

December Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion, a high school wellness coach and her coworkers who came together this fall to hike for their health;
- a seminar/webinar on how to enjoy the fun and festivities of the holidays without the stress and overindulgence;
- another year of Wellness Initiatives;
- ways to mind your wellness;
- the importance of creating new brain habits; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free seminar/webinar—**Holiday Survival**

The holidays are intended to inspire fun and festivities with family and friends. Unfortunately, they can trigger stress and overindulgence as well. Join us to get a plan in place to ensure seasonal celebrations are as special as they are meant to be.

Wednesday December 6, 2017
 10:00–11:00 a.m.
 Randolph Bus Depot
 1800 Randolph Road
 Silver Spring, Maryland 20902

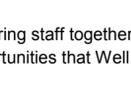
Wednesday, December 13, 2017
 4:00–5:00 p.m.

Webinar

Monday, December 18, 2017
 10:00–11:00 a.m.
 West Farm Depot
 11920 Bournefield Way
 Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

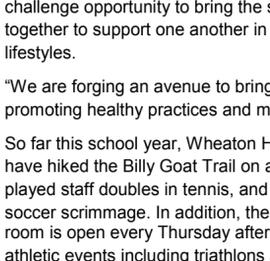
Please register for the seminar or webinar by e-mailing **Well Aware** with the date and time you plan to attend. If you register for the webinar, you will receive a link in your Outlook e-mail as well as an Outlook calendar reminder.

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



Wellness Champion and Coworkers Hike for Their Health

Heather Carias and colleagues at Wheaton High School



Hike for Your Health team Wheaton Knights stop for a photo while trekking along the Billy Goat Trail

Ms. Heather B. Carias, assistant principal and wellness coach at Wheaton High School, is working hard with her coworkers to build a culture of wellness at their school. She took advantage of the *Hike for your Health* challenge opportunity to bring the school's staff together to support one another in adopting healthy lifestyles.

"We are forging an avenue to bring together staff in promoting healthy practices and morale," Heather said.

So far this school year, Wheaton High School staff have hiked the Billy Goat Trail on a Saturday morning, played staff doubles in tennis, and scheduled a staff soccer scrimmage. In addition, the school's weight room is open every Thursday after school for staff to work out together. Some participate in athletic events including triathlons and distance races. Many of the high school's employees train for major athletic events.

"They are an inspiration to other staff and students," Heather said.

Heather notes that being busy staff members in a large high school does not mean they have to avoid physical activity.

"The pace of our days is hectic and we need to build in opportunities to exercise and take care of ourselves," Heather said. "As a team, we hold each other accountable for logging our exercise hours."

Heather offers some advice to other MCPS employees.

"Wellness activities are a great way to create opportunities to bring staff together for fun, exercise opportunities," she said. "Take advantage of the opportunities that Well Aware has to offer!"

Enter the Sweet-free Zone!

Again this year, Well Aware is challenging you to designate your school or office as a Sweet-free Zone. What does this mean? It means that you pledge to do your best to celebrate the holidays in a healthy way. Post **this flyer** to designate your school as a Sweet-free Zone and share suggestions on how to change the culture in your school or office.



Are you doing something special to stop the influx of sweet and treats in your work location? Be sure to let us know, and **e-mail your photos to Well Aware!**

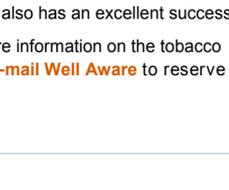


There's Still Time to Hike for Your Health

Since September 25, MCPS employees have been working to achieve the goals they set during the *Hike for your Health* physical activity challenge. Across MCPS, employees are experiencing better health and morale because of their involvement, whether they are participating as individuals or as members of a team.

There is still time to join in and win prizes! Your activity updates need to be entered into the online **Well Aware Fitness Log** by 12:00 noon on Monday, December 11, 2017. Grand prize winners of the fall challenge will be announced in the December 13th issue of *The Bulletin*. For details, including incentives, rules, and important dates, visit the **Well Aware web page**.

It is Always a Good Time to Quit



Quit for Good is a free, eight-week tobacco cessation class for MCPS staff and their spouses. The class covers everything from nicotine replacement therapy, coping techniques, stress management, nutrition, and more. It also has an excellent success rate.

