

MCRRC Intervals



May 2026

Newsletter of the Montgomery County Road Runners Club

On the Horizon

Please volunteer if you can!

Saturday, May 2, 8:30 am

Kids on the Run (\$)
 Gaithersburg

www.mcrrckidsontherun.org

Sunday, May 17, 8:00 am

Run Aware 5K
 Bethesda

Monday, May 25, 8:00 am

Memorial Day 4-Miler
 Rockville, MD

Saturday, May 30, 7:30 am

Little Bennett 10K
 Clarksburg

Saturday, June 13, 7:30 pm

Suds & Soles 5K (\$)
 Rockville

www.mcrrcsudsandsoles.org

Saturday, June 20, 8:00 am

Run for Roses 5K (\$)
 Silver Spring

www.mcrrcrunforroses.org

Check our website for updates:

www.mcrrc.org

Board Meetings

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

MCRRC Takes to the Trees



Photo: Rachel Jones

Srikanth Yaragudi (front) and Vicky Nathan enjoy the peaceful scenery of Seneca Greenway Trail 50K.

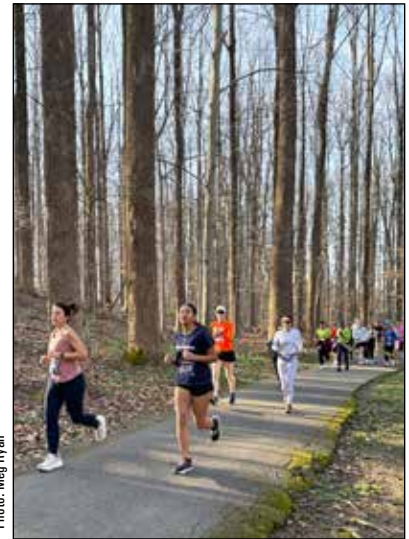


Photo: Meg Ryan

Mild temperatures draw hundreds of runners out to test the new course for Piece of Cake 5K/10K on Rock Creek Trail near Twinbrook.



Photo: Michelle Miller

Elizabeth Petraglia coasts through Spin in the Woods 4M in Wheaton Regional Park.

from the editor



Running Experiences

by Amy Lin

I am once again writing my column from Boston, where I spectated and photographed multiple MCRRC runners conquering the iconic marathon course on April 20. It was my fourth time spectating there, and the thrill hasn't faded one whit.

This month's Intervals focuses on experiences—what we hope to get from running and from a running club; the joy of finishing a great race, whether it's 5K or 50K, a first-ever race or a hundredth or more; the contentment that comes from a sense of belonging.

First, below we have our list of award recipients recognized at this year's MCRRC Awards Banquet. Congratulations to all! Also, our new board members officially began their terms; much appreciation to outgoing board members Jane Heinrichs and Sharon Raszap Skorbiansky for their

service!

Next, in From the Board, MCRRC Vice President Eric London summarizes the feedback from the recent survey the Club offered. Members Sadok Rouai and Danny Tang each share a piece of their running lives—Sadok on his overall journey and Danny on his recent distance PR. Our Runner Profile features a wide range of experiences, all from one person—Larry Feidelseit, whose involvement in the Club includes running, coaching, race volunteering, program directing, chairing a committee, and more.

Last but not least, you may have noticed our Intervals design refresh, featuring our updated Club logo. Many thanks to MCRRC board member-at-large Bruce Lemieux and production designer Bob DiIorio for our great new look!



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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.



MCRRC Awards 2025

Lifetime Achievement Award

Tom Brennan

President's Award

Larry Feidelseit

Runners of the Year

Open

Monika Schneider, Spencer Zidarich

Masters

Emilie Ney, Adrian Spencer

Grandmasters

Lynn Case, Kevin D'Amanda

Runner of the Year Recognitions

James Anderson, Beverly Black, Kevin Camp, Paul Jacobson, Verena McClain, Peter Merrill, Matthew Richardson, Andrei Ridzel, Meg Ryan

