

## October Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion, a principal who is leading by example to set a precedent at her school that staff wellness is essential;
- a webinar on the role nutrition can play in preventing chronic health issues related to menopause;
- the latest news on the Try-Athlon physical activity challenge;
- another Wear Pink Day to raise breast cancer awareness;
- Mental Health Screening Days;
- a Virtual Staff Wellness Day; and
- more!



## Don't Miss It

### This month's free webinar— Menopause and Nutrition

Menopause is a biological turning point in a woman's life. During this webinar, we will discuss what is happening in a woman's body during menopause and its impact on health. Nutrition plays an important role in helping women manage this time in their lives. Participants will learn about nutrition's role in preventing chronic health issues related to menopause, including cardiovascular disease and inflammation. We will discuss diet therapy in detail throughout the presentation, including supplements and lifestyle changes that can have a positive effect on women's health. Handouts with suggested key nutrients and lifestyle changes will be provided.

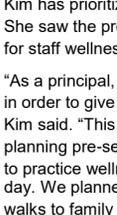
**Thursday, October 27, 2022**  
4:30–5:30 p.m.

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 Champion Sets the Tone for the Year During Pre-service Week: Wellness Is Essential



**Mrs. Kimberly A. Henriquez, principal, Rock Creek Valley Elementary School**

Kimberly "Kim" A. Henriquez, principal of Rock Creek Valley Elementary School, made sure to prioritize staff wellness during the school's staff pre-service week, setting the precedent that staff wellness is essential. From an ice cream dance party, to self-care breaks, Principal Henriquez is leading by example and demonstrating that staff wellness is a part of the Rock Creek Valley culture this school year!

Kim has prioritized staff wellness for many reasons. She saw the pre-service week as a way to set the tone for staff wellness early in the school year.

"As a principal, I want my staff to be well and feel well in order to give their best to our students each day," Kim said. "This summer, we were intentional in planning pre-service opportunities that allowed for staff to practice wellness or self-care during the school day. We planned a staff dance party during lunch, pickleball games, and pre-arranged walks to family homes within our community. These activities were included as part of a week-long game where staff could earn chances to win a prize."

Kim realized many positive outcomes from her pre-service week efforts, including positive feedback from the staff.

"Staff appreciated the time built into the day to do something with their colleagues," Kim said. "They were able to take a break from the tasks on their list that often mean working alone in their classrooms or offices. We are hopeful that helping staff find the time to stop and do something for themselves during the busy pre-service week will help them see how they can incorporate wellness into their day throughout the school year."

Kim has plans for continuing staff wellness activities this year..

"We are starting an after-school walking club, and there was definitely interest in bringing pickleball breaks back during professional development days," Kim said.

She offers great advice for school leadership looking to begin a staff wellness program.

"I would recommend collaborating with both core and leadership teams to choose the activities for pre-service and beyond into the school year," Kim said. "Involving some of our families and their homes as walk destinations was a huge hit. We felt the positive energy from staff, students, *and* their families!"

## Join the Fall Physical Activity Challenge: The Try-Athlon

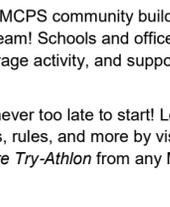
A typical triathlon is a race consisting of three events over various distances. This fall, Well Aware is putting its own spin onto this empowering competition. We invite MCPS employees to—

1. Pick three health goals,
2. Set measurable objectives, and
3. Make and implement a plan for reaching them.

It is time to give behavioral change a try! Dedicate yourself to your goal, objectives, and plan in the *Try-Athlon* physical activity challenge. By the end of the 10-week challenge, you will cross the finish line as a healthy Try-Athlete!

The *Try-Athlon* continues Well Aware's goal of helping the MCPS community build long-lasting healthy habits. Participate as an individual or on a team! Schools and offices can work together to create their own *Try-Athlon* teams, encourage activity, and support each other throughout the challenge.

While we are already a few weeks into the challenge, it is never too late to start! Learn more about the Well Aware *Try-Athlon*, including incentives, rules, and more by visiting the **Well Aware web page**. You also can search for *Well Aware Try-Athlon* from any MCPS web page.



## It Is Easier Than Ever to Quit for Good

MCPS and Kaiser Permanente are teaming up again to bring you the *Quit for Good* tobacco cessation program. The free program is available to employees and their spouses, regardless of whether or not you participate in MCPS employee benefits or if you participate with Kaiser.

Now shorter in length and held via webinar, it is easier than ever to take the first steps to quitting, for good. Join us as we discuss the skills necessary to successfully give up smoking and live tobacco-free.

Start your new year off right! The next class starts in January 2023. **Learn more.**



## Wear Pink to Raise Breast Cancer Awareness

Wear Pink Day will be held this year on Friday, October 14, 2022. Join your MCPS coworkers and wear pink that day to raise breast cancer awareness.