The next class will begin December 11, 2017. For more information on the tobacco cessation program, visit the **Quit for Good web page**. **E-mail Well Aware** to reserve your spot in the class.

Wellness Initiatives

If you are covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan, you can learn more about your health and reduce your contributions to your health insurance with the Wellness Initiatives program. To take full advantage of these rate reductions, complete a biometric health screening and a health risk assessment yearly, and, if you use tobacco, consider quitting.

The Wellness Initiatives are easy to complete. To earn the maximum two percent incentive toward your health insurance premiums, you need to complete—

- a yearly online health risk assessment, and
- a yearly biometric health screening.

To find out how and when to complete your assessment and screening, more about the benefits of participating, and what Wellness Initiatives information is reported to MCPS, please visit the **Wellness Initiatives for Employees web page**.

Mind Your Wellness

Are the holidays stressing you out? Join Well Aware to learn how to manage your stress.

Stress Reduction and Mindfulness for a Healthy Holiday Season

Learn strategies, tips, and exercises to help you minimize stress and increase peace of mind and well-being as you prepare for the upcoming holiday season. You will learn exercises to help you embrace mindfulness, moderation, and wellness in your approaches to work, family, and food.

Monday, December 11, 2017
 4:30 p.m.
 Maple Room
 45 West Gude Drive
 Rockville, Maryland 20850

Meditation

Mondays December 4, 11, and 18, 2017
 5:00 p.m.
 Conference Room 240
 850 Hungerford Drive
 Rockville, Maryland 20850

Seated Yoga

Wednesdays, December 6 and 13, 2017
 4:30–5:30 p.m.
 Maple Room
 45 West Gude Drive
 Rockville, Maryland 20850

Tai Chi

Thursdays, December 7 and 14, 2017
 4:30–5:30 p.m.
 Lower Level Gym
 45 West Gude Drive
 Rockville, Maryland 20850

and

Wednesdays, December 6 and 13, 2017
 5:00 p.m.
 Room 148
 Rocking Horse Road Center
 4910 Macon Road
 Rockville, Maryland 20852

To register for any of these classes, **e-mail Well Aware**.

Holiday Wellness

Make the most wonderful time of year a safe and healthy time of year. With just a little preparation and caution, your holidays can be remembered for all the good reasons. Here are some tips on staying healthy, safe and stress free.

Don't skimp on sleep while getting ready for the holidays. Lack of sleep leads to—

- overeating and weight gain;
- safety hazards at home, work, and on the road; and
- a negative mood.

Holidays mean lots of time spent with others, mostly indoors. Whether it's shopping or social events, indoor activity is prime time to spread common colds and the flu. Some ways to avoid getting or giving viruses include—

- washing your hands with soap and water for at least for 20 seconds;
- covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze; (If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow.)
- getting the flu vaccine; and
- keeping your immune system strong by staying physically active, eating healthy, and limiting alcohol. (You don't have to say no to all of the holiday treats, just don't overindulge.)

Often, on our own or with the media's help, we create unrealistic expectations. If not kept in check, holiday commitments and spending can lead to stress. Ways to manage holiday stress include—

- balancing work, home, and social activities; (Remember: It is okay to say no.)
- asking for support from family—including your children—and friends;
- finding time to relax—even for just a few minutes—to recharge;
- getting plenty of sleep; and
- creating a budget for purchasing gifts, food, and decorations.

My Brain Solutions: A New Year, a New Mindset!

Coming in January 2018, MyBrainSolutions will be available to all MCPS employees. MyBrainSolutions is a scientifically based online platform that helps individuals relieve stress, increase resiliency, and enhance mindfulness. Take an easy 15-minute assessment to learn more about your brain health, then get ready to develop better brain habits through fun and engaging exercises. The program is completely confidential and your information will not be shared with your employer. **Watch a one-minute introductory video** on MyBrainSolutions.

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 e-mail newsletter as a **PDF document**. Questions or comments about your employee wellness program? Contact ERSC at 301-517-8100 or **e-mail Well Aware**.