

January Well Aware eNews

Welcome to the January 2021 issue of the *Well Aware eNews!* Read on to learn about—

- this month's wellness champion, a principal intern who is committed to keeping her socially-distanced staff connected while supporting their cancer awareness efforts;
- a webinar to explore how to eat a healthy, well balanced diet while maintaining a budget;
- more about Flights to Fitness;
- another opportunity to get InStep with Diabetes;
- a new health and wellness platform;
- how you can submit your recipe to be included in our MCPS-staff healthy eating online cookbook; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar— Healthy Eating on a Budget

Join us for a webinar to explore how to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet while maintaining a budget.

Thursday, January 21, 2021
4:00–5:00 p.m.

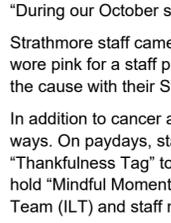
Webinar

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: CareFirst

Wellness Champion Keeps Staff Connected By Supporting Their Cancer Awareness Efforts



Ilana S. Carr, principal intern, Strathmore Elementary School

Many people have been affected by cancer and are eager to bring awareness to the topic. Thanks to the determination of her staff at Strathmore Elementary School, Ilana S. Carr, principal intern, created opportunities to simultaneously connect her socially distanced staff and raise cancer awareness.

"We have several staff members who are passionate about the issue," Ms. Carr said. "During our October staff meeting, we took time to honor this cause so close to our hearts."

Strathmore staff came up with numerous ideas and Ms. Carr fully supported them. They wore pink for a staff photo, regularly tweeted each other, and held "peace circles" related to the cause with their Strathmore student scholars.

In addition to cancer awareness, Principal Carr has motivated her staff in a number of other ways. On paydays, staff attend Zoom happy hour. Their social committee began "Thankfulness Tag" to connect staff by focusing on gratitude during the pandemic. They also hold "Mindful Moments" during daily morning announcements and Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and staff meetings.

"It's important to check in with each other and be reminded we're in virtual learning together," Ms. Carr said. "We can have fun and take care of and lean on each other."

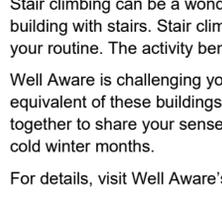
Ms. Carr recognizes that it is difficult to find a balance, but wellness is as critical as academics.

"Finding a balance is a challenge, not only for our student scholars and families but also for our staff," Ms. Carr said. "We have to check in with each other and focus on wellness consistently. It's just as critical as focusing on academics. When our team is well, our scholars are well!"

As an administrator, Ms. Carr has learned that her staff is her best resource.

"Our team members brainstorm our wellness initiatives, based on their experiences," Ms. Carr said. "We check in with each other by asking questions, through formal and informal surveys, to determine need. In this way, we gain feedback on how to respond and put those responses to action!"

Be sure to visit the Well Aware Twitter page @mcpowellaware for a clearer view of the above Strathmore Elementary School Breast Cancer Awareness Zoom photo.



Flights to Fitness: Climb Maryland's Tallest Buildings!

Stair climbing can be a wonderful way to keep fit. Most of us live and/or work in or near a building with stairs. Stair climbing can be done anytime throughout the day as a break in your routine. The activity benefits your heart, your mind, as well as your leg muscles.

Well Aware is challenging you to climb the tallest buildings in Maryland, or climb the equivalent of these buildings in flights of stairs. Form a team and challenge yourselves together to share your sense of achievement! It is a great way to stay in shape during the cold winter months.

For details, visit Well Aware's **Flights to Fitness web page**.

Take the [Wellness] Initiative

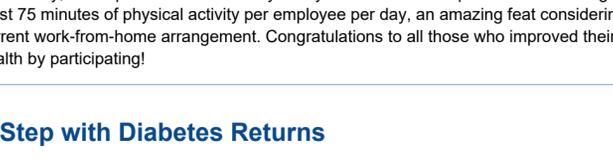
It Is Not Too Early to Reduce Your Share of Health Insurance Costs for 2022

If you are covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan through CareFirst or Kaiser Permanente, you can learn more about your health and reduce your contributions to your 2022 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 very simple to accomplish. To receive the maximum 2 percent reduction on your health insurance premiums in 2022, you have until October 8, 2021, to complete—

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

To find out how to complete your biometric health screening and health risk assessment and how your results will be reported to MCPS, please visit the **Wellness Initiatives web page**.



