

MCRRC Intervals

November 2023

Newsletter of the *montgomery county road runners club*

On the Horizon

Sunday, November 5, 8:30 am
Rockville 10K/5K (\$)
Rockville
www.rockville10k5k.com

Saturday, November 11, 6:00 am
Stone Mill 50 Mile Run (\$)
Montgomery Village
www.stone-mill-50-mile.org

Saturday, November 18, 6:15 pm
Run Under the Lights (\$)
SOLD OUT—JOIN WAITLIST!
Gaithersburg
www.mcrrcrununderlights.com

Saturday, November 25, 8:00 am
Turkey Burnoff 5M/10M
Gaithersburg

Sunday, December 10, 9:00 am
Seneca Slopes 9K XC
Gaithersburg

Sunday, December 17, 9:00 am
Jingle Bell Jog 8K
Rockville

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

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

Board Meetings

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

Still Racing in the Rain



Photo: Marvin Schewe

A wet Parks Half Marathon brings out Joe Nah's formal running shirt.



Photo: Kim Nonato

A soggy Black Hill 10K doesn't faze Jessica Rodriguez.



Photo: Dan Reichmann

Forty-two intrepid souls slog through Needwood 5K, shortened from 10K due to Tropical Storm Ophelia.

from the editor



Trying on New Shoes

by Amy Lin

When I went to RnJ for my first running shoes, I was told that only two models fit my feet. One of them is now obsolete, so I've been getting the same running shoes for more than a decade. However, as I've become a more mature runner (in more ways than one), I've tried *not* to stick to the same things in running. This issue of Intervals looks at how seeking new perspectives helps us grow, as runners and as people.

In From the Board, MCRRC president Brian Murphy provides insight into the work that goes into securing a track for the Club's weekly workouts and explains how our track locations can help us reach prospective new members in different parts of the county.

Tim Willis shares his personal journey toward becoming a Wingman in Montgomery County's Athletes Serving Athletes community, which began its group runs in 2021. For Coaches' Corner, Joe Divel offers thoughts on staying motivated and fit through the months when the cold and dark may make it more difficult to get outside.

This month's Runner Profile holds special interest for me because

it features Alice Franks, whom I remember from my very first race. That morning, I felt like a pretender as I put on my MCRRC bib and chip, and I surreptitiously scoped out other runners to make sure I'd done everything correctly. I spotted Alice pinning on her bib and admired how confident, relaxed, and happy she looked. As I had no idea what my pace was or even what "pace" actually meant, I decided I'd try to keep up with her. (Spoiler alert: I couldn't.) I now know what a challenge I'd unwittingly set for myself that day, and I still aspire to follow in Alice's footsteps.

Last but not least, I present our advice column with its new name: The Rundown. Those of you who are longtime Club members will recall that *The Rundown* was the previous iteration of the MCRRC newsletter; we're pleased to add a little Club history to our new column. Thank you to everyone who contributed suggestions! In this issue, Catherine Howard collects tips from experienced runners on how to conquer the "dreadmill."

I hope you'll try on some new "shoes" in the next few months—you never know what you'll discover about yourself.

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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.





What's the Deal with Track?

by Brian Murphy

One thing I didn't really think about much before I joined the MCRRC board was the securing of track locations and the where, what, and how of making track workouts work. What I did know was that it was pretty hard, as an individual, to find and get access to a convenient and open track when I wanted to do a workout. However, MCRRC had a weekly location where I could join Club members and get my workout in with a bunch of friends. Wednesday night track was one of my first introductions to the Club; it stemmed from the frustration of trying to find a good location on my own, but it was the people I met who kept me coming back. I had no idea what went on behind the scenes to make this work.

When I became a board member, I got to understand firsthand the frustrations of trying to secure good track locations and how different, and costly, the process is from reserving places for other Club activities. First, we pay for a permit for MCRRC to use a county track each night we need it. This works out to roughly \$18,000 annually for the Club. On top of paying for the use of the tracks, we also need to be aware that we share the space, first and foremost, with the schools and their athletic programs.

We're also a big county. One area of focus the board is undertaking is finding ways to increase participation and membership in previously underserved areas. If you map out MCRRC's membership, I don't think it would be a big surprise to see a large percentage of our members from Rockville, Bethesda, and the surrounding areas. This is where most of our workouts are centered, making MCRRC very visible to these running communities. Getting a track location for a few weeks in Silver Spring isn't

going to solve this, but it definitely won't hurt. It also could absolutely introduce the Club to people who may not have been familiar with us.

