

MCRRC Intervals

March 2023

Newsletter of the *montgomery county road runners club*

On the Horizon

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
www.pikespeek10k.org

Saturday, May 6, 8:30 am
Kids on the Run (\$)
Gaithersburg, MD
www.mccrckidsontherun.org

Sunday, May 21, 8:00 am
Run Aware XC 5K
Bethesda, MD

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

Board Meetings

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

Training Programs Embrace Winter



Photo: Lily Burch

Rosa Sherafat and Lulu Muze hit Beach Drive for a Speed Development long run.

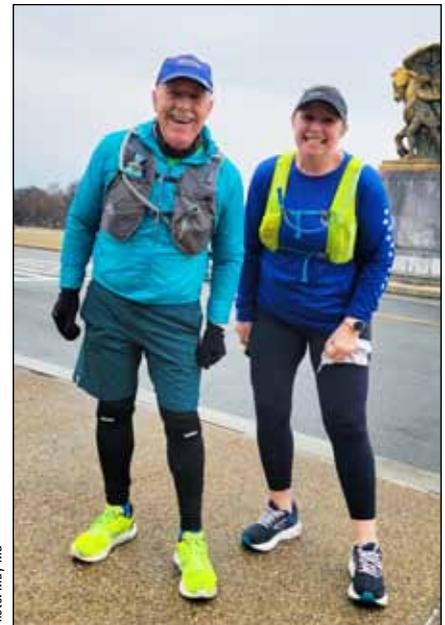


Photo: May Ma

Sadok Rouai and Kim Nonato of Winter Marathon Training pause for a photo op on Arlington Memorial Bridge.



Photo: Jyoti Bishey

The Winter 5K Run/Walk program's Green Team enjoys the Capital Crescent Trail.



Springing Along

by Amy Lin

As I write this, we're having some very non-wintery weather, but MCRRC's many winter training programs have been chugging along smoothly, with participants eagerly looking forward to their spring goal races and a longer stretch of above-freezing temperatures. Although I'm a bit disappointed to have had fewer chances to snowboard locally, I'm nevertheless excited to welcome a new spring and the beauty of what many consider the best season in the DC area.

To that end, this issue of Intervals provides a sneak peek at spring and upcoming events both within the Club and outside of it.

Thanks to Catherine Howard for suggesting and spearheading our new advice column! Please get in touch if you'd like to be one of our experts or if you have a question to submit (see page 3 for details).

In From the Board, Brian Murphy highlights our low-key race series and the benefits of participating—including cash awards and gift cards. MCRRC members get to do

all these races for free, and they definitely live up to the "low-key" billing; once you pick up your low-key race bib and chip at any one of these events, all you have to do for the rest of the year's races is show up and run.

Many Club members participate in a favorite local race that showcases the spectacular blooming of our area's renowned Yoshino cherry blossoms. In honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the Cherry Blossom Ten Mile Run, Dan DiFonzo outlines the history of MCRRC's close ties to the race and its organization.

For March's Runner Profile, Lisa Levin talks to Mayra Fairbairn, race director of our Piece of Cake 5K and 10K low-key race, a signature spring event that segues into MCRRC's awards brunch and, of course, cake!

Finally, Ira Gold writes of how a beloved four-legged friend helped develop his joy for running and an appreciation of the outdoors year-round.

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Have comments or questions? Or want to help?

Contact us at Intervals@mcrcc.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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Lace Up for Low-Key Races

by Brian Murphy

We're a few months into our new year, which means MCRRC has already held a few of our low-key races. One thing I've noticed from these first few races is an uptick in members taking advantage of these races over last year. Last year, we were still recovering from the pandemic and we saw race-participation numbers down across the country. It's encouraging to see the Club rebound in both race participation and membership growth.

