

# MCRRC Intervals



**January 2025**

Newsletter of the *montgomery county road runners club*

## On the Horizon

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

**Sunday, January 26, 8:30 am**  
Cross Country on the Farm 5K  
(TS)  
Derwood

**Sunday, February 9, 8:30 am**  
Kemp Mill (C)hills 5K/10K (CS)  
Silver Spring

**Saturday, March 8, 7:30 am**  
Seneca Creek Greenway Trail  
Marathon & 50K (\$)   
Gaithersburg

**Sunday, March 23, 8:30 am**  
Piece of Cake 5K/10K (CS)  
Potomac

Please see page 8 for a complete  
list of 2025 races, and  
check our website for updates:  
[www.mcrrc.org](http://www.mcrrc.org)

## Board Meetings

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

## End-of-the-Year Cheer



Photo: Dan Reichmann

Ernest Chrappah braves the freezing temperatures  
of Turkey Burnoff 5M.



Photo: Eleanor Wainscott

Clara Pittleman tackles Seneca Slopes 9K with  
a smile.



Photo: Amy Lin

Jingle Bell Jog's one-mile Young Run participants sport plenty of festive gear.



# Finding Warmth in Community

by Amy Lin

The dark mornings and cold temperatures have arrived, and it's become *de rigueur* for me and my running friends to reward ourselves with a hot drink (preferably caffeinated) after every run. Several of MCRRC's winter training programs are well underway, and it's been a fun challenge to identify all the bundled-up people in our social media feeds. It's chilly out there, but doing a run or walk with friends generates warmth in more ways than one.

In that vein, this month's Intervals takes a look at relationships built through MCRRC and the running community.

Brian Murphy kicks off the issue with notes on the Club's council-proclamation honor and MCRRC's long-term goal of fortifying our volunteer base to include more of our members.

Jyoti Bisbey offers her

personal experience in finding community, both while training for the Everest Base Camp trek—with MCRRC friends, of course—and during the trek itself, halfway around the world.

Our hive-mind advice column, The Rundown, is back again, this time with helpful tips from Club members on how to identify some warning signs of injury and illness.

January's Runner Profile features Debra Diewald, who used race volunteering to stay connected with MCRRC when she wasn't running. Debra's participation in one of our 5K programs brought her back to running and inspired her to give back to the Club by becoming a pace coach.

We close our January issue with a handy reference list of our 2025 races. Be sure to sign up for your low-key bib. See you at the New Year's Day 5K!

## Stay Informed!

Like us on Facebook – Montgomery County Road Runners

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## MCRRC Intervals

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Have comments or questions? Or want to help?  
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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.



# Connecting Community

by Brian Murphy

Something I've been following closely over the past year or so is running clubs' rise in popularity. According to a 2024 *New York Times* article, running clubs have become an alternative to dating apps! This was echoed by a 2024 Strava report proclaiming that run clubs are replacing nightclubs as social hangouts. Strava's data show a 59% bump in running club participation last year.

I don't know about the dating connection, but we've seen a continuing trend of more memberships and larger turnouts at MCRRC races, drop-in runs, and other events. I've definitely seen that this increased growth brings positive community building. In November, several Club members joined me at a Montgomery County Council meeting to recognize MCRRC with a council proclamation by Councilmember Evan Glass. It's this community aspect that Evan, his Chief of Staff and MCRRC member Valeria Carranza, and I highlighted during the proclamation. It seems especially important lately to have an outlet away from smartphones, social media, or other distractions. I'm grateful MCRRC can provide that community connection for so many.

As I enter a new year, I like to

set goals and fill my calendar with things I can look forward to. You'll see me at as many of the Club's low-key races I can attend, of course, but there're a few others I have my eye on. First of these is the MD-DC RRCA 10 Mile Club Challenge in February. This race has such a cool history and it's so fun to be out on the course with the many local RRCA-affiliated clubs to compete in various award categories. Next on my list is our Seneca Creek Greenway Trail 50K—this was my first 50K, and I loved it. We're so lucky to have many great local trails (both paved and natural). MCRRC's two ultramarathons (Greenway and Stone Mill) and our trail series do a tremendous job highlighting these trails and showing how accessible trail running and ultras can be.

Moving further into the racing calendar, I have other PR attempts I'd like to make. Even though I'm not looking for the dating-scene aspect of the Club, I know that I have a huge MCRRC support network to help push me closer to those goals (and have fun doing it).

