group by word of mouth. I think Dan came up with the name, and he and Brian Savitch came up with our initial singlet design (the DC flag's stars and bars, with our logo in the middle, which other groups have since adopted as the basis for their shirts). Several talented women joined the group and helped recruit other women. The group has always been open to anyone of any ability who wants to come out and run the workouts with us, but the workouts aren't easy, and only people with a certain kind of craziness are willing to get out and run long intervals at Hains Point in the dark, in all weather, through the winter and summer. There are no officers, no dues, no admissions requirements, just a listserv of interested people who show up for the posted workouts. On a good day we'll have twenty people for Tuesday or Thursday workouts, and more than that for weekend long runs, and there are well over a hundred people on the listserv who show up occasionally. The training schedules for the last couple of years have been drafted by Jeff Redfern, and many people show up and do their own workouts. People are usually pointing towards a few key goal races, usually marathons (Boston, California International Marathon, Richmond, MCM, Chicago). There's always been a core group of regulars, but they've changed over the years.

What is the Runner of the Year Committee?

It's the committee that selects MCRRC's Runners of the Year (male and female in the Open, Masters, and Grandmasters divisions). The committee consists of former winners, and it meets two or three times at the conclusion of each racing year to consider and vote on who that year's awardees will be. It's a very amoral selection process, focusing solely on race speed and not on contributions to the Club or humanity, and we operate by majority vote.

What are your responsibilities as chair?

I schedule the meetings, chair them, and help assemble a list of nominees for the committee to vote on. I usually try to do as much advance work as I can, assembling information on Club members who have had good racing performances in the past year, and committee members come with their own information and nominees. At the meetings, we vote on who the nominees will be, and I get volunteers to do the final analysis of the running performances of the nominees. Those volunteers then present their analysis and we vote on the final winners. Typically the volunteers become the presenters at the MCRRC award ceremony.

What do you find to be the most challenging part of the Runner of the Year selection process?

The homework in advance of the first meeting is most time-consuming, but I don't mind it. The meetings themselves are fun, and lots of people have good ideas and good information. I don't try to impose my own views too strongly, but try to get a sense of the group consensus and build agreement.

What advice would you give runners looking to get faster?

Run with other people who challenge you and make running fun. Read a few books (Jack Daniels, Brad Hudson, Seb Coe's dad's book, Sunderland's book on middle-distance training, for instance). Follow a definite plan where you build volume and intensity over time, and stay within your body's limits, but not well within them. Learn to recognize the early signs of injury before they get serious enough to cause a break in training.

What do you enjoy doing when you are not running?

Tending a big vegetable and berry garden in New Hampshire and splitting firewood. Perfecting a Manhattan. Playing the NYT Spelling Bee. Resisting autocracy.

What are your running-related goals for 2023?

Hey, I'm in a new age group, so let's see what happens. Cherry Blossom, Boston, Chicago—maybe things will go well at one of them if I can do some sustained training.

—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.



MCRRC Race Schedule 2023

Save the dates! Also, don't forget to register for your 2023 Low-Key bib and chip online.

Guidelines can be found at: <https://mcrrc.org/low-key-race-entry-procedure/>

Register at: <https://runsignup.com/Race/MD/Rockville/2023MCRRCMemberLowKeyRegistration>

Note: If your membership is current, you can bypass the "Would you like to join MCRRC?" checkbox by clicking "Continue." If your membership has expired, you will need to renew before continuing registration.

Sunday, January 1, 10:00 am

New Year's Day 5K
Gaithersburg, MD

Sunday, January 29, 8:30 am

Cross Country on the Farm 5K XC
Derwood, MD

Sunday, February 12, 8:30 am

Kemp Mill (C)hills 5K/10K
Silver Spring, MD

Saturday, March 11, 7:30 am

Seneca Creek Greenway Trail Marathon & 50K (\$)
Gaithersburg, MD

Sunday, March 19, 8:30 am

Piece of Cake 5K/10K
Potomac, MD

Sunday, March 26, 7:45 am

Spin in the Woods 4 Miler 2023
Wheaton, MD

Saturday, April 15, 8:00 am

Capital for a Day 2023
Olney, MD

Sunday, April 23, 7:50 am

Pike's Peek 10K (\$)
Rockville, MD

Saturday, May 6, 8:30 am

Kids on the Run (\$)
Gaithersburg, MD

Sunday, May 21, 8:00 am

Run Aware XC 5K
Bethesda, MD

Monday, May 29, 8:00 am

Memorial 4M
Rockville, MD

Saturday, June 3, 7:30 am

Little Bennett 10K XC
Clarksburg, MD

Saturday, June 17, 8:00 am

Run for Roses 5K 2023 (\$)
Wheaton, MD

Saturday, June 17, 7:30 pm

Suds & Soles 5K 2023 (\$)
Rockville, MD

Friday, July 7, 7:00 pm

Midsummer Night's Mile
Gaithersburg, MD

Sunday, July 9, 8:30 am

Country Road Run 5K
Dickerson, MD

Saturday, July 15, 7:30 am

Matthew Henson Trail 5K
Silver Spring, MD

Sunday, July 30, 7:30 am - 11:00 am

Riley's Rumble Half Marathon
Boyd's, MD

Saturday, August 5, 6:45

Going Green Track Meet
Gaithersburg, MD

Sunday, August 13, 8:00 am

Groovin' Woodstock 7K XC
Dickerson, MD

Saturday, August 26, 7:30 am

Eastern County 8K
Silver Spring, MD

Sunday, September 10, 6:45 am

Parks Half Marathon (\$)
Rockville, MD

Saturday, September 23, 8:30 am

Lake Needwood 10K XC
Derwood, MD

Sunday, September 24, 9:00 am

Cabin John Kids Run
Bethesda, MD

Saturday, October 7, 9:00 am

Black Hill 10K
Boyd's, MD

Sunday, November 5, 8:30 am

Rockville 10K/5K 2023 (\$)
Rockville, MD

Saturday, November 11, 6:00 am

Stone Mill 50-Mile Run (\$)
Montgomery Village, MD

Saturday, November 18, 6:15 pm

Run Under the Lights 5K (\$)
Gaithersburg, MD

Saturday, November 25, 8:00 am

Turkey Burnoff 5M/10M
Gaithersburg, MD

Sunday, December 10, 9:00 am

Seneca Slopes 9K XC
Gaithersburg, MD

Sunday, December 17, 9:00 am

Jingle Bell Jog 8K
Rockville, MD