

MCRRC Intervals

September 2013

Newsletter of the *montgomery county road runners club*

On the Horizon

September 8

8th Annual Parks Half Marathon
Rockville, MD

September 15

Cabin John Kids Run
Potomac, MD

September 21

Lake Needwood Cross Country
Derwood, MD

October 6

Cross Country on the Farm
Derwood, MD

October 9

Brooks "Run Happy Island"
MCRRC Track Night
Wootton High School Track

October 12

Matthew Henson Trail 5K
Silver Spring, MD

October 19

Black Hill 10K
Germantown, MD

November 3

Rockville 10K/ 5K
King Farm Village Center, Rockville, MD

November 9

Candy Cane City 5K
Chevy Chase, MD

November 16

Stone Mill 50 Mile
Gaithersburg, MD

November 23

Run Under the Lights 5K
Seneca Creek State Park
Gaithersburg, MD

November 30

Turkey Burnoff (5 miles or 10 miles)
Gaithersburg, MD

For complete details of MCRRC's races and programs, visit www.mcrrc.org

Board Meetings

September 12, 7 pm
Rockville

October 3, 7 pm
Rockville

2013 Riley's Rumble



Runners enjoy the mild August weather in the 2013 Riley's Rumble half marathon. Photos: Ann McDermott



A Closer Look at the Parks Half Marathon

by Jeff Evans, Editor

This issue is all about the Parks Half Marathon. This year's race functions as the 2013 Road Runner Club of America Eastern Region Half Marathon Championship event. According to the RRCA, the Championship Event Series aims "to shine a spotlight on well-run, community-based events, and to promote the sport of running by recognizing the top performing runners in the Open, Masters (40+), Grand Masters (50+), and Senior Grand Masters (60+) categories for both men and women."

There's no doubt that the race is one of the best in the DC area's fall running scene for many reasons. The race exhibits the dedication and talent of MCRRC's volunteers who plan and carry out the race—all 400 of them! Among those volunteers are our pacers, who are ready to lead you on to your half marathon PR. Dan DiFonzo highlights their virtues on page 4.

Even though the Rock Creek Trail setting may be familiar to many runners in Montgomery County, especially those who have participated in some of MCRRC's training programs or weekly workouts, you may not be familiar with how much coordination it takes to keep the race running smoothly and safely. George Tarrico explains how it all happens on page 5.

Besides knowing that 2,500 runners will participate in the race, you can get a sense of its scale by going over some fun race-day statistics on page 7. But don't worry about what will happen to all the cups, food scraps, and leftover food at the end. MCRRC's Green Team will be on the scene making sure the course is cleaned up, the new finish line composter is used, and the leftover food is donated, as described by Cathie Rosenfeld on page 8.

I hope the articles give you a good sense of what goes into making this race one to remember each year. It is a real showcase of what our club's members can do!

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Newsletter of the montgomery county road runners club

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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.



Keep up with the latest news and information about MCRRC events and happenings!

Like us on Facebook – Montgomery County Road Runners

Follow us on Twitter - @MCRRC

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Subscribe to our Yahoo Groups!

mcrrc-alert for breaking news alerts (track closed due to thunderstorms)

mcrrc-info for general news and information about club events

mcrrc-discuss for discussion with other club members about anything running or club related

<http://sports.groups.yahoo.com/group/mcrrc-info/>

Maintaining a Balance for All Age Groups

by Karen Ward Kincer, President

When my kids woke up this morning, I had all the windows open and they all grabbed blankets to put around themselves. I've had some mixed feelings about our mild August because we didn't really need to escape the swelter at the pool, which cut down on the list of easy activities to entertain the kids. In fact, August swim clinics were downright cold. But on the other hand, it has been beautiful running weather, and I hope it continues as we head into the true fall.