With respect to our board of directors, there are a few things I'd like us to focus on. The first is long-term sustainability in key volunteer roles. We'll be continuing our efforts to

expand MCRRC's bench of race directors, program directors, coaches, and those all-important volunteers you see at our events. We'll also be looking for more ways to give back to the membership through investment into the Club. If you have an idea, come find me after a race. I'm always happy to chat about new ways to improve the Club.

With that, happy 2025, and I'll see you at the next MCRRC race!

*—Brian Murphy is the President of MCRRC and a member of the Competitive Racing Team. He can be reached at [president@mcrrc.org](mailto:president@mcrrc.org).*





# The Journey is the Destination: Trekking Everest Base Camp

by Jyoti Bisbey

**I** did it! My dream was to conquer the Everest Base Camp (EBC) trek in my fiftieth year, and I fulfilled that dream in September 2024. It took a lot of planning, arduous training, support from loved ones, and sheer determination. My goal was never the destination; it was the journey to feel the immateriality of my existence among the giants. Whether it was ruminative or introspective or spiritual, at the end I think it was a test, and I passed it. That is how I felt. I kept a diary of the trip; here is an excerpt from Day 4, approaching Dingboche, elevation 4,410 meters, about 14,470 feet. (Mount Everest is 8,849 meters—more than 29,000 feet—high.)

*The landscape is breathtaking and out of this world! We are above the treeline now, with mist and clouds playing around this almost barren land. Small succulent plants wave in the strong winds at above 4,300 meters altitude. Yaks graze on the slopes lazily. Scanty shacks are made of rocks, with 4–5 foot-tall boundary walls to ward off the mountain wolves from the baby yaks. Herders live in these huts near the pastures to scare off the wolves at night and keep an eye on the herd. White stupas are sprinkled all over the peaks and slopes, like beacons with multi-color flags dancing frantically in the breeze. Once in a while you can look over the precipice at the dead drop to the white waters of the Dudh Koshi River, making you realize that we are walking at the flat top of the Himalayas approaching the glaciers.*

My key takeaways:

**Training is a must.** It needs to be continuous, day after day, as hikes are continuous. Even if you're exhausted after a long hike, you must rest only overnight and restart on the path the next day, despite the weather. My training included coaching the Summer Half program in unprecedented heat

this past summer 2–3 days a week and going for a day-long hike the next day, carrying a weighted backpack, StairMaster workouts, and weight training. Every day you must do some sort of hard workout. On the EBC trail, climbs can be above 3,000 meters (9,843 feet) for more than ten miles. Being part of MCRRC and having support from fellow Club members lifted my tired spirits to build endurance and self-confidence. Appalachian Trail hikes in Maryland and Virginia will not render the required elevation gain, but they will provide the relentless extreme strain on mind and body.

**Things can change at the last minute.** Weather can happen, with clouds swooping in to reduce the visibility to zero, resulting in the cancelation of flights to and from Lukla (the entryway to EBC, high in the mountains, with no road access), so include a few days' buffer in the itinerary. Add extra days at the tail end of the trip so if there is any kind of delay, you can still make up time and catch your flight back. Once you are

up high, altitude sickness can hit you suddenly and become a health risk, so be flexible and adapt accordingly. If you need to take a horse, then take one. Your journey is the destination. Making good life decisions is a big part of the challenge.

**It's cold and wet.** Rain and dampness will follow you everywhere. As you go higher in elevation, the clouds roll in at mid-morning and it's highly likely that the day will remain damp. It's hard to wash and dry anything. Everyone is in the same boat, so don't be shy about being stinky! There is a weight limit for your duffel and backpack, so do your research on equipment.

**Enjoy being there.** The most common food is dal bhat (lentils with cooked vegetables and rice). The motto "Dal bhat power 24 hours" is real. The menu looks similar everywhere, so try it all—veggie dumplings, veggie chow mein, Nepali masala chai. Get to know the locals and guides. Meet people from local villages. Take a pack of cards and play a Nepali card game called Dumbal.

*continued on page 7*



Jyoti Bisbey poses in front of Mount Everest (center), with Mount Lhotse and Mount Ama Dablam also visible.



# Tips for Running Healthy

by Catherine Howard

**R**unners tend to be goal-driven people, and the new year is often when we resolve to better ourselves through specific achievements in the year ahead. We commit to these goals and work diligently towards them, and it means so much to ultimately achieve them. In our pursuits, performance at a specific location and on a specific day and time matters. Yet, sometimes our body doesn't do what it "should" be doing.

This month we gather our runners' wisdom from lived experience with unexpected ailments suffered at one time or another and, in retrospect, what they could have done differently to lessen or prevent the situation. Gratitude to all who contributed their stories in the aim of helping others achieve their goals *sans* illness or injury.