Mountain/Ultra/Trail Runners of the Year

Kristen Kelman, Jeremy Krug

Mountain/Ultra/Trail Runner Recognitions

Roberta Albert, Haider Salih,

Adrian Spencer, Amelia Vincent

Most Improved Runners

Wayne Carson, Verena McClain

Outstanding High School Runners

Ayaan Ahmad, Olivia Donmeyer, Alexia Ladstaetter, Erich Ramos

Race Director of the Year

Wendy Young

Coach of the Year

Sheila Patel

Volunteer of the Year

Amy Lin

Volunteer Service Awards

Rajinder Bhanot, Jonathon Hou, Bernard Kelly, Sheila Patel

Community Voice Award

Nicolas Crouzier



What You Told Us: A Look at Our 2026 Member Survey

by Eric London

Thank you to the 296 members who completed our annual survey in *Ins & Outs* earlier this year. With total membership at about 3,960—many of whom are children participating through family memberships—that represents a robust and meaningful response from our adult membership, and we're grateful. Your feedback directly shapes how the Board sets priorities and directs the Club's energy on your behalf.

Let's start with the headline: Members rated MCRRC an average of 9.06 out of 10. In survey research, scores above 8.0 indicate high satisfaction and a strong likelihood to recommend the organization. We don't take that for granted. It reflects the work of our volunteers, race directors, program leaders, and everyone who shows up week after week to make MCRRC what it is.

Of the 296 respondents, 157 took the time to answer our open-ended question, "Do you have any new ideas the Club should pursue over the upcoming year?" From those responses, our analysis identified roughly 115 substantive suggestions, organized into 11 themes. Here's what we heard, and what we want to make sure you know:

Inclusivity and Timing

Members want MCRRC to feel welcoming to all paces, including walkers, back-of-the-pack runners, and those using the Galloway run/walk method. We're glad this matters to you, because it matters to us, too. Programs like our Spring 5K are explicitly designed to support run/walk participants, and every pace is welcome at our races and social runs. In fact, in many of our programs, BOP pace groups incorporate the Galloway method. If you haven't felt that welcome yet, we want to change that—and we want to do a better job making sure that message reaches every member.

Regarding program times, our programs tend toward earlier starts in the day because that reflects the

preference of most participants. But if later mornings work better for you, keep an eye on our Summer Speed program, which won't have any morning runs. There're also the more informal weekly workouts that start weekend runs later. Grab a friend and try them out.

Social Connection

Many members, particularly newer ones, said they'd like more opportunities to build connections within the Club. We want to make sure everyone knows what's already available: Our daily drop-in runs bring together a genuine mix of ages and paces, and they're a wonderful way to meet fellow members in an informal setting. Some are pub runs, but they welcome everyone; most offer food and non-alcoholic options, and the real draw is the company. If you haven't tried one, we hope you will.

That said, we heard you on wanting more structured social opportunities, and the Board is actively discussing ways to build on what we have.

Technology and Communication

Members asked for a stronger digital presence and clearer communications. When it comes to staying informed, *mcrcc.org* is where we focus our efforts; it's the most complete and up-to-date source for all things MCRRC, from programs and races to drop-in runs and events. If you haven't bookmarked it, start there.

Next, make it a habit to read the weekly *Ins & Outs* email every Monday morning. It's the single best way to stay connected to what's coming up each week—a must-read for every member.

We also maintain an active Strava page where Club events are regularly posted, and newly elected board member James Jalandoni is bringing fresh ideas to our online presence and will be working on improvements over the coming year.

Geographic Reach

Members all across the county asked

our Club to show up closer to home. We've been working on this, and we're encouraged by the growth we've seen in eastern Montgomery County—we hope our presence at Blair track has contributed to that. We're also exploring the possibility of new races in the Silver Spring area, to strengthen our connections there. Stay tuned.

This survey will become an annual practice. Your voice shapes MCRRC—and we intend to keep working to implement member ideas when and where we can, and, of course, make sure you hear about any changes.

—Eric London discovered MCRRC after running his first Parks Half Marathon in 2012. He is currently the Vice President of MCRRC and a regular low-key racer; Riley's Rumble is his favorite Club event.

Greenway

continued from page 8

time and gave everything I had left in moving forward.