These low-key races are one of our MCRRC member benefits. They are actually how I first got introduced to the Club—those races and Denis McDonald welcoming me at Wednesday night track. My first low-key race was in 2014 at the now-defunct Shooting Starr 6K—I remember it and Art Drisko kicking my butt up the last hill. They are a really great place for bringing the Club together as a community, whether you're running or volunteering. I feel more connected to MCRRC when I participate.

In connection with our low-key races, MCRRC gives out Championship Series (CS) and Cross Country Series (XC) awards. Members participating in enough events—at least half

of the races—have a chance to compete for overall and age-group awards. We have twelve Championship Series races and eight Cross Country Series races. The overall award is a cash prize each year, and each age group competes for an RnJ gift card. Not too bad!

The series has been designed to showcase and award well-rounded runners. We have a number of race distances, from one mile to a half-marathon. It's fun to see how this balances out at the end of the year as strengths of different runners are accumulated.

The other strong benefit our low-key races provide is an opportunity to get a hard workout or race effort into your training plan with less stress than

a big race. As someone pointed out to me, on a perennial basis, our Runner of the Year nominees are often at the top of the list for the race series in the overall awards or in their age group. There is a huge benefit to going out there, practicing your race strategy, and pushing your effort that will prove valuable over the course of the year.

So, whether you come out to compete for a top spot, to run for an age-group award, to improve your overall running, or to feel more connected to the local running community, I hope to see you at the next low-key race!

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

Advice Column Coming Soon!

Intervals would like to introduce an advice column to help MCRRC members with running-related challenges. As we bring this new column to the start line, we need you to:

- Volunteer your expertise to answer questions (e.g., health, nutrition, coaching, technique, gear)
- Suggest a catchy title for the column
- Let us know what you want to know! Send your questions to intervals@mcrrc.org

If you'd like to help, please contact Catherine Howard via intervals@mcrrc.org.

Cherry Blossom Blooms with MCRRC

by Dan DiFonzo

The Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile Run (CB10) is known far and wide as one of the nation's premier running events, but few are aware of the impact the Montgomery County Road Runners Club has on the race's organization.

It's well established that the CB10 has attracted some of the fastest runners in the world to participate in the annual race dubbed "The Runner's Rite of Spring." The 2023 race, to be held on Sunday, April 2, will be the fiftieth anniversary of the storied event.

Historically, the CB10 has been the venue for multiple world—and American—records in both the men's and women's races. In fact, a total of nineteen world and American records have been set at the Cherry Blossom Ten Mile Run in the nearly fifty years the race has been contested.

What many don't know, however, is that the roots of this very successful local event grow deep thanks to the know-how of the local running community. MCRRC's involvement with the CB10 goes back nearly thirty years.

Organized originally by DC Road Runners Club (DCRRC) members, including the current race director, Phil Stewart, the Cherry Blossom Ten Mile was founded in 1973 as a tune-up race for runners planning to participate in the Boston Marathon.

The CB10's reputation grew quickly, and the popularity of the event meant that race organizers

felt the need to tap into the local running community for even greater expertise and experience.

The DCRRC owned the race from its inception in 1983 until 1989, when it spun off and became its own Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) Event Member.

It was around then that MCRRC's Anna Berdahl, whom most may remember as the person who started the Club's Halloween Young Run, joined the CB10 race committee.

"The first true connection was through Anna Berdahl, who worked for Jeff Darman and me when we were the co-directors back in the 1980s. Anna used to conduct the lottery by spreading out envelopes on her living room floor and randomly selecting the runners who would get in. Her nickname was "The Lottery Lady," recalls Stewart.

"It was through that relationship that she brought [MCRRC member] Dennis Steinauer on board, and Dennis became the first president of our new non-profit organization when it spun off from the DCRRC in 1989."

Both Dennis Steinauer and Anna Berdahl were winners of MCRRC's Lifetime Achievement Awards in 1999 and 2000, respectively. Today, Steinauer coordinates the race photography team at Cherry Blossom Ten Mile.