I probably wouldn't have needed hip surgery and would have actually run some decent marathons (finisher of 30+ marathons) if I could have arrived at them injury-free. My mistake was running too many training miles—I should have done much more aerobic cross-training. My body never held up under very high weekly mileage. I would break down when I got to 75 miles per week for more than two weeks. —*Richie Weiss*

For years, I've been in a repeating "ramp up, hit a brief peak, get injured, rehab for months" cycle that I'm trying to break. I've learned that you can't count on running itself for sufficient lower-body strength to run injury-free. Muscular deficits eventually catch up with you, especially as you get older. Over time I've added hip, butt, hamstring, and calf exercises to my regimen and am still perfecting the formula. I would not be running at all without supplemental strength work. —*Larry Cynkin*

I should have better recognized the symptoms of my existing health conditions. I ran my first half marathon without the benefit of any of the wonderful MCRRC training programs, so I was doing my nutrition and hydration sorta on the fly. Around Mile 11, I started having trouble swallowing and decided that meant I'd had enough to drink and was developing hyponatremia—so I stopped drinking. At the end of the race, the medical guy said, "Let's take this one first; she's

in trouble" in reference to me. I ended up with dehydration (needed 1.5L of saline) and an asthma attack. Sad thing is, I had my inhaler but didn't recognize the symptoms. Lessons: Be self-aware of preconditions, even if they rarely flare up; always fill out emergency contact information on the back of your bib and wear a road ID; don't be afraid to join one of MCRRC's outstanding training programs (even if you're shy and socially awkward); and always carry your health insurance card, your driver's license, and a credit card.

Also, during my first marathon, I thought it odd that my body was betraying me around Mile 15 since I'd done two of the three FTM 20-milers and all of their shorter runs (18s, etc), so I sucked it up and finished the race because "everyone says marathons are hard" (I may have taken that encouragement a bit too literally). After not being able to keep much food down for a couple of weeks after, thinking *I just ran a marathon and everyone says I need to give myself a chance to recover*, my partner forced me to go to urgent care where they noted this was not normal marathon recovery. Shortly thereafter, my gallbladder was removed, and six weeks after that I ran a very enjoyable half marathon. I guess my lessons are: 1) Being so sick that you just want to stay in the porta-potty and hope they check to make sure it's empty before they load it onto the truck is not a normal part of marathoning; and 2) Get medical attention quickly! —*Jonelle (Joni) Drugan*

In an effort to protect my aging joints, I was buying stability shoes, then adding stability orthotics. No one working in a running store suggested this could be off. Then I went to a running clinic and one of the experts (including a PT, an orthopedic, a shoe expert, and a running coach) who watched me run on the treadmill and examined my shoes said I needed to stop that. He said I was not getting double the stability; instead, I was overcorrecting (and had been for years). He said I could wear stability shoes or stability orthotics, but not both. Joint comfort did improve after I listened to him. My advice: the MCRRC running clinics are priceless—go!

On losing toenails: After trying the

universe of wicking socks and Glide with limited success, I stopped losing toenails when I switched to toe socks. —*Terry Mayo*

Hyponatremia. Running the Chicago Marathon was my goal for fall 2024. Going to the hospital afterward was not. I ran my first half in near-PR pace, but hit a wall at Mile 18 and barely got through the last eight miles. Ready to drop at the finish line, I sat in a wheelchair, prompting an unsolicited, yet welcome visit from a cardiologist, who handed me a pack of salt tablets. That evening, I managed a walk and dinner near the hotel, and drank a lot of water.

The next day I felt worse—nauseated, barely eating, and driven to lie down most of the day. Following well-intentioned advice, I drank more water. The next day was similar, but worse, and I spent a restless night puking, urinating, sweating, and drinking more water in my hotel room. My symptoms escalated to dizziness, confusion, and hallucinations. Early the next morning, I asked the concierge about the nearest urgent care, then emergency room, then if he would call an ambulance in quick succession. Lab tests revealed critically low sodium, just above potentially fatal levels. I had hyponatremia and would be held for the next 60 hours while my sodium levels slowly stabilized.