Eventually, I saw a course marshal, and I was so happy I'd reached the end... until the course marshal said, "Keep going—you have one mile left!" *Ughhh, okay...*

I pushed through the final mile until I heard my name being called. A volunteer spotted me through the trees (thanks to my bright pink outfit, hehehe) and told me the finish was right around the corner. I kept going and then saw all the people I love waiting for me! The finish line was right there; I sprinted to the end and FINISHED!!!

Thank you again, Karen and Kelly, for being wonderful race directors and hosting this great race!

—Danny Tang joined MCRRC in 2023 and has coached in the Fall 10K, Winter 5K, and Winter Marathon Training programs. His favorite race and distance is Pike's Peek 10K, and outside of running, he enjoys drawing, writing, reading, and baking cookies for loved ones.

From Bridge to Desert: My Running Journey

by Sadok Rouai

I was born in Tunisia in 1950 and celebrated my 76th birthday this year. I came to the United States in 1987 and worked at the International Monetary Fund as Senior Advisor to the Executive Director until my retirement in 2021.

For many years, while I was still working, my wife, Dalila, and I spent weekends at our beach house in Lewes, Delaware. Every Friday, I would leave Washington for Lewes, especially in winter. It was my refuge—a place to relax, to read, to reflect, and to prepare my work for the coming week.

The most direct route there is to cross the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Many people dislike that crossing; some are even afraid of it. At the beginning, Dalila preferred to take I-95 rather than Route 50, to avoid the bridge altogether.

For me, it was the opposite. Tunisia lies on the Mediterranean, and I spent my youth by the sea, under the sun. Whenever I reached the bridge and saw the vast expanse of water, it reminded me of home. The sight of the bay always filled me with calm and quiet joy. I never feared the crossing—I welcomed it.

One weekend, as I was driving home, I saw something unexpected: people running across the eastbound bridge. I slowed down, watching them with amazement. The image stayed with me.

When I got home, I searched online and discovered that once a year the bridge is closed for a 10K race, and walkers are also allowed

to participate. I told myself: *I have to do this.*

I had never run before. In the Tunisia of my childhood, walking was simply part of life. We walked to school, to visit friends and family, even from town to town. Walking was not exercise; it was necessity. As I grew older, it became second nature.

Because of my work, I traveled extensively—for business and for pleasure. I loved exploring cities on foot: parks, museums, neighborhoods. Walking was always my way of understanding a country. But running was different.

Before registering for the Bay Bridge 10K, I went to the Capital Crescent Trail to see whether I could even cover 10K in a single

walking—was an extraordinary experience. That was in 2017.

A year later, I ran the Rock 'n' Roll Washington DC 5K. I still remember the joy of crossing the finish line and receiving my medal. That small medal meant more than I expected.

Soon, I set my sights on a half marathon. In 2019, I ran the St. Michaels Running Festival Half Marathon. It was extremely hard, but I finished—crying with joy. During the race, volunteers handed out GU gels. I had no idea what they were. I kept mine in my pocket and only later learned that distance running requires more than determination: hydration, nutrition, training, clothing, recovery.

Running is simple—but it is not easy.

I did further research and, a few weeks later, I joined MCRRC just as the FTM program was beginning. During long runs, people constantly talked about “the next marathon.” For me, simply running with a club was already an achievement. I had no intention of running a marathon. But eventually I signed up for the Philadelphia Marathon.

After consistent training, I was fully committed. Before Philadelphia, I completed several half marathons. Philly was unforgettable—and extremely cold. I finished in 4:44:13, which remains my personal best.

In 2021, I ran one of the most extraordinary races of my life: the 50K of Ultra Mirage El Djerid, in the Tunisian Sahara. I knew the



Photo: Fatma Photography

Sadok Rouai runs through the Sahara Desert on his way to completing the 2021 Ultra Mirage El Djerid 50K.

stretch—and in a decent time. Halfway through, I looked behind me and saw no one. Almost without thinking, I began to jog. Then I walked again. Then jogged. I realized I could do both. Something changed that day.

I registered for the 10K. Crossing the bridge on foot—running and

desert as a visitor. Running in it is something else entirely.