Former MCRRC President Jean Arthur has been an integral part of the Cherry Blossom Race Committee, taking on numerous roles over the years, including overseeing the water stops, coordinating signage, and now serving as the President of the Credit Union Cherry Blossom



Photo: Dan DiFonzo

The CB10 pace team consists of runners from MCRRC's Experienced Marathon Program.

Board of Directors. She received the 2009 MCRRC Lifetime Achievement Award, and most recently won the 2022 Browning Ross Spirit of the RRCA Award for her involvement with the RRCA, where she has served as a past board member.

Countless other MCRRC veterans have also contributed to the success of the CB10, including Irv Newman, who served as Deputy Race Director, Treasurer, and President. Bob DiIorio is the Publications Editor; Kari Keaton is a board member and currently directs the Kids' Run; Kirt West has served on the race committee as Vice President and heads up the Virtual Training Program; Phil Quinn, who is a 2001 recipient of MCRRC's Lifetime Achievement Award, is in charge of timing, scoring and map production; and Rachel Miller serves as one of the medical coordinators on the CB10 Medical Team.

Longtime Club member Tom Filippone is in charge of vehicle procurement and coordination. Steve Solbeck is in charge of security, while Arlene Solbeck serves as the Merchandise and T-Shirt Design Contest Coordinator. Danny Talmage, MCRRC's most recent winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award, heads up Storage and Shipping, while the late George Tarrico was in charge of logistics.

Jean Arthur has been involved with the CB10 for nearly twenty-five

years. She recalls being recruited to serve by race director Phil Stewart and later being joined by many members of MCRRC.

"Personally, once I figured out my duties in CB10, I started assembling my team and I, logically, recruited people that I knew and trusted from the running community. Those people were almost always from MCRRC," said Arthur.

Jean Arthur, Irv Newman, George Tarrico, and most recently, Danny Talmage were also honored by the CB10 Race Committee with the Les Kinion Outstanding Service Award—the highest honor presented for race involvement.

These are just a few of the current and former MCRRC members who have supervisory positions within the CB10 organizing structure. Numerous other jobs are filled by MCRRC members serving as volunteers, such as water stop managers. They include: Craig Roodenburg, Don Libes, Barry Hauptman, Lubin Hernandez Palomino, and Danny Talmage.

For the past eight years MCRRC's Experienced Marathon Program has organized and provided the official pacers for the ten-mile race and, beginning this year, will provide pacers for the newer 5K race, held the day before the ten-mile event.

There are many MCRRC volunteers who serve in high-level positions but who are not on the committee. There are an even greater number of race-day volunteers who hail from the Club

and do everything from acting as course marshals, to helping with food distribution and bag check, to working in the medical tent, and filling the dozens of other roles that are required to conduct a race of this size and magnitude.

Aside from the personnel, MCRRC and the CB10 have ties that are invisible to most. Symbolic of this close relationship is the fact that the two organizations share storage sheds which are right next to each other in a sleepy industrial storage facility in Rockville. The CB10 has hired MCRRC to distribute supplies along the course on race day, and MCRRC has done likewise, with equipment owned by Cherry Blossom, for Club races and events.

"The side-by-side sheds are a good symbol of our working relationship. Equipment and supplies get shared both ways, and we are pleased to use MCRRC's Race Management Services for parts of our operation," said Phil Stewart.

—Dan DiFonzo is a frequent contributor to Intervals. He is also a coach with the Experienced Marathon Program (XMP).



Mayra Fairbairn



by Lisa Levin

Other than the first three years of her life, when she lived in Guatemala City where her parents were born, Mayra Fairbairn has spent her life in the DMV area, growing up and attending elementary through high school in Wheaton, and living in Gaithersburg for the past 36 years in the same house. It comes as no surprise, then, that Mayra's involvement with the Club stretches all the way back to 2003, when she (along with her kids) started out not as a runner but as a volunteer. She dedicated several years of time as such and took her first steps as a runner after being inspired by the MCRRC runners she saw during her volunteer shifts. While Mayra has now tackled every distance from two miles to the marathon, and has even ventured into triathlons, she remains true to her roots as a dedicated Club volunteer, including as race director of the Piece of Cake 5K/10K, which will take place on March 19 in its new (as of 2022) location at the Falls Road Local Park in Potomac.