Reflecting on the experience, there are a couple of key changes I'd make to avoid the ordeal I experienced—better pacing and informed hydration. First, I'd run with a pacer. My GPS watch, while normally reliable, struggled with Chicago's tall buildings, leaving me with wildly inconsistent splits. A pacer would have helped keep me steady and avoid early burnout. Second, it's important to understand hydration and replenishment, including electrolytes, to prevent imbalances. Logging water intake and planning hydration with guidance from a nutritionist are steps I'll take as I prepare for future races. —*Tom Howard*

*Do you have a running question or advice you'd like to share, or would you like to co-author The Rundown? Send an email to: [intervals@mcrrc.org](mailto:intervals@mcrrc.org)*

# Debra Diewald



by Lisa Levin

*Debra Diewald picked up running in 2011 when she turned 40, starting with the 5K distance and eventually completing Parks Half Marathon in 2015 and again in 2018. Subsequently, during a several-year hiatus from training and racing, Debra continued to stay involved by volunteering for Club races, and she eventually found herself inspired to get back to her own running earlier this year, at age 53. She found the Fall 5K training program a good fit and a welcoming environment for her reentry to running, and used the guidance of the program to rebuild her mileage. She is now looking forward to helping others who are either returning to running or starting to run for the first time. Debra, originally from Wethersfield, Connecticut, lives in Rockville and is a preschool teacher.*

adult. I always said soccer was running for a purpose, and that I'd never run solely for running.

## **When and why did you start running?**

I started running when I turned 40



Photo: Debra Diewald

Debra Diewald heads into the finish chute at Parks Half Marathon 2015.

and had the goal of running a 5K. I ran with the Run Farther & Faster training group, starting out mostly walking and eventually worked my way up to the half marathon. My favorite race distance is 10 miles, and my favorite race is the Army Ten-Miler.

## **What was your first race?**

What do you remember most about it? My first race was the infamous DC Hot Chocolate 5K, which was a big mess. They started hours late and ran the race course backwards (and alongside highway traffic) so I was barely able to run, but I did get

chocolate at the end!

## **What inspired you to sign up for the 5K training program?**

I wanted to restart my running and get back to running my mileage without having to take as many walk breaks. I saw the MCRRC coaches this year at the Parks Half Marathon finish cheering on their runners, and it looked like fun to be a part of one of the Club's training programs.

## **What do you remember about your first run with the 5K program?**

It was challenging, particularly because I joined the program during the third week and had not been running too much. Still, everyone was very friendly and I did complete that first run!

## **What has been the most challenging part about getting back into running?**

It's a mental challenge for me, but the program remotivated me and gave me the tools to be able to progress successfully, starting out with run/walk intervals.

## **What have you enjoyed most about being a part of the 5K program?**

I enjoyed meeting new running friends and getting back out onto the track. I also have reconnected with old running friends.

## **What lessons did you take away from the 5K program?**

## **How have you been involved in MCRRC over the years?**

I have volunteered for years in the medical tent and at the finish line of Parks Half and Pike's Peek, and most recently as part of the MCRRC volunteer crew at bag pickup at Marine Corps Marathon. I was also a course marshal at this year's Rockville 5K, where I enjoyed cheering on many of the participants in the 5K program.

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

I played soccer and basketball in high school, and soccer as a young



I learned to pace myself, and that running intervals with walk breaks is okay!

### **Now that the 5K training program is over, what next?**

I'm going to coach in the Winter 5K program, which has been a goal of mine since I got my coaching certification.

### **What is your favorite local running route?**

I love to run on Beach Drive and the Rock Creek Trail.

### **Do you have any favorite running gear?**

I love arm warmers during the cooler weather.

### **What's your favorite post-race recovery meal?**

Chocolate!

### **What are your goals for 2025?**

My goals are to start pace coaching and to run a 5K race and run the whole distance.

### **What advice do you have for runners who may just be getting into running, or returning to running after a long hiatus?**

Pace yourself and give yourself grace that not every run will feel great.

*—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.*

## **Everest**

*continued from page 4*

Keep yourself occupied and make friends with other trekkers. The dining hall is the center of activity: hot food, huge tables, wood-burning heaters, Wi-Fi. Winding down after a hard hike and



Photo: Jyoti Bishey

**Hillary Bridge, one of many suspension bridges on the Everest Base Camp trek, spans the Dhud Koshi River in Sagarmatha National Park, Nepal.**

comparing notes with fellow hikers is a lot of fun.

**Appreciate the resiliency of humanity.** There are no roads on the EBC trail. Everything you are eating, sleeping on, and using has been carried up by porters and working animals such as donkeys, horses, cows, and yaks. The entire EBC path is strewn with dung, so be prepared. As you go higher, the prices of necessities become higher.

**Carry cash.** Accommodations are very basic. Rooms have the bare

minimum, two flat beds with blankets. Since there is not much sun, there is a permanent odor. Wi-Fi, hot water, toilet, sink, running water, soap, bright lights in rooms, and laundry are all luxuries. While your room and meals are included in the group rate, they require cash payment. Keep a good amount handy, as ATMs are few and many do not work.