When we run a city marathon, we speak of the crowds—the cheers, the music, the encouragement. In the desert, there is nothing. No spectators, no sound, no wind that day, only sand, runners, and an endless horizon. In the desert, the song “A Horse with No Name,” by America, comes to mind:

In the desert, you can remember your name

Because there ain't no one for to give you no pain

In the Sahara, those lyrics become real. You run toward the horizon, and when you reach it, another appears. And another. Fifty kilometers, under a temperature close to 100°F. At aid stations, they gave us bottles of water not only to drink but also to pour over ourselves, to wash away the salt so the skin could breathe.

When I finished, other runners gathered around me. They asked my age. I was 71. When you run, no one asks your age. They ask only when you surprise them at the finish line.

Now, running is part of me. I have completed sixteen marathons, including six World Marathon Majors, and I am still waiting for Boston to call. And as I look ahead, Cape Town is next—in pursuit of my seventh star.

When I was working at the IMF, I always walked during lunch. It helped me release stress, but more importantly, it helped me think. Writing was never the hardest

part of my job; deciding what to say—shaping the argument, organizing the ideas—that was the real challenge. Walking clarified my thoughts.

Running follows the same philosophy. It gives me space to think about current events, about family, about my writing projects. That is why, even when I run with groups, I am often quiet. I am listening—to others, and to myself.

Friends often tell me they feel too old. I tell them: Don't run—walk. And when no one is watching, try running a little. Then walk again. Then run. Then join MCRRC! One day, you might find yourself crossing a bridge you once feared, or traversing a desert you only ever imagined—and realizing that



Photo: Sadok Rouai

Wearing a traditional Tunisian jebba and chéchia, Sadok Rouai prepares to march in the Parade of Nations at the New York City Marathon's opening ceremony in 2024.

the journey was always within you. Or perhaps you'll be holding

your country's flag at the opening ceremony of the New York City Marathon.

Running is one thing; joining MCRRC has been something entirely different—a transformative experience that perhaps only retirees can fully appreciate. One of life's greatest challenges is retirement. You move from a busy, structured life—sometimes from positions of significant responsibility—to a quieter existence where you are simply one person among many, with hobbies perhaps, but also with long stretches of unstructured time. The transition can be unsettling.

For me, running—and especially being part of MCRRC—did more than fill a void. It addressed what I believe is the central challenge of retirement: staying socially connected. Through the Club, I found not only discipline and purpose, but also camaraderie, shared goals, and genuine friendships. I can say without hesitation that I now have more friends than I did during my professional life.

—Sadok Rouai joined MCRRC in 2019 and coaches in the Winter Marathon and 5K programs. His favorite distance remains the marathon—always a demanding and rewarding challenge. Outside of running, he writes about financial history, with a focus on Tunisia's relationship with the IMF. He recently published his first book and is currently working on a trilogy on financial sovereignty.

Larry Feidelseit



by Lisa Levin

At the annual MCRRC Awards Banquet, held on Sunday, March 22, Larry Feidelseit received the President's Award, which recognizes members who have made outstanding and long-term contributions to MCRRC and its programs. Larry exemplifies the qualities recognized by this award, dedicating his time for more than a decade to improve training programs, races, and Club leadership. He has been the director of the Summer Half Marathon training program since 2016, and has also coached in a number of other programs, including 5K, 10K, and Winter Trails. Beyond coaching, Larry is a regular volunteer at MCRRC races and has been captain of the Stone Mill 50 Mile Run's first/last aid station for twelve years. He's also active on Club committees, serving as chair of the Program Committee and a member of the Nominating Committee. Larry, 59, is originally from Brattleboro, Vermont, but now lives in Germantown with his wife, Laura, and their dog, Callie. They have two daughters, Erica and Kara, and Larry retired from his job as a program manager on April 10, giving him even more time to dedicate to running and volunteering.

When did you start running?

When I was fifteen, I started running simply to get in shape. I had never run track/cross country in school, and I had never been coached.

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

The Brattleboro Firecracker 4-Miler on the Fourth of July. I was fifteen or sixteen, I think. It was miserable. I knew nothing about training or pacing. I went out way too fast. This was back in the day when they gave you popsicle sticks with numbers on them as you came into the finishing chute, to map racers to their finish times.

What distances do you enjoy most and why?

Before I tore my meniscus in my knee and the subsequent surgery exacerbated the arthritis, ten miles to half marathon were my favorite. Now, I probably lean more towards 10K.



