

MCRRC Intervals

July 2023

Newsletter of the *montgomery county road runners club*

On the Horizon

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

Sunday, July 9, 8:30 am
Country Road Run 5K
Dickerson

Saturday, July 15, 7:30 am
Matthew Henson Trail 5K
Silver Spring

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

Saturday, August 5, 6:45 pm
Going Green Track Meet
Gaithersburg

Sunday, August 13, 8:00 am
Groovin' Woodstock 7K XC
Dickerson

Sunday, August 27, 7:30 am
Eastern County 8K
Silver Spring

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

From Spring to Summer



Photo: Amy Lin

Lois Dicker finishes strong at Memorial Day 4 Miler.



Photo: Dan Reichmann

Hector Montesinos focuses on the final stretch at Run Aware 5K.



Photo: Dan Reichmann

Patricia Scott runs happy at Little Bennett 10K.

Board Meetings

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



Summer Plannin', Happened So Fast

by Amy Lin

Despite the unseasonably cool weather we've had for the past few months, summer has arrived, and many MCRRC members are already well into their planned summer travels and training programs. For those of us who need a carrot at the end of the stick, planning is vital for motivation. I tend to make plans so far in advance that it's hard to believe when the time for the event/trip/race finally rolls around and it actually happens!

Our July issue of Intervals looks at several aspects of making running plans—coming up with ideas, figuring out locations, doing physical preparation, and experimenting to see what works. In From the Board, Deb Levy discusses what the board of MCRRC does for us and how a member's brainchild can become reality.

Have you ever shown up for an event and discovered you were in the

wrong place? Dan DiFonzo provides an overview of the *what3words* location app and MCRRC's plans to incorporate it into our races and programs.

For Coaches' Corner, physical therapist Kelsey O'Keefe debunks a common belief about running and offers strength-training exercises to prevent injury and improve running fitness.

In our Runner Profile, Lisa Levin interviews FTM coach and frequent Pike's Peek and Parks Half pacer Tom Hu, who will soon be moving to Colorado but plans to keep supporting MCRRC from afar.

Last but not least, Catherine Howard reports on the progress of our upcoming advice column—please send us your feedback on the suggested column titles and your thoughts on eco-friendly running snacks.

Happy planning!

Erratum

In our May 2023 issue, "Lofty Goals" implied that the Nominating Committee recommends members for MCRRC awards. The Nominating Committee evaluates candidates for MCRRC board positions; it is the Awards Committee that reviews award nominees. We regret the error and wish to thank both committees for their service!

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Have comments or questions? Or want to help?

Contact us at Intervals@mcrrc.org.

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Intervals is published bimonthly by the Montgomery County Road Runners, P.O. Box 1703, Rockville MD 20849.

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.



So, You're on the Board... What Does That Mean?

by Deb Levy



Like most people in the Club, I had an interest in running. I had friends who ran with MCRRC, so I decided to run with a Club program. I got hooked and became a part of the community. During runs, I'd chat with my buddies: "Wouldn't it be great if..." Or, "I think the Club should..." The classic response from the veterans was "Great idea, you should present it to the board," or "Sounds great, do it yourself." What is this "board"? Is it similar to the board of directors at work? The answer is both yes and no.

I've worked at banks my entire career. I've met many board members over the years. While they have an idea of the conceptual overview of a bank, they may not know the day-to-day operations. MCRRC's board also has an idea of the direction, but if I ask any of my fellow board members about a specific action item, they're likely to know all about it; in fact, it may have been an idea they championed and brought to life.

Every fall we see the announcements crowdsourcing for board nominees. For years I ignored them because: "Someone else can do it," "I don't have time," or "I don't have the experience," or even "I've never qualified for Boston; why would they want to hear from me?" Then I mentally danced around "Gee, I wonder if someone will

nominate me?" and finally, I bit the bullet and nominated myself. Here's the thing about board service. We represent everyone in the Club. I'm sure you've heard "A mile is a mile whether it's run in six or sixteen minutes. If you run, you're a runner." Well, it's the same with board service: If you're a part of the MCRRC community, we'd love to see if you can represent us on the board. Pace, distance, speed, terrain, and tenure are not factors. It's passion, organization, and commitment. We embrace a diverse set of skill sets, age, experience, and running accomplishments, like our Club membership.