The board is currently working to make securing tracks easier by establishing good relationships with schools and athletic directors and standardizing the whole process. We are also going to continue to work on more equitable access to track locations. This is not just to establish good access for our members living in different areas, but also as a way to increase awareness of MCRRC and membership from areas otherwise underserved. We have plenty more to come on this, but I think it is important to know that securing a safe place for track workouts is a priority for our board to deliver to our members.

—Brian Murphy is the President of MCRRC and a member of the Competitive Racing Team. He can be reached at president@mccrc.org.



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ASA, confidently predicted that I'd enjoy this one far more than any of the previous nine.

She was right.

Our team was assigned to push Terrence, a 22-year-old with cerebral palsy and a *joie de vivre* that could soften even the grumpiest soul. I couldn't help but smile as spectator after spectator and racer after racer encouraged Terrence on. Terrence inhaled the love and responded by whaling on his giant cowbell.

They say training for a marathon changes your life, and they're right. I'm learning that being an ASA Wingman can be similarly life-changing—and not just for me.

Hope to see you out there!

Learn more about ASA and the Wingman program at www.asa.run. In the Program tab, select Group Runs and sign up to join a training session—a low-key, no-obligation way to meet Tim, Matt, Wendy, and other Wingmen, and to get a taste of the program. Montgomery County's group runs take place on the second and fourth Mondays of the month and meet at 6 pm at Winding Creek Local Park.

—Tim Willis joined ASA as a Wingman in May. He has been an MCRRC member since 2011 and currently runs with the Experienced Marathon Program (XMP). He describes himself as an "avid, but thoroughly average" runner.

Sharing the Run as an ASA Wingman

by Tim Willis

Let's face it: Running, for all of its virtues, is a relatively selfish endeavor. Unlike other hobbies, such as playing the piano (as I do), where the resulting music can be enjoyed by anyone within earshot, nearly all of running's benefits accrue solely to the runner.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with sometimes doing things just for ourselves. But wouldn't it be something if the unique joy we derive from racing could encompass another person—perhaps someone who would love gliding down a finish chute lined with cheering and admiring onlookers, but, due to the circumstances into which they were born, can't do it on their own?

I recently discovered a way of making that happen.

When I first ran the Baltimore 10 Miler in 2012, I saw, on the course, a fleet of blue rolling joggers carrying children with various physical limitations. The kids in the joggers were pushed by teams of runners in matching shirts, all with the word *Wingman* emblazoned across the back.

I wondered who they were. The course passes Johns Hopkins, and I remember thinking that maybe the kids in the joggers were hospital patients and that the people pushing the joggers were overzealous medical students.

It didn't take long for me to notice that the most heartfelt cheers went toward these kids. That their names were prominently displayed on pennants atop their joggers certainly played a big part. "Go, Zach!" "You've got this, Emily!"

The enthusiasm was unusual in that it came from race spectators and participants alike, and it was contagious, as evidenced by the elation of all involved. While most race participants had their game faces on as they chugged up and down Baltimore's hilly streets, the Wingmen were all smiles. The only people who looked

happier than the Wingmen were the kids they were pushing. They positively glowed with excitement.

After that, the Baltimore 10 became my summer rite of passage, and year after year, the kids, the joggers, and the Wingmen pushing them were always there. I later learned that they weren't affiliated with any hospital, but rather with a non-profit organization called Athletes Serving Athletes. I admired them from a distance, the same way I admire lots of people who do kind things. "Oh, how nice," I'd think, without giving a moment's thought to the notion that I could actually *become* one of those nice people.

Fast forward to a year or two ago, when I met Wendy Young at one of Jeff Lunsford's Thursday-morning Kemp Mill runs and then again at one of Shlomo Fishman's "Northwood b4 Dawn" track workouts. I noticed that

Wendy was wearing an ASA shirt, and when I asked her about it, she told me about the organization, described how much she enjoyed being a Wingman, and suggested I'd like it, too. It was a nice idea, but my brain still classified it as the kind of thing "other people" did.

Then, during an XMP long run in May, I found myself in the same pace group as Matt Levine. We weren't even a mile into the run before I learned that he was also an ASA Wingman.

The timing couldn't have been more perfect. I was trying to decide which fall race(s) I would do, contemplating my summer training schedule, and feeling a little guilty about how much "me time" all this would entail. Granted, a lot of it would be spent with my MCRRC friends, but I'd still be working pretty much for myself.

Matt patiently answered my incessant stream of inquiries, and he may not have known it then, but by the end of that run, he had a new convert.