Photo: Bruce Lemieux

Larry Feidelseit takes the final hill at Memorial 4-Miler 2024.

Which do you prefer personally, trails or roads?

I really enjoy both. I love the more relaxed vibe of trail runs and races. I remember working the Stone Mill aid station the first year and being amazed at how unfailingly gracious all the racers were.

What's your most memorable race?

I think my all-time favorite race is the Falmouth Road Race on Cape Cod. It's a great distance (7 miles), and has great views (you've got the ocean on your

right for a good bit of the race) and great spectators (lots of them are playing music in their front yards, a fair amount of it live, and they've got hoses to cool you off).

What motivated you to start coaching Club programs?

The first Club program I ran was Summer Half, directed by Barry Hauptman. After a couple of years, he asked me to pace coach, and then asked me to be the assistant program director. I've taught or coached some sort of sport since I was seventeen, including swimming, karate, soccer, and, of course, running.

How does your experience in other sports influence how you coach runners?

I love participating in sports, but I've never been top tier in any sport at any point in my life. I've also taught all levels and abilities in karate and coached rec league soccer teams. I think that has led me to be inclusive in my coaching, ensuring that we're thinking of all our participants.

What do you enjoy most about coaching?

I really enjoy interacting with all the runners and helping them meet and exceed their goals.

What is one training principle you aim to convey to the runners you coach?

Denise Anderson, one of my SHM coaches, tells her groups to trust the process, and I've stolen that for the entire program and everyone I coach. If you listen to your coaches, follow the training, be smart when there are challenges like injuries and weather

conditions, and put in the work, you'll see the results!

How do you help runners stay motivated training through challenging weather (heat in summer, cold/snow in winter)?

Freeze pops in the summer! I try to make it fun. None of us are making money at this, so if we're not enjoying it, what's the point? Ever since COVID, I've been using the Rate of Perceived Exertion scale to as one guide for our runners during the summer. If I expect you to be able to speak full sentences during a workout (RPE 7), then that's what you should be doing when it's 50°F and overcast or 90°F and 90% humidity. It's just that your paces will be completely different.

How has the Summer Half Marathon program evolved over the years?

Although I coach a pace group in the middle of the pack, it's the back of the pack that has changed the most, adding a run-walk contingent a few years ago, and then two years ago, changing from a distance goal for our long runs to a time goal. I think using RPE has really helped put our runners in the right mindset with our area's heat and humidity, which only seems to get worse from year to year.

What is the most challenging part of directing a training program?

Trying to be all things to all people. You're never going to be able to please everyone. You've just got to be confident in yourself, your program, and your approach.

What's the best piece of running advice you've received?

Two oldies but goodies: Dress like it's twenty degrees warmer, and (for a race)

Run the tangents! It drives me nuts when I see even experienced runners add more distance to their races because they're just following the person in front of them. As part of race prep, I send my runners a great cartoon that really drives home the impact that running the shortest distance can have.

Are there any bucket list races you'd still like to run?

I'd like to go back to Falmouth. Also, if my daughter asked me to run another Ragnar (or probably any race shorter than a marathon), I'd jump on it!

What keeps you excited and motivated to keep running after 40+ years?

Physical fitness has always been very

important to me, and I just seem to be an endurance guy. I am not interested in lifting massive amounts of weight over my head, although I do understand the benefits to runners, and the overall benefits, of strength training. Running is also great for my mental health.

Why should someone join an MCRRC training program?

We have such a variety of programs, targeting all sorts of goals. We have fantastic, experienced coaches. Running with a training program holds you accountable. You're less likely to skip a workout when you know you've got your pace group who's going to show up. And you're sure to make new friends, whether you want to or not!

What are your goals for the rest of 2026?

I herniated a disk at the beginning of 2025. It took me months to fully recover, and then I did it again at the beginning of this year, although I've recovered much more quickly. I was coaching a Fall 10K group and running at a faster pace than I probably should have been running, but it helped me gain some speed back. I really want to stay healthy and see if I can get that speed back a bit earlier. Also, as a new retiree, my biggest goal is just to figure out all the things I want to participate in to make sure I'm enjoying myself as much as I can.

