

November Well Aware eNews

Welcome to the November 2022 issue of the *Well Aware eNews*! Read on to learn about—

- this month's wellness champions, four middle school colleagues who, after a wellness-focused pre-service week, have teamed up for the Try-Athlon challenge;
- a webinar on the negative consequences of sleep loss, the positive benefits of getting the right amount of sleep, and the small steps we can take to create healthier sleep habits;
- American Diabetes Month;
- Eat Smart Month;
- an update on the Try-Athlon challenge;
- the Great American Smokeout; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar— Sleep Deprivation: Understanding and Improving Sleep Patterns

Join us for this webinar to learn more about the negative consequences of sleep loss, the positive benefits of getting the right amount of sleep, and the small steps we can take to create healthier sleep habits.

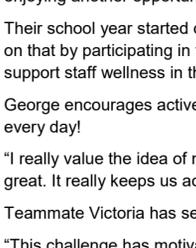
Thursday November 17, 2022
4:30–5:30 p.m.

Please **email Well Aware** to register for the webinar. After registering, you will receive a link to the webinar in your Outlook email as well as an Outlook calendar reminder.

Spread the word with our **printable flyer**. Visit the **Wellness Webinar Library**.

Presented by: Kaiser Permanente

Wellness Champions Challenge Themselves in the Try-Athlon



The Tri-Flippers, Rosa Parks Middle School

Left to right: Barbara A. Becker, Victoria A. Knorr, George P. Eastham, and Michael J. Kryder

Ms. Barbara A. Becker, counselor; Mr. George P. Eastham, physical education and health teacher; Ms. Victoria A. Knorr, science teacher; and Mr. Michael J. Kryder, assistant principal; teamed up this fall for Well Aware's physical activity challenge: the Try-Athlon. This Rosa Parks Middle School team found success in previous challenges and are enjoying another opportunity to improve their physical health.

Their school year started off with a wellness-focused pre-service week. They are building on that by participating in the Try-Athlon and hope to win grand money to continue to support staff wellness in their school!

George encourages active participation in the challenges. He believes we should move every day!

"I really value the idea of movement every day," George said. "I think this challenge is great. It really keeps us accountable, and it's just a fun way of being fit."

Teammate Victoria has seen many positive outcomes from participating in the challenges.

"This challenge has motivated me to make sure I reach my daily activity goal each day," Victoria said. "It has also sparked me to find new creative ways to be active."

For Victoria, exercise means more than just improving her physical health, however.

"For me personally, exercise not only improves my physical health, but also my emotional health," Victoria said. "In order for me to be my best at work, I need to take care of my emotional health and exercise does that for me."

Victoria and George think other schools should join in and participate in the challenges.

"We would definitely recommend other schools take part in these challenges," George said. "It is great for camaraderie, and the prize money has been very beneficial for our school!"

They have other advice for those who are physically active.

"It is okay if you don't reach your daily activity goal on a certain day," Victoria said. "Days of rest are just as important!"

November Is American Diabetes Month

Observed every November, American Diabetes Month is an important part of the American Diabetes Association's efforts to focus our nation's attention on the disease and the tens of millions of people affected by it.

Because there is no cure for diabetes, the focus is on prevention. If you have risk factors or **symptoms**, or are pre-diabetic, the following are ways to prevent or delay onset of diabetes:

- **Get physically active.** Just 30 minutes of aerobic exercise, five times a week, reduces your risk of diabetes. If you haven't been active, start with 5–10 minutes a day and gradually work your way up to 30 minutes.
- **Eat healthy.** It may seem hard to eat healthy if you are on a budget or always crunched for time. You are more likely to adopt healthy eating habits if you start with small changes. Look for ways to make your meals healthy by choosing—
 - Non-starchy vegetables—carrots, broccoli, green beans, kale, and cauliflower
 - Lean meats—skinless chicken and turkey and lean cuts of pork and beef
 - Low-fat dairy products—skim milk and fat-free yogurt
 - Whole grains—brown rice, barley, farro, and quinoa
 - Healthy fats in small amounts—olive, canola, sunflower, and peanut oil
- **If you smoke or use tobacco—quit.**

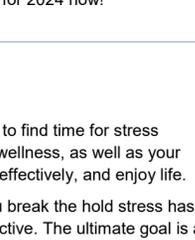
Eat Smart Month

Take simple steps to eat healthier by celebrating Eat Smart Month in November. Throughout the month, the American Heart Association is urging Americans to take the first step to commit to healthier eating. The food we eat is a very important part of living a healthy lifestyle.