The best part of board service is seeing ideas come to life. Have you seen our social media content lately? That was an idea championed by one of our fellow board members. How about the amazing swag distributed at Suds & Soles? The new course map for Memorial Day 4 Miler? Again, the work of our board members. Together with our incredible Executive Director, Ashley Zuraf, we help oversee the Club today as well as create initiatives for tomorrow.

I sit in our monthly meetings in awe of my fellow board members. Each of them comes to the table with a different set of skills. I am always impressed at the knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm. If I had to pick

a team for *Survivor* or a partner for *The Amazing Race*, it would likely be one of the people in that room. Some of us are learning new things as we go along. It's all for the good of the Club, but the experience of being on the board and seeing how this non-profit organization is run is also for the good of us, too. Many runners like to challenge themselves with a can-do attitude. When ideas come to the board, they are not dismissed; many times it's "We've never done this before, so why not try it?" but with this caveat: If you bring an idea, be prepared to execute!

We're out and about and running side-by-side with you. We're training with the various programs. We're always happy to introduce ourselves. We enjoy hearing from you. So, if you see us out on a training run or a race, please be sure to say "hello." Tell us your great idea. Who knows, you may join us on the board next year! Board nominations occur every fall, and we welcome new people.

—Deb Levy is an MCRRC board member-at-large. She joined the Club in 2011. As a native Washingtonian and career mortgage lender, her top requirement for a new home is close proximity to a running trail. She is currently located right off the CCT and can often be found there.

what3words Joins the Club

by Dan DiFonzo

MCCRRC is excited to announce the integration of a new geocoding program known as *what3words* into our races, programs, and communications. The free smartphone app is simple to use, will improve communications in all aspects of our races and events, and could have life-saving implications when used for runner safety.

What is *what3words*? Quite simply, it's the easiest way to describe any precise location anywhere on the globe. The program developers have divided the world into ten-foot-by-ten-foot squares—more than 57 trillion squares—and have given each one a unique identifier made from three simple words. This includes urban and remote areas, as well as oceans, mountains, jungles, and deserts. Literally every point on the globe is represented by three unique words. The system provides an easy and memorable way to communicate precise locations using words instead of traditional latitude and longitude coordinates or mailing addresses.

For runners, it is an especially important tool for logistics and safety. Will you be meeting a group of runners at the trailhead of the Rock Creek Trail at Lake Needwood for a Saturday run? No need to send detailed directions on where to meet. Simply give them the *what3words* address, input those words into the app, and their favorite mapping software instantly guides them to the exact meet-up location, in this case, **navy.spoke.races**.

It's an even more useful tool when it comes to runner safety. A few years ago during the running of MCCRRC's Parks Half Marathon, a runner fell and was injured along the Rock Creek Trail crossing a bridge about midway through the race. It was in a remote area along the trail, and the nearest roads were more than a half-mile in any direction. Giving directions to first responders was difficult at best, and meant a long delay in getting the runner emergency medical attention. Today, telling a dispatcher the *what3words* location **pocket.alone.doctor** will point first responders to the exact site of the accident.

"We are really excited to start spreading the word to our MCCRRC

membership about *what3words*. This new app can be utilized in countless ways to enhance runner safety, improve logistics for our organizers and volunteers, and streamline communications. We think every runner should have this app on their phone," said MCCRRC President Brian Murphy.

For now, expect to see *what3words* show up in race communications and within training programs. The Experienced Marathon Program (XMP) is the first program within MCCRRC to begin using *what3words* for sharing the location of group training runs. On Tuesdays, XMP trains at the Montgomery College track in Rockville, but runners are instructed to meet just outside the track entrance prior to the run. Runners are directed to **gums.fluid.fuzzy** for the exact location.