Going the (Physical) Distance Relay Challenge Comes to an End

Nearly 6,000 Montgomery County Public Schools employees increased their physical activity during Well Aware's fall physical activity challenge: *Going the (Physical) Distance Relay*. They took part in a variety of physical activities to compete for prizes, and more importantly, to adopt or maintain healthy lifestyles. Each of the top 15 schools averaged at least 75 minutes of physical activity per employee per day, an amazing feat considering our current work-from-home arrangement. Congratulations to all those who improved their health by participating!

InStep with Diabetes Returns

Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente have teamed together to offer a three-week educational diabetes program called InStep with Diabetes. It is geared towards those diagnosed with diabetes to help control the disease as well as those with pre-diabetes to help prevent a further diagnosis. The class is virtual. You will be sent a link upon registration.

Class will be held on Tuesdays from 4:30–5:30 p.m. on the following dates:

- January 19, 2021
- January 26, 2021
- February 2, 2021

Stress Less This Winter

Shorter days with less sunlight, a more sedentary lifestyle due to the cooler weather, and getting back to regular routines after the holidays can have a big impact on mood and stress levels. Add to that the ongoing challenges brought on by the pandemic and you have a recipe for significant stress in your 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—and 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.

Well Aware offers many classes virtually to help you learn tools to manage stress. From Mindfulness and Meditation, to Seated Yoga, Yoga, Stretch and Mobility, and Pilates, you are sure to find something that will meet your individual needs. **Email Well Aware** to request a monthly schedule of classes.

Online Physical Activity Classes for Winter

Physical activity or exercise can improve your health and reduce the risk of developing several diseases like type 2 diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. Physical activity and exercise can have immediate and long-term health benefits. Most importantly, regular activity can improve your heart, your mind, and your overall wellness.

Consider trying Well Aware's online classes to see what kind of physical activity is best for you. We offer many classes to meet your needs, including Zumba, HIIT Camp, Stretch and Mobility, Core workouts, Yoga, and toning.

Email Well Aware for a monthly calendar of classes.

BurnAlong Classes Available to Help You and Your Family Stay Well and Fit

MCPS and CareFirst have partnered to give you access to *BurnAlong*, a health and wellness platform that comes with four free accounts for you and interested family and friends. The 1000+ classes available range from meditation, boxing, yoga, bootcamp, and spin. There are even classes on nutrition and financial literacy and specialized senior classes for you or older members of your family who may need physical activity but need to remain in the house. Classes can also be taken as a group, so you can work out with a friend or family member while seeing and talking to each other during the class. **Register and log in**.

Share Your Healthy Recipe in the Online MCPS Healthy Cookbook

Whether you have a list of resolutions or you just want to get back on track after indulging over the holidays, the new year is a great time to focus on healthy meal planning.

To help keep each other motivated, be sure to share your favorite healthy recipes with Well Aware. We will create a PDF collection to share daily on our Twitter account @mcpowellaware during the month of January.

Email your healthy recipe to Well Aware.

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.

For more information, contact MC Government at 240-777-6840 or **email MC Recreation**.

Share Your Wellness Stories and Encourage Your Coworkers Through Twitter!

Well Aware is proud of MCPS employee for all of the good 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 wellness stories, ideas, and encouragement from your MCPS coworkers. You also will read tips on living a healthy life and receive updates on MCPS staff wellness programs.

Be Well 365 for Staff

MCPS has launched a well-being web page for its employees. This online resource is a one-stop shop where employees can find information to help them navigate and balance their work, home, personal, and community lives. The emphasis is on staff well-being and self-care. Last year was a challenging one for all of us, and MCPS is committed to ensuring that its staff members stay safe and feel supported. **Browse Be Well 365**.

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**.