Like many parents, I've struggled over the last few weeks with the question of "What activities should the kids do this year?" Of course, they get to provide input, but it also comes down to what makes sense for the family, schedule, and finances, as well as what activities we as parents want to encourage. I'm a little ashamed to admit it, but I have an aversion to both frilly and hip-hop dance, although Irish Step is palatable. Thus, my kids aren't in ballet or hip-hop classes, much to their dismay. My kids swim, and at least we all agree that swimming is a good activity to invest time and money into, but we still had to duke it out over which winter swim program was the best one for us. Family scheduling won out, but it wasn't pretty. It's tough to balance what is best for parents with channeling kids' desires and talents (which may not match) — especially for multiple kids. I have no idea if I've gotten it right.

The club has spent a lot of time this year considering our offerings for youth runners. In 2013, the Board appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Service to Youth Members. Some of the issues at hand included our existing Youth Running Series, youth participation in MCRRC's training programs, stand alone youth training programs, and youth participation in our low-key races. The Committee spent a great deal of time researching other offerings in the community, including those by other running clubs and other youth sports programs. They even sought some input from the medical community. All of this was done against the backdrop of constant inquiries to the club about young runners' desires for training programs and interest in races. People on the committee came from different backgrounds and held vastly different opinions on some of these issues, but they did come up with some majority

opinions, which the board is using to help formulate policy.

The Board has decided that for now, MCRRC will continue to require individuals participating in our training programs to be eighteen years or older. We feel that our programs are designed for the emotional and physiological needs of adult runners and that these programs may not adequately meet the needs of younger runners. Some of our coaches are not comfortable coaching younger runners and having coached youth track for the past two years, I can tell you that it is a vastly different experience than working with adults. We recognize that our programs will not meet the needs of every adult runner and that a few younger runners probably could be successful in our programs. But we're sticking to this policy without exception because the Board also does not wish to be in the business of making judgments about which kids truly want to do a training program and are prepared for it and which are being pulled or pushed along by a well-intentioned parent. I don't have complete confidence that I've set my own kids' activity schedules well, but at least they are my kids to mess up. (By the way, I'm setting aside money for therapy and college.)

The Committee also considered whether or not MCRRC should create its own youth training programs. While this seems to be a great idea, MCRRC's programs and races have historically come about because there is a champion who has an idea and wants to make it happen. While a lot of people would like to see MCRRC offer youth specific training programs, no one has stepped up to lead one. Luckily, there are some other good offerings for youth training in the county. MCRRC has long partnered with the City of Rockville to conduct the track meets for their Youth Track and Field Program every spring, and two years ago we expanded that partnership to the City's new Youth Cross Country Program in the fall. There are other Cross Country offerings in the county, and the Firebirds Track Club offers a track program for youth as well. We will look for opportunities to expand our efforts to support some of these great programs, as well as the many more informal fun runs and fitness events that we are seeing organized by PTAs and other groups on a neighborhood level.



The Committee's feedback on young running within the club was thoughtful and important. While our training programs are an adult-focused environment, our low-key races have long been family-focused activities and should remain so. But in order to do that, we need to improve the quality of our Youth Running Series. The Board would like to ask all of our race directors to consider the execution of young runs and junior participation at their events and to ensure that the same care and planning that are paid to the main race are also given to those events. Clear registration procedures, course maps, course marking, and marshals are all important components of races for our younger runners — just as they are for adult runners. We will also work with our Young Run coordinators to see how we can improve tracking and recognition for our younger athletes.

MCRRC's Mission statement reads: MCRRC aims to be the leading authority on the organization of running events and programs in Montgomery County, striving to meet the needs of individual runners and community organizations engaged in running and fitness activities. One of the tactics toward achieving this vision is to promote running as an affordable form of exercise that can last a lifetime. Ensuring that we provide appropriate opportunities for youth to learn about and engage in our sport is critical to our mission and is tied to larger health and fitness concerns in our community. As we work to improve our young run programs and to provide resources and support to youth running programs in our schools and community, I hope that many of you will find a way to be a part of this effort.