"XMP long runs often take us off the beaten path," said XMP pace coach Brad Stewart. "We hope that the additional *what3words* location information will help runners find our meeting locations and provide an additional level of safety and well-being in the event of an emergency. We are excited to be the first group in MCCRRC to begin using the app and we are hopeful it will catch on club-wide."

Outside of the obvious uses for runners, *what3words* is being integrated into many industries. Car manufacturers like Mercedes-Benz, Subaru, Ford, and Jaguar Land Rover have been integrating the app into their navigation systems, and logistics companies like DHL also use *what3words* for package deliveries, with rumors that Amazon and other retailers may soon follow. The travel and tourism industry, along with humanitarian organizations, are also realizing the possibilities. Ride sharing and transportation companies are discovering *what3words* and the ease of use it brings to their customers.

Loading the free app on your phone is as easy as going to the app store on your Apple or Android device. Simply search for *what3words* and download. The interface is easy to navigate. To get the three words for your current location, just click the arrow in the bottom right corner of your screen. You can toggle to

the satellite view and zoom in to see a detailed overhead view.

If there's another location for which you'd like to get a unique three-word combination, you can type a traditional address into the search bar and then zoom in to pinpoint a grid for a more exact location. The three words instantly come up on the screen. From here, you can share the words with others via text or email, or select your favorite navigation software like Waze, Google Maps, Apple Maps, or even Uber to find your desired location. The app even allows you to share a list of *what3word* locations with others, which is useful for events where multiple meeting locations are sometimes necessary.

The other great benefit of having *what3words* on your phone is that it works even if you do not have cell coverage. As long as you have a line of sight to the sky, the satellites overhead can pick up your location, just like your GPS-enabled running watch. Sharing your location is a bit more difficult in situations without cell service, but there are stories of people being trapped in a remote location with no cell service but were able to text their location via 911 thanks to a passing plane that picked up the signal.

We invite you to give *what3words* a try. Download it to your smartphone and then practice navigating using the interface. It's really very simple to use, it's free, and because every spot in the world has a unique three-word location, the app never needs updating.

If your dream is to run the Boston Marathon or maybe you just want to visit the finish line on Boylston Street while in Beantown, just tell the *what3words* app you want to head to **loops.gates.valve** and you'll be directed to the exact spot where thirty thousand runners finish the storied event each April. How about the starting line in Hopkinton? All you need to know is **nurses.create.devic**.

In the meantime, we hope to see you at **chip.camera.part** on Sunday, September 10, for the start of the Parks Half Marathon!

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



Strength Training for Runners

by Kelsey O'Keefe

“I don't run because it's bad for the knees!” If there's a running myth I hate hearing more than any other, it's that one! Running is, in fact, GOOD for the knees and joints in general. What gets people into trouble is poor running mechanics and muscle imbalances. I see the most deficit in runner's strength in the hips and glutes. You may think, “Well, since I run so much, my legs should be very strong! I don't need to do any extra strength training!” Nope! You'll head straight for injury if you don't do any running-specific strengthening.

Running is, or at least should be, a glute-dominant exercise. In other words, what should be propelling us forward is our butt muscles—not our quads, hamstrings, or calves. Of course they all play a role, but for many people (especially those with sitting jobs) the glutes are either too weak or just not active at all! As a result, the body likes to cheat and will compensate by using other muscle groups that were not made to sustain quite that level of pounding on the body. Your quads, hamstrings, and calves should be very strong, but they should *not* be doing a majority of the work.