When did you start running?

Well, that question makes me chuckle! It was 1976 when I had to run the mile in sixth grade. I started out slowly, as I had been told that would be best, though I still huffed and puffed throughout—it took me eleven and a half minutes to complete, but it felt endless! That was my first-ever official run. “Never again,” I told myself. HA!

Fast forward to somewhere around 2003, when I volunteered for MCRRC. I excitedly told myself, “I wanna do that!” It looked as if runners were having a blast, effortlessly. I quietly began running sometime around 2007 along Great Seneca Highway to train for an upcoming two-mile race. I trained on a cold day and wore sweatpants and a sweatshirt, running as if someone was chasing me. I thought that was what you were supposed to do, and did not quite understand at that point how those MCRRC runners

looked like they were having the time of their lives. When it was time to run that two-mile race, I stopped four times, but kept the walk breaks as brief as I could. I finished somewhere between 20 and 23 minutes, but regardless of my time, I found it to be a great accomplishment. It blew my mind that I finished, and I was determined. It took me until 2009 to join a MCRRC training program, and at that point I knuckled myself on the head and understood that I had been doing it all wrong on my own (HUGE laugh here).



Photo: Mayra Fairbairn

Mayra Fairbairn

Do you have any training secrets you've learned over the years?

I actually noticed an improvement in my running from one year to the next when I was running fewer miles per week. I cannot say whether it was running fewer miles, eating habits, or running smarter, but for whatever reason, my paces improved. What I look for now are hills, hills, hills (uphills in particular). I am usually really disappointed when I find a new route that is mostly flat or downhill on the way out, so I make it a point to use the hills my advantage on the way back and run the heck out of them. Punishment? No, just the desire to run that particular hill faster the next time I run it. I actually keep a log of the times in a notebook so I can compare times.

I have also done a lot of walking with hand weights and light ankle weights, particularly since the pandemic, and most recently I've incorporated a 20-pound vest while walking. I'm loving the challenge of the added weight.

Which volunteer roles have you found most rewarding over the years?

Coaching for the 10K Program and Summer Half Marathon Program (2011 and 2012) was so rewarding. In 2013 I was asked to co-direct the 10K Program, and while it involved a lot of planning, it was a hell-of-a fun watching the participants skyrocket toward and achieve their goals. I also had a lot of fun serving as assistant race director for at least four Club races, and of course as race director to Piece of Cake. I have been team captain in various areas for many Club races, and have volunteered in 90% or so of the volunteer positions. One of my most memorable positions was the position of photographer for a few training programs and creating video montages to watch at the end of each graduation, seeing the joy in people's faces in how far they had come, and to see what they would tackle next.

When did you become the race director for Piece of Cake, and what motivated you to take on a race director position?

I actually started out as an assistant race director (ARD) in 2008. My entire role was “to get the donuts”. At the end of the race, the race director asked me, “So, how would you feel about becoming a race director?” I was speechless. It wasn't until I spoke to our then great Race Director Father, George Tarrico, that he put me in touch with Piece of Cake in 2009. I became the ARD when it was at Seneca Creek State Park, and took over as RD in 2010. I am still loving it to this day.

What do you find to be the most challenging part of being a race

director? The most rewarding?