For my part, I will be coaching a new youth running program at my kids' school this fall in between shuttling to swim, Irish step, field hockey, piano, guitar—if I can get it scheduled — and Rockville's Cross Country program if I didn't miss the sign-up deadline (you'd think I would be on top of that one!). And hopefully I'll get in a run for myself one of these beautifully cool mornings!

— Karen Ward Kincer is the President of MCRRC. She can be reached at president@mcrcc.org.



Elite Pace Team Helps You Reach Your Goal

by Dan DiFonzo

More than 2,500 runners will toe the line for the Parks Half Marathon on September 8. Each of them will run with a purpose. Some will be running their first half marathon. Some will be running for fun, some in honor of a lost friend or relative, and others will be running for a variety of personal reasons or to achieve that highly coveted personal record.

Experienced racers will tell you that the key to running a “PR” or personal record—at any distance—is to run even splits. In other words, run each mile of your goal race at exactly the same pace. The logic being that you are rationing your energy stores to suit your target distance. That works well in theory, but on the pavement it’s an entirely different ball game.

Fortunately, for those planning to race the Parks Half Marathon, there’s a simpler way to achieve your goal. Join a pace group! For the eighth consecutive year the Parks Half Marathon will feature pace groups for runners expecting to finish between 1:30 to 2:45.

The elite pacing team has been managed and led by Ken Trombatore for the last five years. You can usually find Ken up toward the front pacing the 1:30 pace group, and he’s all business.

Let the group have their day!

“The best pacers are the ones who can consistently run each mile within five seconds of goal pace for 13.1 miles,” said Trombatore. “As a pacer, I owe it to every competitor to run each mile as consistently as I can. Anything less and

I feel like I’m cheating the runner. It’s all about the runners on race day. Let the group have their day!”

past a few mile markers before we could zero-in on that perfect race pace, but once that pace was dialed-in we could work on knocking off the miles one at

a time. If we had anything left at the end of the day we could do our best to pick it up, kick it home, and then bask in the glory of a new personal record or age-group record!

Back in 1995, former Boston Marathon champion Amby Burfoot had the bright idea to equip the St. George Marathon in Utah with a warren of “public pace-rabbits” for racers seeking to run a specific pace. Picture a runner whose only job was to run a consistent, boring metronomic pace from the starting gun to the finish line—all while wearing a bright shirt and a stick with a few colorful balloons attached to it. The pace coach was born!

Running slow when you want to run fast, and running fast when you want to run slow.

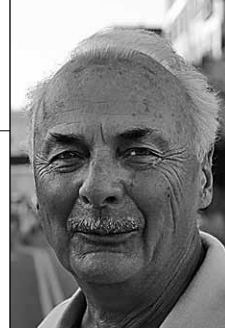
The modern day pacer isn’t much different from twenty years ago—except today he has GPS technology on his side to help fine-tune that perfect pace from the start. His/her number one goal is still the same—never race and always hit your splits. But, pacers are a different breed. They are part coach, part cheerleader, part psychologist, and part conductor. Their main objective is to help you run slow when you want to run fast, and run fast when you want to run slow.

continued on page 5



Photo: Tom Brennan

Twenty years ago we didn’t have sophisticated tools like GPS watches to keep us on pace. We paced by feel, which isn’t always accurate, as anyone who has experienced a few weeks of taper and the adrenaline rush of race day can attest. Typically, we had to run



Inside the Parks Half Marathon Command Center

by George Tarrico

Runners never worry about course safety because someone else is doing it for them.

Far from the streets and trails through which the Parks Half Marathon passes is the Parks Half Marathon Command Center. Using the facilities of the Montgomery County Emergency management system, our Command Center oversees the entire race course and provides instant response as problems develop.

From the start in Rockville, through the streets of Montgomery County, onto the Rock Creek Trail, and into the finish at Elm Street Park in Bethesda, the race is continuously monitored and controlled by a complex of Rockville Police, Montgomery County Police, Park Police, Montgomery Amateur Radio Club (MARC) operators, and MCRRC volunteers. Runners rarely see what goes into ensuring a smooth, safe race.