**Put health and safety first.** I have asthma, and my lungs couldn't keep up with my physical fitness. There was a time I could not walk. One reason September through November is the peak period for the trek is that trees have leafed out and have produced enough oxygen to sustain life at altitude. Above the treeline, oxygen levels deplete quite quickly. Many trekkers are evacuated by helicopter, many fall extremely sick and yes, die. Being self-aware and maintaining good balance between the goal and journey are key to survival in these extreme conditions.

This was truly the hardest thing I have done in my life (other than childbirth!). The trek tested my resolve in life, love for my kids, relationships, and memories, and it redefined life fulfillment and happiness. I am thrilled to conclude my fiftieth year with a grand celebration and with renewed belief in life being a journey.

*—Jyoti Bishey has been an MCRRC member since 2009 and loves coaching distances from 5K to half marathon. Her favorite trail is Riley's Lock at sunrise, and when she's not running, she volunteers cleaning up local streams, hikes with her kids, and binge-watches Harlan Coben. Next, Jyoti is planning her sixtieth year, so stay tuned!*

## MCRRC Race Schedule 2025

Save the dates! Register for your 2025 Low-Key bib and chip online. Guidelines can be found at: <https://mcrrc.org/for-members/chipbib-procedure/>

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

**Sunday, January 26, 8:30 am**  
 Cross Country on the Farm 5K (TS)  
 Derwood

**Sunday, February 9, 8:30 am**  
 Kemp Mill (C)hills 5K/10K (CS)  
 Silver Spring

**Saturday, March 8, 7:30 am**  
 Seneca Creek Greenway Trail Marathon  
 & 50K (\$)   
 Gaithersburg

**Sunday, March 23, 8:30 am**  
 Piece of Cake 5K/10K (CS)  
 Potomac

**Saturday, March 29, 7:45 am**  
 Spin in the Woods 4M (TS)  
 Wheaton

**Saturday, April 12, 8:00 am**  
 Capital for a Day (CS)  
 Olney

**Sunday, April 27, 7:50 am**  
 Pike's Peek 10K (\$)   
 Rockville

**Saturday, May 3, 8:30 am**  
 Kids on the Run (\$)   
 Gaithersburg

**Sunday, May 18, 8:00 am**  
 Run Aware 5K (TS)  
 Bethesda

**Monday, May 26, 8:00 am**  
 Memorial 4M (CS)  
 Rockville

**Saturday, May 31, 7:30 am**  
 Little Bennett 10K (TS)  
 Clarksburg

**Saturday, June 14, 7:30 pm**  
 Suds & Soles 5K (\$)   
 Rockville

**Saturday, June 21, 8:00 am**  
 Run for Roses 5K (\$)   
 Silver Spring

**Friday, July 11, 7:00 pm**  
 Midsummer Night's Mile (CS)  
 Potomac

**Sunday, July 27, 7:30 am**  
 Riley's Rumble Half Marathon (CS)  
 Boyds

**Friday, August 1, 6:45 pm**  
 Going Green Track Meet (CS)  
 Potomac

**Sunday, August 3, 8:00 am**  
 Groovin' Woodstock 7K (TS)  
 Dickerson

**Sunday, August 10, 7:30 am**  
 Matthew Henson Trail 5K (CS)  
 Silver Spring

**Saturday, August 23, 7:30 am**  
 Eastern County 8K (CS)  
 Silver Spring

**Saturday, September 6, 8:00 am**  
 Lake Needwood 10K (TS)  
 Derwood

**Sunday, September 21, 6:45 am**  
 Parks Half Marathon (\$)   
 Rockville

**Sunday, September 28, 8:30 am**  
 Country Road Run 5K (CS)  
 Dickerson

**Saturday, October 4, 9:00 am**  
 Cabin John Kids Run  
 Bethesda

**Saturday, October 18, 9:00 am**  
 Black Hill 10K (TS)  
 Boyds

**Sunday, November 2, 8:30 am**  
 Rockville 5K/10K (\$)   
 Rockville

**Saturday, November 8, 6:00 am**  
 Stone Mill 50 Mile Run (\$)   
 Montgomery Village

**Saturday, November 22, 6:15 pm**  
 Run Under the Lights 5K (\$)   
 Gaithersburg

**Saturday, November 29, 8:00 am**  
 Turkey Burnoff 5M/10M (CS)  
 Gaithersburg

**Sunday, December 7, 9:00 am**  
 Jingle Bell Jog 8K (CS)  
 Rockville

**Sunday, December 14, 9:00 am**  
 Seneca Slopes 9K (TS)  
 Gaithersburg

CS = Championship Series  
 TS = Trail Series