—Lisa Levin has been with MCRRC for more than two decades. She is a member of the Competitive Racing Team and co-founder of Run Farther & Faster.



Photo: Brad Stewart

Larry Feidelseit and Wendy Young dinosaur-race on the Montgomery College track in 2023 to celebrate Larry surpassing his fundraising goal for the American Cancer Society.

My Day at Greenway

by Danny Tang

This year, on the day before International Women's Day, an incredible race happened—MCRRC's Seneca Greenway Trail Marathon and 50K. Directed by Karen Craney and Kelly Scherf, the race covers the wonderful terrain of Seneca Creek Greenway Trail and parallel trails, with more than 2200 feet of climb at a low cost. Because the race is in March, race-day weather has varied throughout the years, sometimes rainy, sometimes beautiful.

I had attempted this race in 2024, encountering the worse weather in its history, with tons of rain and extremely muddy trails throughout. At one point I barreled down a hill (hehehe, so fun!)

This year, the runners were blessed with cool temperatures and a beautiful sun illuminating the course. It had rained the day before, so the trails were a bit muddy and slippery but very runnable.

After I chatted with the people I love and took loads of selfies, the race started! We ran up the road towards the trailhead, with some speedy runners immediately taking off (shout out to the MCRRC Competitive Racing Team). I could feel the excitement from the start, and pure joy throughout.

After seven wonderful miles on all sorts of different terrain, some flats, some downhills, and some serious uphill, we reached the first aid station! It was filled with fantastic volunteers and fuel—pretzels, chips, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and soda. The volunteers commented on how great my glitter was (hehehe, I'm so sparkly!). The aid station was led by Ben Galbraith, who is a

First Time Marathon coach and has done multiple marathons and ultramarathons.

We jumped onto the road again and booked it to the next trail section. With the help of our dedicated course marshals, we were able to safely cross the road and get back onto the trails. From Miles 7–15 we had more climbing and some mud trenches, with a stream crossing to boot.

At the next aid station, Mile 15.2, we encountered more amazing volunteers and food! This was also where we could retrieve the drop bags we had left at the start; they had been transported there by another wonderful volunteer. The fuel here was bacon, potatoes, chips, soda, and of course, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. This station was led by our Winter Trails co-director Audrey Fincher, who has also run many marathons and ultras, including, most recently, Umstead 50M.

After we fueled up, my friend the powerful Ann Pohlers and I pushed through to the next aid station. Miles 15–19 weren't too bad with the terrain being less hilly and mostly flat with some road sections as well. At one point we even posed for an MCRRC photographer on the course. (Hehehe, we're models too!) Then we reached Mile 19.2 and Ben and his team again, as the course loops back to their aid station. We filled up again and took off to the next aid station at Mile 26.9.

Oh my goodness... This section was the hardest, as it was essentially nonstop hills that felt like mountains—remember those 2200 feet of climb I mentioned? Thankfully I was still running with Ann; she encouraged me

through the low points and kept me pushing to the decision point—in this race you have the option of choosing the 50K or marathon when you reach Mile 26, and runners must be at the decision point by 3:30 pm to be allowed to take on the 50K. After tons of eating, positive self-talk, and encouragement from Ann, I finally made it to Mile 26!

We were greeted with big smiles; I got a Coke from my friend Karen Kirby and more support from the people I love! At the decision point, Ann wanted “only” the marathon, so we hugged and split off, with her heading to the finish line and me continuing on the course to get the 50K distance.

The last miles were difficult mentally, as at this point my legs and ankles were sore. But I kept focusing on the positive as each step I took was one step closer to the finish! I managed to hit Mile 31.5 on my watch and I cried with joy! *I'm officially a 50Ker!!! YAY... wait, hold on, why is there another piece of blue trail-marking tape ahead of me?*

Unfortunately, with trails it's difficult to get exact mileage, especially for a 50K, so I still had to keep going! At this point I was begging the universe that I was close to being done. I kept asking others if I was close to the parking lot, but each of them told me that the parking lot was still far away.

Then I looked at the time on my watch and found that I only had forty minutes left to run, as the race cutoff was at 5:15 pm. I decided to pivot from focusing on distance to

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