- **7 Hacks for Healthy Eating at Home**
- **Meal Planning: Benefits & How-To's of Family Dinners**
- **5 Easy Ways to Find Healthier Options While Grocery Shopping**

Have You Joined the Try-Athlon?

Well Aware's fall physical activity challenge, the *Try-Athlon*, is well underway. There is a lot of school and team competition for the grand prize grants. It is not too late to join! The *Try-Athlon* challenge is not only getting MCPS employees moving, it also is establishing long-term healthy habits. **Learn more.**



The Great American Smokeout Will Be Here Soon!

Quitting smoking is not easy. It takes time and a plan. You don't have to stop smoking in one day; you just start with one day. Let this year's **Great American Smokeout** on **November 17** be the day you start your journey toward a smoke-free life. You will be joining thousands of smokers across the country in taking an important step toward a healthier life and reducing your cancer risk. Plus, the American Cancer Society has the **resources and support** you need to quit.

Quitting smoking has immediate and long-term benefits at any age. Quitting is hard, but you can increase your chances of success with help. Getting help through counseling or medications can double or triple your chance of quitting successfully.

Quitting starts here. Begin day one with these many resources to help you take the first step to being tobacco free.

Are you ready to quit? Well Aware has a free tobacco cessation program for MCPS employees and their spouses. If you are interested in registering for the next class, **email Well Aware.**

You Can Take the Wellness Initiative for 2024 as Early as ... Now!

Did you miss your opportunity to save money on your 2023 health insurance premiums? Each year, you have an opportunity to pay up to 2 percent less on your MCPS-provided health insurance by participating in the Wellness Initiatives program. By completing a biometric health screening and filling out your medical plan's online health risk assessment, MCPS will pay 2 percent more of your health insurance premiums. For more information, please visit the **Wellness Initiatives for Employees website**.

Avoid the rush next fall. Begin taking the wellness initiative for 2024 now!

Stress Less This Fall

The holidays are approaching, so more than ever we need to find time for stress management. Stress can negatively affect your emotional wellness, as well as your physical health. It makes it harder to think clearly, function effectively, and enjoy life.

Effective stress management, on the other hand, helps you break the hold stress has on your life, so you can be happier, healthier, and more productive. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun—with the flexibility to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on. But stress management is not one-size-fits-all. That's why it's important to experiment and find out what works best for you.

This fall, Well Aware is continuing our online virtual live and recorded classes, and adding some onsite classes, for your convenience. From yoga and seated yoga, to mindfulness and tai chi, there is something for everyone. Give them all a try to see what you like best.

Email Well Aware to request the full schedule of classes. **Opt in to receive the daily wellness email** for class links and updates.

Join Us for Online Physical Activity Classes

Regular movement can reduce the risk of developing serious illness, such as Type 2 diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. Physical activity and exercise has immediate and long-term health benefits. It can improve your overall wellness, including your physical and mental health. It also helps you better manage stress.

This fall, Well Aware is continuing to offer our online virtual live recorded classes, and adding some onsite classes for your convenience. From Zumba and HIITCamp, to yoga and core workouts, there is something for everyone. Give them all a try to see what you like best!

Email Well Aware to request the full schedule of classes. **Opt in to receive the daily wellness email** for class links and updates.

Getting a Flu Shot Could Be More Important Than Ever

Getting a flu shot has always been the smart thing to do. It is the best way to protect against the flu and stop its spread. But in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its Omicron variants, a flu shot is essential.