Under the direction of the Command Center, roads are closed just ahead of the first runners and re-opened after the last runner passes. This minimizes traffic disruption while ensuring unin-

errupted race progress. Streets are observed through a system of video traffic cameras installed at key intersections and controlled by traffic management personnel at the Command Center. Trails are not electronically monitored but are coordinated by onsite Park Police, MARC operators, and MCRRC volunteers.

Communications is a very important part of our command system. Montgomery County has a modern communications system that allows the Command Center to talk directly to each police officer along the route. With this system, we are able to manage road closures and respond to any emergency that may develop during the course of our race.

Similar to the Command Center, the Medical Center, located at the finish line, oversees medical assistance to injured runners along the course and those needing first aid after the race. The Medical Center is staffed by medical volunteers—many of whom are doctors and nurses—and Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service emer-

gency professionals. MCFRS provides ambulances and medical ATVs that respond to serious injuries on the course.

Essential on-course first aid treatment is provided by medical tents located at four-mile intervals on the course. In addition, bicycle patrols with emergency response teams follow the runners on the course to spot runners in distress and give early first aid. They, too, are in continuous communication with the Medical Center.

The same communications system that provides police communications also facilitates medical response to incidents on the course under direction of the Medical Center. MARC radio operators, posted along the course and shadowing key officials, fill in communication gaps through a separate communication system.

So there you have it: A nice, smooth operating system that you hopefully will never see.

— George Tarrico is MCRRC's Club Race Series Coordinator. You can find him at most MCRRC races doing just about everything!

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“We’ve found that the best pacers are cool-headed runners who have had some coaching experience,” explained Trombatore. “They know what the runner is thinking and they know how to motivate them to help them reach their goal. A select few will tell you when to drink and when to eat and may even entertain you along the way. Each pacer has his or her own style.”

One of the rules of being a good pacer is to never race members of your pace group. In fact, it’s an unspoken rule that if someone has run with you the entire race and maintained goal pace for the day, that runner should always finish in front of you.

“If the group is running strong and consistently, I may even drop back to

help push a struggling runner if he or she has stuck with me all day. I will try to give them as much encouragement as possible and will push them up until the last second to help them reach their goal,” said Trombatore.

Pacers serve as sign posts.

Pacers are equally important for runners **not** in a pace group. They serve as sign posts for runners who may have gone out too fast or have fallen off the pace a bit. Runners will look for pace groups around them to give them an idea about where they should be—another reason why it’s important for a pace leader to run his designated pace even if all of the runners have abandoned him during the race.

So what’s so rewarding about being

a pacer? Ken summed it up nicely, “When people come up to you after the race and thank you for helping them reach their goal or personal record or just compliment you for running even miles for the day, that’s what makes it so satisfying and worthwhile. And that’s what keeps our pacers coming back year after year.”

Look for one of the elite pacers on race morning. They’ll be leading the way for you—like clockwork!

— Dan DiFonzo is a pace coach for the Experienced Marathoners Program (XMP) and Winter Marathon Program. He has served as an official pacer for the Parks Half Marathon and, most recently, the Cherry Blossom Ten Miler.

Elyse Schwartz



by Lisa Levin Reichmann

Elyse Schwartz joined MCRRC three years ago after taking up running despite a diagnosis of Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS), a neurological disorder caused by a malfunction of the autonomic nervous system and characterized by lightheadedness, chest pains, and shortness of breath that occur when standing up from a prone or sitting position. For individuals with POTS, simply standing upright can lead to heart rate of 170 bpm or more. Determined not to let her diagnosis slow her down, Elyse has participated in the Winter Half Marathon program since its inception and most recently ran the NYC Half Marathon in March of this year.

When did you start running?