Two days later, I went to my first ASA training session, which consisted of helping push a girl named Tisha for three miles on the Matthew Henson Trail. I loved it! Tisha has cerebral palsy and an infectious smile that she wore for the entire run. I'm not sure who had more fun, Tisha or me, but we both had a ball. And I realized I had stumbled onto something I wouldn't even have thought to look for before—a situation in which I was running for someone other than myself. Now my running, in addition to benefitting me, was making someone else happy, too!

I went home and immediately completed the paperwork to become an ASA Wingman. (It was not onerous.) Two weeks later, I was teamed up with Matt and two other Wingmen, Chelsea and Bikram, at the Baltimore 10 Miler. It was my tenth go at this race, and Wendy, who was also there to run with



Photo: MarathonFoto

ASA athlete Terrence's delight at the Baltimore 10 Miler finish line spills over to Wingmen Matt, Chelsea, Bikram and Tim.

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How to Stay Tuned Up During the Winter

by Joe Divel

So, your fall training is over, you've completed a 5K, 10K, half marathon, marathon, or other event, the medal is proudly displayed in your home, and now it's time to take the winter off until you do this again next spring... but is it really an off-season? Do we need to run, walk, and stay in shape over the winter? After all, it's cold, it's snowy, it's dark, it's the holidays, you're tired... and so on. So, here are my insights and my experience with staying fit in the six months of November until May.

I used to hate winter. The days are short, there's less sunlight and cold temperatures, and I had the winter blues. Then, in 2015, I rediscovered running and started to look at winter as an opportunity for further change. I found multiple ways to stay in shape in those cold months.

My experience with running came late in life. I had run in college and again in my 40s, but did not commit to it. When I was 55 years old and struggling with health and fitness issues, nothing helped me long-term until I discovered running again. I ran my first marathon after training with MCRRC's First Time Marathon (FTM) program. After that memorable six months, I was hooked on a new way of life year-round, and now I've been free of health issues for years. Running changed my life forever! I also found new friends and a running family that I want to be around and see all year, not just for six months. Running year-round has been very beneficial to my overall health, especially over the winter months. Now, instead of treating winter training as a burden, or not wanting to do it because of the elements, I embrace it as a way of life. I must run.

We are some of the most fortunate runners in the country. We have the most diverse paths and well-maintained trails around. We are MCRRC! The best running group anywhere, with programs for every pace year-round. We have many winter training groups that you can join to keep up with training, or you can lace up and go out on your own or with a group of friends to get in some miles.

Here are my tips for winter training:

Commitment. Make a promise to yourself to set aside time for *yourself*. Set a time and day you are going to run or exercise, and stick to it. Being part of a running group helps, but contacting other running friends and setting up a meeting time and place also works for that commitment. Don't believe the thought "I don't have time on weekends to do this, with everything else going on." It's not selfish to set aside time for yourself; you will be a better person by putting your health first for a couple of hours a week.

Goals. What is the distance you want to run or walk today? This week? Write it down. Get a calendar and put it on the fridge, where you and everyone else in your household can see your goal miles. After you do your workout, put a big checkmark next to the miles so you can see that you did it. My running calendar is clearly on display for my family to see.

FUN! Do some Club races that are fun. Turkey Burnoff, Run Under the Lights, Jingle Bell Jog, New Year's Day 5K, etc. Keep in touch with those you ran with over the summer, meet up with friends for a fun run, and go get a coffee after the run. Take silly pictures so you can look back and remember it was actually fun! We get to do something that many adults don't get to do... run

and have fun. Enjoy it.

Cold weather tips: Running is great because we generate our own heat... but sometimes not until after the first mile or two. Don't overdress; you will get warm running. Invest in a good pair of lightweight gloves. Dress in light layers; I find it better and more comfortable to wear two lightweight shirts than one heavy shirt. Same for pants—wear lightweight long pants if it's cold. My rule of thumb is, for any temperatures above 40°F when I start a run, I prefer to wear shorts. Also, a good hat is essential. I prefer lightweight hats that cover my ears over heavy wool hats.

The benefits of lacing up and getting out, even if it's just once a week, greatly outweigh doing nothing. Winter can be a stressful time of year for some, and exercise and running can have a positive effect on mood and overall well-being. Go for a run and be healthy year-round.

—Joe Divel joined MCRRC in 2015 and ran his first marathon that year. He has been an FTM coach since 2017 and has completed eleven marathons. After forty years in the home improvement industry, Joe retired in 2021 and now enjoys traveling, RV camping, cooking, baking, woodworking, visiting his children in Texas and California, and, of course, running. He has no plans to stop running anytime soon and hopes to be able to keep hitting the trails for years and years to come.