The typical flu is active each year from October through April. An estimated 5-20 percent of Americans get the flu each year with symptoms lasting up to two weeks. Having the flu and coronavirus at the same time likely leads to further complications and more severe outcomes.

The flu vaccine takes about two weeks to be effective, so it is important to get the vaccine as early as possible. Still, better late than never. Once the flu season is under way, it is not too late to get vaccinated.

Both CareFirst and Kaiser Permanente have suggestions for getting this year's flu shot.

- **CareFirst**
- **Kaiser Permanente**

Here are some other resources to show you how to protect yourself from colds and flu:

- **Healthy Habits to Help Prevent Flu** from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- **Cold remedies: What works, what doesn't, what can't hurt** from the Mayo Clinic

Montgomery County Offers MCPS Employees Free Access to Its Recreation Facilities

As a permanent MCPS employee, you have free access to all Montgomery County (MC) recreation facilities, including swimming pools and gymnasiums. You also are eligible for a 20 percent discount on an annual pool pass for your family members.

Interested? **Learn more** and visit the **MC Recreation website** for general information. You may **apply online** for the individual Total Rec Pass. The **Employee Family Pool Pass application** also is available online. Both passes are valid for one year; you may reapply each year to continue your access to the facilities.

Share Your Wellness Stories and Encourage Your Coworkers Through Twitter!

Well Aware is proud of MCPS employee for all of the hard work they are doing to lead healthy lives. It is time to share your stories and your spirit! Or, perhaps you need some extra motivation to begin a staff wellness program at your school, depot, or office, or to turn life-long unhealthy habits into healthy ones. Follow @mcpowellaware for incredible stories, wellness ideas, encouragement from your MCPS coworkers, tips on living a healthy life, or for updates on MCPS staff wellness programs. Follow the hashtag #mcpstaffwellness for tweets!

Check out Wellbeats' Healthy for the Holidays Program for November

Celebrate the holidays without losing track of your health and well-being goals. Join Wellbeats' 14-day Healthy Holiday Program designed to cope with holiday stress and help you feel your best during the holidays. Includes a day-by-day schedule of classes such as health holiday-approved recipes, mindful eating and hydration tips, gratitude meditations, and quick workouts. **See the Healthy for the Holidays flyer!** You can join the Healthy Holiday Program on the Wellbeats app or visit the **Wellbeats website**.

Wellbeats offers 24/7 virtual fitness, nutrition, and mindfulness classes for free to MCPS staff. These classes can be streamed on your personal devices at home, school, or on the go. You can schedule classes in advance and invite your coworkers to join you; you also can schedule classes to play when you are offline. See **this flyer** for log-in information, enjoy this **welcome video**, and this video announcing that **Wellbeats is for All. Get started today!**

Check Out Our Online Health and Wellness "Toolbox"

Well Aware, the MCPS employee wellness program, brings you the *Well Aware Wellness Toolbox*, a web page with many resources for MCPS staff. These tools include physical and mental health resources, lists of free exercise and mindfulness classes, links to resources for improving sleep, nutrition, and more. MCPS staff are encouraged to take the time for self-care. Studies show that self-care is essential to well-being, especially during times of uncertainty and transition. Check out the **Well Aware Toolbox** to see what self-care resources will work best for you!

A Virtual Staff Wellness Day is Coming!

Well Aware, Healthier Generation, Kaiser Permanente, and CareFirst will come together on Monday, November 7, 2022, to present a virtual wellness day! Take a few minutes out of your professional day to give one of our wellness programs a try!

This is a great opportunity to sample some of the classes that Well Aware hosts throughout the year, as well as prioritize your health and wellness! See the **class descriptions and schedule** or **email Well Aware** for details.

The employee wellness newsletter is brought to you by the Employee and Retiree Service Center (ERSC). Learn more about employee wellness by visiting our **website**. View this email newsletter as a **PDF document**. Questions or comments about your employee wellness program? Contact ERSC at 301-517-8100 or **email Well Aware**.