I started running about four years ago as a challenge to myself. I always told myself that I couldn't run because I didn't have a runner's physique. One day at the gym, all the elliptical machines were taken and there was an open treadmill so I decided to see how long I could run. I told myself I would stay on the treadmill for ten minutes. Lo and behold I was on there for 30 minutes — needless to say, I was hooked!

When did you first experience symptoms of POTS? What were those symptoms?

I started experiencing symptoms as a teenager, which is the typical age of onset. I recall avoiding an after school aerobics class because I always felt like I was going to pass out and later realized this was because we were constantly changing positions in class and I was constantly near syncope (fainting). The symptomatology became far more acute when I was in my sophomore or junior year of college. I was fatigued, lightheaded, and unable to get up without feeling like I was going to pass out and my heart was always racing.

How long did it take to get diagnosed with POTS?

I was very fortunate that my diagnosis came fairly quickly. I was a college student in Boston and was referred to the head of the Autonomic Lab of one of the Harvard Hospitals. I had a Tilt Table Test and the diagnosis was confirmed. Often times, people go years without a definitive diagnosis because of the myriad symptoms that can be attributed to so many other disorders.

Do you still experience symptoms? If so, how do you manage them?

Oh yes, I experience symptoms on a daily basis, including lightheadedness and near syncope (fainting) when I stand up. My symptoms are always worse in the summer time, as my body does not tolerate heat well. When my symptoms get very bad, or occur more frequently, I increase my fluid/water and sodium intake. I also experience severe tachycardia (fast pulse) and take a beta blocker twice daily to manage this symptom. I have extreme heat intolerance, which is why I can only run outdoors in the winter time.



Photo: Jason Schwartz

How does your diagnosis affect your running?

I have to be super careful about hydration and be sure to replenish my electrolytes more frequently than other runners. Because POTS symptoms mimics dehydration and an increase in sweating (also a POTS symptom) causes me to lose liquids faster, I need to rehydrate more frequently and with larger amount of fluids. I tend to carry more (electrolyte enhanced) water when I run or do any physical exercise because of my propensity to dehydrate. On a typical day, a POTS patient needs to drink upwards of 4 liters a day and eat large amounts of sodium which helps retain the fluids in our system. I get in about 3 liters a day, more if

I'm working out. My biggest challenge on a long run is to remain hydrated – but not so much that I need to go to the bathroom constantly – though my pace group knows I never pass up an opportunity to use a porta-potty!

And vice versa, how does your running affect your symptoms?

Running has helped me stay conditioned and in shape. I find I have more energy the more I work out, although I have to be extraordinarily careful about remaining hydrated with any physical exercise I do.

Were your doctors supportive of your running goals?

My doctors have encouraged and supported my active lifestyle. I know my body well and am able to gauge how I'm feeling and what my body needs in order to remain healthy.

Have you found networks that you turn to for support and information? If so, what has been most useful about having those networks?

Because there is not a lot of awareness about POTS, or dysautonomic disorders in general, I only recently met others who suffer from this syndrome. I turned to online support, primarily informational pages on Facebook, to exchange ideas and learn things from others. For instance, I asked for suggestions of high sodium, low calorie snacks to eat to maintain my sodium intake and was able to ask others on a POTS Facebook page for recommendations. Also, I have found an enormous amount of information on DysautonomiaInternational.org. They have a great website that has a lot of information and does advocacy work on behalf of dysautonomia research. They recently held their first conference in DC, which was a great success.

What advice would you give runners (or aspiring runners) who are facing a chronic illness?

Listen to your body! I am constantly monitoring how I feel days before a run, during the run and afterwards to make sure I feel hydrated enough. All runners do this, but running with a chronic illness makes it all the more challenging – thus, all the more rewarding!



Photo: Jim Rich

Getting the bounty of food ready for finishers of the 2012 Parks Half Marathon.