Alice Franks



by Lisa Levin

If you've stuck around for the age-group awards at local races, odds are that you've seen Alice Franks on the podium. You've also probably noticed her 100-watt smile and the joy she brings to every race, whether as a participant or a volunteer. Alice, 75, has been a member of MCRRC for two decades and is an active participant in the Maryland Senior Olympics, advancing to the Maryland Senior Games and National Senior Games. This year, at the National Senior Games in Pittsburgh, she won an age-group gold medal in the 10K and a silver medal in the 5K. When she is not taking the top spot on the podium, Alice works at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, part of NIH, where she is engaged in obesity and energy homeostasis research. Alice lives with her husband, Rollin, in Rockville, and has four children. One of her fondest memories is of running the 2014 Marine Corps Marathon with her son, Scott, and her daughter, MCRRC member Kelly Davis, and telling post-race war stories at the Club's hospitality suite.

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

As a child I loved gymnastics and springboard diving. I played several team sports in high school and college, and later played on recreational softball teams. I became serious about fitness when I joined a gym in 1992, and immediately became obsessed with step aerobics (complete with the requisite neon tights and leotards).

When and why did you start running?

I started running in earnest in February 2001, at the age of 52, when

the aerobics classes at my gym took a temporary downturn. I had heard about the Pike's Peek 10K in April and thought it might be something fun to try. My longest run leading up to that race was five miles. I had no idea what I was getting into. I assumed that everyone who ran in races was fast! I lined up behind the very last runners and prayed I could keep up... and I



Photo: MarathonFoto

Alice Franks celebrates her win in the 2023 National Senior Games 10K, alongside runner-up Rosemary Fajen and fellow MCRRC member Gretchen Bolton, who placed third.

could! Seeing that column of runners ahead on the Pike was incredible. I was totally hooked.

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

My favorite race distance has dropped from the 10M to the 10K in recent years, due to aging knees. Likewise, my long-time favorite, the Cherry Blossom 10-Mile Run, has been replaced by the

Pike's Peek 10K. Gotta face reality.

What is your proudest running moment?

At the USATF 12K Nationals held in Alexandria in 2014, I won my age group and finished fourth in the overall Masters age-graded placings. I was a local contender on an awards stage with a lot of national stars; I was over the moon! I am also proud of my fifth-place age-group finish at the Boston Marathon in 2014.

How has your approach to training and racing changed over the years? What do you do to stay healthy and injury free?

Speed work in the form of interval training has long been a staple of my running schedule. As I have aged, I am more likely to do hill or bike or intervals on the elliptical to lessen the impact on my knees and back. I certainly haven't avoided injuries but am doing my best to train around them. I am also a firm believer in the importance of strength training and core work. I tend to be a regimented person (family and friends say stubbornly so), making it easier (for me) to maintain a healthy diet and sleep and training routines.

Have you experienced any significant injuries requiring time off from running, and if so, how did you navigate that recovery time?

While in my mid-sixties, I experienced my best three years of running from an age-graded perspective. I was winning my age group at nearly all my races, and at the top of the local runner rankings. I figured it was time to hit the national circuit! I registered for high-profile races all over the country... and then the wheels fell off. Almost overnight

I developed significant arthritis in my hands and feet and developed a debilitating knee issue. So much for my grandiose touring plans. A major reset was in order.

Ah, but hope springs eternal, and I was determined to power through. I hit the elliptical, bike, rower, and weights with a vengeance. I tried to resume running too quickly (of course!) and exacerbated my knee problem. Lesson learned: body parts take longer to heal than we would like. Over the next few years I suffered a major meniscus tear, developed spinal stenosis, and broke my wrist at the track; all three calamities required surgery. I have had to develop coping strategies, both mental and physical, for managing my goals. I spend a lot more time cross-training, run fewer miles and on fewer days, and I have learned that simply being able to participate in a race is a gift. I still have weeks where I am unable to run at all. I have developed a close relationship with power walking. I am also a member of a loosely organized group of mostly older MCRRC runners who meet regularly at Montgomery Blair High School's track on Sunday mornings. Some run, some walk; it's all good.

When and how did you get involved in the Maryland Senior Olympics and the National Senior Games?