Breast cancer, along with skin cancer, is the most common cancer among American women. Getting mammograms regularly can lower the risk of dying from breast cancer. The United States Preventive Services Task Force recommends that women who are 50 to 74 years of age have a screening mammogram every two years. Those 40 to 49 years old should talk with their doctors about when to start and how often to have a screening mammogram. **Learn more about screening guidelines.**

- **Learn more about the importance of family history, genetic counseling, and lifestyle choices.**
- **Learn what it means if your mammogram indicates you have dense breasts.**

Wear Pink Day is a great opportunity to speak with coworkers, family, and friends about breast cancer warning signs and to encourage self-checks and mammograms. Also, be sure to take photos of you and your coworkers wearing pink and **share them with Well Aware!**

## Stress Less This Fall

We are now in the full routine of the school year. Now 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 offering some in-person classes while continuing its online virtual live and recorded 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 offering some onsite classes and continuing its online virtual live recorded classes for your convenience. From Zumba and HIITCamp, to yoga and core workout classes, 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.

## Employee Assistance Program to Hold Mental Health Screening Days

The MCPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) will conduct in-person and virtual screenings for depression, anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder on Tuesday, October 11, 2022, and Wednesday, October 12, 2022. The free and confidential screenings take approximately 30 minutes and are available to MCPS employees and their adult family members.

This is an opportunity to learn more about depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mood disorders. Those who sign up will complete a brief screening questionnaire and speak one-on-one with a mental health professional. If appropriate, referrals will be made for a complete evaluation.

Telephone the EAP at 240-314-1040 if you have questions and to schedule your screening appointment.

## 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

## Wellbeats Updates for October

Be sure to check out the *Fit for Fall* program for October: If you are looking for a way to stay motivated and make a change in your wellness routine, this four-week program is perfect for you. Our team of expert-led instructors keep you engaged and on track with fun workouts, healthy fall-inspired recipes, calming meditations, and wellness prompts for a healthy body and mind.

Join the *Fit for Fall* program today and transform your wellness routine. See more information in the—

- **Fit for Fall flyer**
- **Fit for Fall calendar**

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 download classes to play when you are offline.

New to Wellbeats? See **this flyer** for log-in information, enjoy this **welcome video**, and watch **a tutorial to get started**.

## 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!

## 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.

## Wellness Initiatives Deadline Approaching to Save Money on Your Health Insurance in 2023

The Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Wellness Initiatives program provides you with incentives to reduce your health insurance costs. If you are covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan, complete a biometric health screening and your insurance provider's online health risk assessment by October 7, 2022—and yearly thereafter—to take advantage of the rate reductions in 2023 and beyond.

You can pay 1 percent less of the total cost of your health insurance in 2023 by seeing your doctor or visiting a CVS Minute Clinic (if you are a CareFirst member) for an annual physical. Not able to schedule a physical this year? Instead, complete the *Biometrics Incentive Alternative 2023 Benefit Year* training (course number 90899) on **Professional Development Online (PDO)** to earn biometrics credit. To earn an additional 1 percent credit, complete a health risk assessment on your medical plan's website by October 7, 2022.

Both CareFirst and Kaiser Permanente members must log in to their medical plan's web page to consent to their participation in the program. Without your consent, your information will not be reported.

**Note to CareFirst members:** If you complete your biometric health screening and health risk assessment by the October 7, 2022, deadline, you will receive credit for 2023 even though you no longer will be covered by CareFirst in 2023.

Take the Wellness Initiative! **Learn more.**

## 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 @mcpsswellaware 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 #mcpssstaffwellness for tweets!

## 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.

## Join Us This Fall as We Make Colorful Choices!

Please your palate and turbo-charge your health during our fall nutrition challenge: *Colorful Choices*. This simple, effective, and fun online program will help you put produce first, by eating a colorful variety of vegetables and fruits every day. By spreading daily choices across the rainbow of colors, you are guaranteed the best produce has to offer—vitamins, fiber, and phytochemicals—which lead to better health.

There is no calorie counting, fat gram tabulating, weighing, or measuring. You simply earn points for each produce serving: two points for veggies, one point for fruit, and a bonus point for selecting top choices (produce such as blueberries, tomatoes, and Brussels sprouts, which contain extra health benefits). **Learn more.**

This challenge includes:

- Friendly team competition
- More than 120 vivid produce choices
- 260+ delicious, healthy recipes
- Fun, interactive logging tools
- Inspiring daily tips

Online registration for *Colorful Choices* begins on October 3, 2022, and the challenge starts on October 17. Mark the date and get ready to enjoy vivid veggies and fabulous fruits. For more information, check out the October Well Aware eNews or **email Well Aware**.

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**.