Parks Half Marathon: By the Numbers

- 400 volunteers
- 3,200 traffic cones
- 1,200 feet of snow fencing
- 41,000 cups
- 1,500 gallons of water / 500 gallons of Gatorade
- 275 pizzas
- 16 6-foot subs
- 600 bagels
- 100s of eggs and potatoes
- 100 pounds of ziti
- 544 pounds of ice
- 6 cases of bananas, 6 cases of oranges, and 1 giant bin of watermelons



Photo: Dan Reichmann

2013 Comus Run Cross Country (XC)

It's Good to be Green

by Cathie Rosenfeld

Carry in, carry out, and carry on. In the *old days*, after a club race, the most important thing was to clean up and leave the venue in even better condition than we found it. Volunteers filled up big black trash bags and made sure that there was no evidence left from our race other than a bunch of happy, healthy folks leaving the area. One of those folks, club member Daryl Hultquist, noticed a trash can overflowing with the plastic water bottles that had been given out at the end of a race in 2007. He asked if he could help, and along with club member Cyndi Gregory, the MCRRC Green Team came in to being. Nicole Deziel is an Environmental Scientist (and club member) who was teaching Environmental Health at Georgetown and saw an opportunity to “practice what I preach.” She contacted Daryl and Cyndi. After meeting, their first goal was to “reduce the ecological footprint of MCRRC races with minimal burden to Race Directors.” They made signs and brought their own recycle bins to races, collecting and taking back plastic and cardboard to be picked up at their homes. (There are so many ways to volunteer in MCRRC.)

Natalie Bailey and her husband joined the club in 2004 to train for their first marathon with the First Time Marathon (FTM) Program under John Noble’s inspiring leadership. Before that her longest run had been ten miles. “Once we got going, every week was my longest run ever! I’ve [now] done

6 marathons with FTM (3 as a coach) and have recently moved to the *dark side* with XMP” (XMP is Experienced Marathon Program.)

Natalie is the Coordinator of the Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group (www.abcg.org). Primarily her concern is with African wildlife and biodiversity. “Sustainability is one of my core values, and when I heard the club had a Green Team, I wrote to Daryl and Nicole right away. A chance to combine running and conservation? Yes, please!”

The MCRRC Green Team is now a full committee of the club, with a budget. This year, the club purchased new, larger recycling bins for all of our events and there are plans to buy additional bins to collect compostable items as well. The first compost bin will be used at this year’s Parks Half Marathon.

The Green Team looked at another runner necessity and wanted to improve its carbon footprint: our running shoes. Shoe drives are conducted at three large club races every year: Pike’s Peek, Going Green Track Meet, and Parks Half Marathon. The shoes collected in good condition go to people in need. (Editor’s Note: Wash your smelly shoes, please!) The shoes in poor shape are sent to Nike Reuse-A-Shoe program, which grinds them up and recycles them to make new track and other athletic surfaces. The shoe drives have been so successful that clothes have been added.

The MCRRC board has been supportive of the Green Team from its

inception. Natalie and the committee also point out how very grateful they are for “the support of Mike Acuna and the Parks Half Marathon organizing committee in our efforts.” Shoes and gear (shirts, hats, sweats, gloves, etc.) will be collected at this year’s Parks Half and donated to Montgomery Interfaith Works. Collection bins will be set up at packet pickup, and cast off clothing will be collected at the start line. Composting will be brought to the food tent at the finish area. Watermelon rinds, orange peels, and banana skins will go in the compost bin for the first time in club history. The leftover food will be donated to Bethesda Cares, which provides meals and services to the homeless and needy county residents.

Our club’s goal has always been to encourage county residents to get healthy by running. Now we are trying to do better for our environment, and the Earth, by actively recycling before and after our races. We don’t just want to improve the health of our club members and race participants; we want to improve the environmental health of our planet as well. As Natalie said, “We get our hands dirty to keep our club clean [and green]!”

The Green Team welcomes your suggestions at greenteam@mcrrc.org.

— Cathie Rosenfeld has been a club member since 2000 and even though she lives in Delaware, her heart remains in Montgomery County.