Older runners who choose to run the local Kentlands 5K automatically become a part of the Maryland Senior Olympics competition. That 5K race serves as a stand-alone event at the state level, as well as a qualifier for the National Senior Games. The corresponding 10K race and qualifier is held in Baltimore. My first shot at the National Senior Games was in 2015, in Minneapolis, where I (foolishly) ran the 10K, aggravating my bum knee to the point where I then couldn't run the

5K. I limped home.

How did you feel about your performance at this year's National Senior Games in Pittsburgh?

My experience at this year's Games could not have been more different than my debacle in Minnesota. I was able to run well in both the 10K and the 5K, without injury. Although my finishing times were hardly those of my younger days, I won an age-group gold medal in the 10K and a silver medal in the 5K. Following years of heartbreaking injuries, these victories were particularly sweet.

What notable memories did you take away from your experience at this year's National Senior Games?

More than 11,000 athletes were in town for the Games. There were competitors, many in their 80s and 90s,

still bringing their "A" game to various events. I spent one day watching the track and field events. Who knew that older folks could still pole vault? Inspiration was everywhere. One aspect that really stood out was how supportive athletes were of each other, across all age ranges and sports.

What keeps you motivated to stay committed to running?

Running is like a drug for me. No further motivation needed.

What advice would you give runners who are entering the Masters/Grand Masters age categories with respect to how to continue running healthy, and enjoying running, into their later decades?

Keep going! But be prepared to reduce both your mileage and intensity. You are eventually going to grow older and decline. Accept that running will at some point *not* feel as effortless as it once did. Lower your expectations. Relish the scenery. Take rest days. Maintain friends of all ages to keep an overall perspective. For older runners: Have a peer group of running friends with whom you share a common experience. Take pride in the fact that you are still out there; many are not. With age comes wisdom; share it. Prepare for a future when you may no longer be able to run. Embrace walking. Volunteer more; the running community will love you for it. Try to look ahead, rather than only at those fantastic PRs from your past. No matter your age, setting goals (more modest ones) can help keep you in the game.

—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: Dan Reichmann

Alice Franks rounds the final turn of Eastern County 8K in August.

the rundown

Becoming a Master of the Machine

by Catherine Howard

As we welcome November and enjoy an extra hour of sleep and more pleasant running weather, we also bid adieu to plentiful daylight. The early darkness can beckon what is often referred to as the “treadmill,” a formidable, fear-instilling piece of equipment that makes the even the most seasoned runners’ knees knock. But fear not! Tips to master the machine are here! With a little of this magic you may find yourself converted, perhaps going all in and training for a world-record treadmill title!

- **Press its buttons (don’t let it press yours)!** “I always do intervals where I adjust... in a pre-planned way. I might start slow and increase speed by 0.1 mph every 20 or 30 seconds, then come back down by 0.1 mph every 10 or 20 seconds ... So I [am] always engaged with adjusting speed.” —*Tom Offenbacher*

“Start off at a slow or medium pace. Then, increase the MPH by a certain amount at a regular interval (each 0.1 mile or 0.25 mile). You will want the time to go by slower so you

don’t have to increase the pace, whereas most people who do a regular run on a treadmill wish the time to go by faster.” —*Steve Smith*

- **Take breaks!** “I remember having to do a long run on the treadmill during marathon training a few winters ago (ice on bike paths/roads is a no-go for me). I went to our neighborhood rec center and ran three hours as 3 x 1 hour, with brief breaks to hit the water fountain and take a quick look at a kids’ basketball game... Still an ordeal, but not nearly as bad as just slogging through 3 straight hours.” —*Dave Haaga*
- **Run with a friend!** “You can make treadmill workouts less hideous by inviting a friend over and doing intervals with them.” —*Cliff Tell*
- **Listen to, watch, or read something you enjoy!** “I often use a music playlist where I listen to fast tempo music (e.g., fast tempo soca, dancehall,

and afrobeats) while running at a faster pace, and slower tempo music (e.g., reggae, calypso, R&B) while running at a more relaxed pace.” —*Keianna Dixon*

“Read something you enjoy (works for some, not for others).” —*Dave Haaga*

“You can make a playlist of the best running-themed songs, such as ‘Running on Empty,’ ‘Running Down a Dream,’ ‘Born to Run.’” —*Cliff Tell*

- **Make it multi-purpose!** “I may use a treadmill during strength training, such as for my warm up or cool down, or for incline running or walking.” —*Keianna Dixon*
- **Let your imagination take you away!** “When I’m on the treadmill, my imagination has me wherever I want to be.” —*Win Persina*

Want to lend your two cents to future advice columns? Email intervals@mccrrc.org.