Race directing is not necessarily tough, but the biggest challenge was the parking when we had Piece of Cake at Seneca Creek State Park, due to the park's layout. Especially when the Club was asked to move the start/finish line to a different location within the park, parking became even more challenging as we were not allowed to park in the open field 200 yards from the start/finish when it was raining, since vehicles would sink into the mud. The field had the capacity for about 150 vehicles, but with the rain, all 325+ runners and volunteers were forced to park as far as a half mile away from the start/finish area. Not a big deal for some runners, but others didn't enjoy being that far from their car. The only other challenge is obtaining course marshals. When I first took over as race director, I was given great advice by an earlier Piece of Cake RD, which was to plan as if no course marshals will show up, so I began laying out the course with lots of directionals.

Race directing is really rewarding. I have always loved watching runners finish their race and cheering them on, especially those first-time racers who realize what they have accomplished on race day and they see how far they have come. At the end of the day, it's great to reflect on the morning's event, having everyone come home to the finish line, then go out to a fancy restaurant and enjoy the celebration. Until next year!

What is the key to putting on a successful race?

Volunteers are what make our MCRRC races happen. Without them, we would not have our races. They are the "apple of my eye" to every race director, and are simply key to putting on a successful race. Team captains and their section volunteers are especially appreciated. No volunteers = a very sad race director. It's that simple, in my opinion. The more volunteers, the more successful the race. That's why it is so critical to fill every

volunteer slot, not only to help the race directors but also make sure our runner peeps have a great race. Don't make us tear out our hair over the stress of volunteers, it is guaranteed to not be a pretty sight!

In 2022, Piece of Cake moved from Seneca Creek State Park to Falls Road Park. What was the reason for the move?

We found that Falls Local Road Park (also known as Hadley's Park) was a far better fit for Piece of Cake, with ample and easy parking. Participants and volunteers can park around almost the entire perimeter of the park and still be within a few hundred yards of the start/finish line. The park also has an impressive display of playground equipment with a lot of fun colorful seating near the start/finish area as well as a huge pavilion to hold pre- and post-race activities.

Do you have any tips for those who will be participating in any of the Piece of Cake races?

Always be aware of your surroundings, as the race course will take you to onto neighborhood streets in Potomac, and, for the most part, vehicles have the right of way. Visit the course a couple of times before race day so you can see for yourself where your challenges may (or may not) be. The Piece of Cake course maps (5K, 10, 0.50 mile, and 1 mile) are on our MCRRC website. Stay alert for the directions of course marshals, and have at least one ear available so you can hear them, especially after descending the park's paved trail about 500 yards after the start where runners will need to cross over Falls Chapel Way. Pay particular attention to our course marshals when approaching Mile 1, just after Mile 2, after Mile 4, and after Mile 5.5.

What can participants do to make a race director's job easier?

Sign up to volunteer AND sign up to volunteer! Fill all available volunteer slots. Volunteers are the meat of our Club

races and required make sure the races run smoothly. Plus, signing up early helps prevent race director anxiety brought on by having critical volunteer positions to fill the night before race day!

What do you enjoy doing when you are not running?

When we were confined to home during the pandemic, I took up sewing. I have watched lots of sewing videos and figured out sewing machine corks, jams, and "it will look better next time" scenarios. I have upcycled pieces of clothing, and learned to resize items, basically saving landfills from discarded clothes. It won't be a profession in my future, just lots of fun learning, upcycling, and creating. I spend a lot of time at the beach, many times two weeks at a time where I find peace and serenity and feel free of any cares in the world. Virginia Beach is one of my favorite places to walk and run along the shoreline.

And while I hated cooking ages ago, as I found too many ingredients in each recipe, since the pandemic, I've enjoyed doing a lot of cooking (even with tons of ingredients) and looking up new recipes to try. I never knew lentil flatbread existed until recently. I've consumed a lot of that, as well as banana flatbread. You just need a wet ingredient and a powder-type ingredient like flour, oatmeal, or ground dry lentils (usually a 1:1 ratio but it all depends on how soft or firm you want the end result to be). Those two ingredients, and seasonings of your choice are all you need for a basic flatbread; then bake it in the oven or air fryer. Dress it up any way you like – make it pizza, dip into a dip, or even spread your favorite jam on it, and there you have it.

