WELL AWARE eNews

The education you need for the health you want

April Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champions, two high school teachers who began walking together after work while serving as wellness coaches at their high school;
- a seminar/webinar to help you relax through meditation;
- National Cancer Control Month;
- ways to stress less this spring;
- National Get Fit Don't Sit Day™; and
- more!

Wellness Champions: Years of Walking Together Leads to Healthy Habit for this duo

Sandy Laurie and Julie Parham, John F. Kennedy High School

As two of the original wellness coaches at John F. Kennedy High School, Sandy Laurie, special education teacher, and Julie Parham, ESOL teacher, set out to begin a healthy walking club for their coworkers. The impetus came as a result of MCPS's *On the Move* physical activity challenge in 2011. The two then turned their efforts into a healthy, long-term habit. They have been walking together after school for more than seven years.

Although Sandy and Julie both exercised prior to the challenge, they found it more enjoyable having someone to walk with. While intended to be an activity to benefit their hearts, they quickly noticed their time together turned into transforming sessions and stress relief opportunities.

"We have both learned more from each other about our respective areas of expertise than we ever knew before," Sandy said. "We often talk about our jobs and our students, ask each other's advice, bounce ideas off of each other, and talk strategy."

Of course, the pair spend a good amount of time discussing their lives outside of school as well.

"We have gotten to know each other's families quite well over the years, even without actually meeting many of the family members," Julie said.

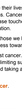
Julie and Sandy have advice for those wanting to start an after school walking group.

"Stick with it! It is easier to continue to have company when you exercise, and you are more likely to hold each other accountable," Julie said.

When they first started, a few people walked with them on occasion. As leaders of the walking initiative, they continued to forge ahead, always welcoming everyone who chose to join them and encouraging others as they passed their classroom doors.

"It has been nice, over the years, to see other co-workers holding impromptu group walks after school," Sandy said. "Many of them have commented that seeing us walking every Tuesday all these years inspired them to get going."

Have You Begun *Le Tour de Fitness*?



We are five weeks in to the *Le Tour de Fitness* physical activity challenge, and MCPS staff members are working hard! Well Aware has given out 25 individual prizes so far, to those who have logged the most activity. We seem to have the spring back in our steps!

It is not too late to join us! Take a virtual tour of France to see how much of the Tour de France you can cover—virtually. Go out for a bike ride and log your time in the online **Well Aware Fitness Log**. Not a big fan of the bike? No worries—any activity counts. In the process, you will regain your health, increase your stamina, and improve your mood.

Register for a Well Aware Fitness Log account and start logging your activity. Learn more about *Le Tour de Fitness* challenge, including incentives, rules, and more by visiting the **Well Aware website**.

Move Attention to Prevention: It's National Cancer Control Month

This year, an estimated half million Americans will lose their lives to cancer, and three times that many will be diagnosed with this devastating illness. Cancer patients are parents and grandparents, children and cherished friends; the disease touches almost all of us and casts a shadow over families and communities across our nation.

During National Cancer Control Month, we remember those we have lost, support Americans fighting this disease, and recommit to programs that effective cancer control.

Prevention and screening are our best defenses against cancer. All Americans can reduce their risk by eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, limiting sun exposure, avoiding excessive alcohol consumption, staying tobacco-free, and taking advantage of appropriate regularly scheduled cancer screenings.

Learn more about screening for many types of cancer.

Article courtesy of Benefit & Risk Management Services

Wellness Initiatives: Know Your Numbers

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 health insurance with the Wellness Initiative 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.

Participation in Wellness Initiatives is easy! To earn the maximum 2 percent incentive toward your medical insurance premiums, each year you need to complete—

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

To learn more about the program and complete them, including details about how your participation will be reported to MCPS, visit the **Wellness Initiatives for Employees web page**.

Well Aware offers onsite biometric health screenings to make participation even easier. For dates, times, and locations, visit the **Biometric Health Screenings web page**.