And that's why doing glute-specific and running-specific exercises is so important. But where to start? Usually I say to start simple, with things you may have heard of or done before, like bridges, clamshells, or side-lying leg raises. These target specific, deep butt muscles that help stabilize the hips. Then there are more challenging ones that target more muscle groups, like squats and lunges. If you haven't heard of these exercises, it's a good idea to work with a trainer or physical therapist to make sure you're doing them correctly. Even if you *do* regularly do these exercises, it may still be a good idea to work with a professional (even if it's just once or twice) to make sure you're doing them properly. For instance, when doing hip or glute workouts, are your butt muscles burning by the end? Or do you feel it more in your thigh muscles? Especially

with standing exercises, such as squats and lunges, it's important that you can feel your glutes working. Running is a standing exercise (or at least it should be—if not, then we need to talk!), so your body needs to learn how to use those butt muscles when standing.

Running is also a single-leg stance exercise—in other words, you're landing and essentially balancing on one leg at a time. Therefore it's very important that you incorporate balance into your workouts. A good, simple test is to see if you can stand on one leg for at least ten seconds. Even just practicing that—while brushing your teeth, washing dishes—will help improve balance. For more of a challenge, you can try swinging one leg forward and back, as if you're running. Or, stay standing on one leg as you bend forward to touch the ground. This makes it more dynamic, and running-specific, too.

The last thing I'll touch on is frequency. How often should you be doing these exercises? With our busy schedules, I get that it's sometimes impossible to fit in a strength workout. And that's okay! But at a minimum, you should aim to get in some sort of strengthening exercise three times a week, and it might only take 10–15

minutes. You can even pepper it in throughout the day—for instance, doing a set of squats or lunges first thing in the morning, or when watching TV during a commercial break (do people even watch regular TV with commercial breaks anymore?), or waiting for water to boil. It doesn't all have to be at the same time. Much easier said than done, I know. However, not only do these strengthening exercises help to avoid injury, they also help you improve your running form and efficiency. You'll find running may be a bit easier, and you may be less sore after long runs. You may even be able to improve your speed! Another thing I recommend for runners is to do one strength exercise, say, bridges or squats, *before* running, as a sort of warm up. This will get those glute muscles firing and ready to go for your run. But if you really want to avoid injury—and protect your knees—regular strength training is key!

—Kelsey O'Keefe has been a member of MCRRC since 2022 and currently coaches in FTM. She is a physical therapist at ProAction PT, and in her spare time enjoys reading, playing video games, and playing/running with her yellow lab, Zelda.



MCRRC Competitive Racing Team members Kevin Camp and Ryan Hadley score a pair of top-ten finishes at Suds & Soles 5K.

Tom Hu



by Lisa Levin

MCRRC has seen many members come through and make significant contributions to the Club before moving on to new adventures in faraway cities, and each of these members remains a member in spirit, even if not physically in the DMV area. Tom Hu is about to become one of those members, as he prepares to relocate with his family to take on a position as Associate Professor and Associate Director for the Center for Advanced Drug Development at the University of Colorado. Tom, originally from Taipei, Taiwan, immigrated to the US in the 1990s and eventually settled in Bethesda, where he currently lives with his wife, Vivian, two children, Abigail (15) and Joshua (9), and their “fur babies,” CoCo and Mocha. Tom joined FTM in 2014, and almost immediately stepped up to help lead the Club and its training programs, including as a pace coach in the First Time Marathon (FTM) program for seven years and in the Winter Marathon Training (WMT) for five years. Tom has also volunteered as a pacer for Pike’s Peek 10K and Parks Half Marathon, and he has helped out at almost every MCRRC race. You can’t really attend a training program or race without seeing Tom’s smiling face. As we wish Tom and his family an easy and successful transition

to altitude, we wanted to share part of his story as a runner, coach, and karate black belt:

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

I participated in chess as a sport in high school.



Photo: Brian Belonia

Tom Hu paces an FTM long run for the 10:00s.

When and why did you start running?

Back in 2012, my brother Chih-kao and I both had high cholesterol and glucose levels. We both started to run to improve our health. Once we started, the rest is history.

What was your first race? What do you remember most about it?

My first marathon was the

Philadelphia Marathon. I remember it was really painful, since I had no idea how to train for a marathon properly. I registered for FTM a year and a half later.

What is your favorite race distance? Do you have a favorite race?