—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.

Chasing Tia

by Ira Gold

Growing up, I was a gymnast and played baseball and basketball. Running was an activity I saw others, including my father, enjoying, but I never thought about it for myself.

My wife, Heidi, and I moved to Silver Spring in 2011, and we began to talk about adopting a dog. We wanted a breed that enjoyed regular exercise, and we were drawn to pointers. After visiting a rescue organization and meeting a one-year-old German Shorthaired Pointer, liver-colored with a white patch on her chest, we had a gut feeling that she was the right pup for us. April 1, 2012 was a day I'll never forget. Within an hour of Tia's arrival, she was sitting in my lap. I was overcome with emotion and a sense of comfort.

Seeing the world from Tia's perspective was inspiring. She would sit on our deck for hours, waiting for a squirrel, rabbit, or bird to make a mistake. She was at total peace in the outdoors, and I became fascinated by her curiosity. We started going for a daily walk, an easy three miles. In those early years, I was still learning to get up with the birds, and Tia would paw at me or stick her nose in my face to wake me up. The flow of each day started together, with this sunrise walking ritual. I felt I was becoming more at peace, more empathetic and joyful.

After a few months, I started easy running with Tia, on that same three-mile loop. Then we began changing the route, the direction, the amount of time. I was feeling different. *I really like being in motion, learning to run like Tia runs. She's a natural, and if I spend more time with her, I'll learn to be just like her, right?*

I found myself signing up for a 5K, then longer races, and finally my first marathon, not even two years after our first day together. *What is going on?* I started following a training plan. Tia would join me for the first part of the morning, and I would continue my workout alone.

When our first daughter, Lena, was born, I adjusted our routine to include walks with the baby, eventually evolving to running with the stroller. A few years later, Frances was born, and she became part of the club, enjoying stroller rides along Sligo Creek Trail and later joining my runs with Tia.

By 2018, I started feeling like an actual runner—really another way of saying that I felt more like Tia. There was an elegance to her running, in our yard, on the leash, or at the dog park. She loved to be chased and was always one of the fastest dogs around. She was a perfect combination of energetic

and I was inspired by their commitment to training. I noticed that just as Tia had taught me to run with her, I was learning to run with others drawn to the outdoors. My running had become communal.

In the summer of 2021, we noticed that Tia was acting differently, and after a month of trying to diagnose her lack of appetite, we had her scanned for abnormalities. Cancer was found in multiple parts of her body, and Heidi and I discussed treatment options. We might have been able to get a few more weeks or months with her, but her quality of life would have been poor.

Within two days of learning Tia's diagnosis, we decided to say goodbye, which was very emotional for Heidi and me, as Tia was our first "child." Our final weekend with her was very peaceful—long hours outside with family, friends, and neighbors. She enjoyed delicious treats and had many, many snuggles.

Though losing Tia was an incredibly emotional experience, I felt at peace. We had done thousands of miles together, forging a bond that only we knew. She had given me so much joy and strength, and I had taken all of it and used it every day. I had learned to be a better version of myself. I thanked her for her kindness and wisdom, and for being my first running coach. For the rest of my life, I'll always be grateful for her.

Whenever I'm in need of a boost or encouragement on a run, I can call upon Tia's spirit. I see her ears flopping as she sprints in front of me, turning her head back slightly to check that I'm staying in line with her stride. She loves to lead, and I love chasing her.

—Ira Gold joined MCRRC in 2021. He is a bassist in the National Symphony Orchestra and an Associate Professor at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore. His favorite distances are the mile and 5K.



Photo: Ira Gold

Ira Gold and Tia smile for a post-run selfie.

and adventurous outdoors, yet cuddly, loyal, and affectionate when inside.

By 2021, I had started running with friends I had met in the neighborhood. Kenny Ames, Shlomo Fishman, Rachel Rabinowitz, Laura Ramos, and Adrienne Mendenhall enjoyed running together,