I really enjoy the marathon distance. However, I started ultras a few years back, and really enjoy how laid-back yet supportive the community is. I have many wonderful memories of so many races. Some of my favorite marathons are New York City, Marine Corps, Disney, Chicago, Wineglass, and Berlin.

What is your proudest running moment?

I have two: the first is the C&O Canal 100 [a one-hundred-mile race]. It is my proudest accomplishment, not due to the distance, but to the effort I had to put in over two years. I DNF’d in 2021, but I continued to train and finished the race in 2022 as my first-ever 100-miler. The other is my personal record (PR) at the Wineglass Marathon a few years ago, where I pushed through the pain during Miles 21–22, and finished strong, with an even pace throughout the entire race.

You are also a black belt in karate (Congratulations!) How do you balance your martial arts training with your running?

I think they are mutually beneficial. Running has helped tremendously in the endurance aspect of physical fitness, and karate has helped tremendously as cross-training. Since karate has a lot of lateral movement, it has helped me prevent some of the potential running injuries due to overuse of certain muscle groups.

What is the most important thing you have learned as a coach?

Even training in a relatively large pace group, there are still some benefits to individual attention. Also, it is important to be kind to folks and to be kind to yourself, especially through the experience of the pandemic.

What do you think makes a good FTM coach?

Sometimes just sharing one's running experience and knowledge is extremely helpful. Since there are some first-timers in every pace group, it is critical to be welcoming, friendly, caring, and kind.

What is the impetus for the move to Denver?

As a federal employee, I was in high-stress response mode through the COVID-19 pandemic.

It seemed worthwhile to go back into the academic environment, sharing my experience with scientists, including graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, research assistants, research associates, research instructors, and physician scientists.

What do you like (and will miss) most about running in Montgomery County?

All of my friends!

What are you looking forward to most about living in Denver?

Some good high-altitude training! My coworkers (both new and old) still think I took the position to get

high-altitude training.

Are you planning to join any running clubs once you settle in Denver? Have you checked out the running routes there yet?

Yes, I have already run on the Cherry Creek trail quite a few times now.

What are your goals for the rest of this year?

My goals are to continue to train for a marathon, to stay healthy, and to use martial arts as cross-training.



Photo: Tom Hu

Tom, Abigail, Joshua, and Vivian Hu enjoy the scenery of Red Rock Canyon near Las Vegas.

Advice Column Update

Several names have been proposed for our new advice column. Thank you to all who have contributed! We welcome additional ideas and your thoughts on the names proposed. We'll use your feedback to determine a name in the next few months. Tell us what you think by August 5: intervals@mcrrc.org

- Ask Dr. Fartlek
- GOTTA Run! (Giving Out Tips To Assist)
- MCRRC Question Corner
- Run Smarter
- The Run Up
- Your Pacing Partner

In the meantime, here's a question from "Eco Runner": *I'm trying to be more eco-friendly and natural in*

my diet. Do you have any recommendations for gel alternatives that are easy to run with?

Anything we can do to lessen our human impact on the earth matters! Every gel wrapper that's left on the ground is not only a blight but causes ecosystem damage. Most wrappers can be upcycled, but are often trashed and sent to the landfill instead. Fuel for your body is clearly necessary, though, and the nutritional mixes found in gels are usually very good. You can purchase reusable gel flasks and experiment with DIY gel recipes from reputable online searches (often with ingredients such as molasses, brown-rice syrup, honey, and salt). You can also experiment with non-gel foods. First,

figure out what your body needs. Do you sweat a lot and need to replenish electrolytes? Do you simply need a quick carb replenishment option? Here are some non-gel options to try to replenish electrolytes and carbs:

- Mini pretzels
- Salted crackers with a nut or seed butter
- Cooked sweet potato sprinkled with salt
- Medjool dates
- Honey sandwiches

What are your favorite replenishment snacks? Send your recommendations to: intervals@mcrrc.org

Have a question for our experts? Please send it in by August 5: intervals@mcrrc.org