Stress Less This Spring

Seated yoga, meditation, and tai chi are wonderful practices that help you to lower your stress level and learn techniques for managing pressure and anxiety. Join Well Aware as we continue these practices into the spring.

Guided Meditation

Mondays
9:00–9:45 p.m.
Carver Educational Services Center
Room 223
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Seated Yoga

Wednesdays
- April 10, 17, 24
- May 1, 8, 15, 23

4:45–5:45 p.m.
Café 45 (lower level)
45 West Gude Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Sit and Be Fit

Looking for an exercise class that increases your heart rate, helps build muscle, but is still low impact and done from a chair? Look no further!

Tuesdays
4:30–5:30 p.m.
Café 45 (lower level)
45 West Gude Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Tai Chi

Thursdays
4:45–5:45 p.m.
Robinson Room
45 West Gude Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Yoga

Mondays and Thursdays
5:00–6:00 p.m.
All purpose Room
Rocking Horse Road Center
4910 Macon Road
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Can't make it to any of these classes? Try one of these online resources to help you manage your stress:

- **Yoga for Teachers**
- **Guided Meditation for Teachers**

Zumba

Mondays
4:30–5:30 p.m.
Gymnasium
Flora M. Singer Elementary School
2600 Hayden Drive
Silver Spring, Maryland 20902

Tuesdays and Thursdays
3:00 p.m.
John F. Kennedy High School
1901 Randolph Road
Silver Spring, Maryland 20902
Register here

Wednesdays
3:30 p.m.
Auxiliary Gym
Redland Middle School
6505 Muncaster Mill Road
Rockville, Maryland 20855

Fridays
4:30 p.m.
Washington Grove Elementary School
8712 Oakmont Street
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877

To register for any of these classes (except for the Zumba class at John F. Kennedy High School), **e-mail Well Aware**.

Another Chance to Quit for Good!

The U.S. Surgeon General has said, "Smoking cessation [stopping smoking] represents the single most important step that smokers can take to enhance the length and quality of their lives."

It's hard to quit smoking, but you can do it. To have the best chance of quitting and remaining a nonsmoker, you need to know what you're up against, what your options are, and where to go for help. We can help!

Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente have teamed up to produce an eight-week tobacco cessation class for staff and significant others. To register for an upcoming session of the Quit for Good class, **e-mail Well Aware**.

Once you (and your spouse) have been tobacco free for 12 months, you can re-attest and stop paying the 25 percent tobacco-user surcharge on the cost of your health insurance. **Learn more.** It's also true that tobacco users who complete *Quit for Good* can have the 25 percent waived and, depending on when the program is completed, refunded. **Learn more.**

American Heart Association: April Is Move More Month!

Every April, the American Heart Association celebrates physical activity and encourages all Americans to commit to being more active on a regular basis.

Are you fitting in at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of heart-pumping physical activity per week? If not, you're not alone. Only about one in five adults and teens get enough exercise to maintain good health. Being more active can help all people think, feel, and sleep better and perform daily tasks more easily. And if you're sedentary, sitting less is a great place to start.

These recommendations are based on the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition, published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. They recommend how much physical activity we need to be healthy. The guidelines are based on current scientific evidence supporting the connections between physical activity, overall health and well-being, disease prevention and quality of life.

Adults should be getting at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination of both, preferably spread throughout the week.

Children 3–5 years old should be physically active and have plenty of opportunities to move throughout the day. Kids 6–17 years old should get at least 60 minutes per day of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity, mostly aerobic.

If you are getting started, remember that any amount of movement is better than none. Start by taking a two-minute walk and add to it!

Excerpted and adapted from "American Heart Association Recommendations for Physical Activity in Adults and Kids" on the American Heart Association website.

American Diabetes Association: National Get Fit Don't Sit Day™

Held the first Wednesday of May each year, National Get Fit Don't Sit Day™ is an opportunity for the American Diabetes Association (ADA) to increase awareness of the dangers of excessive sitting and the importance of getting up and moving throughout the day—especially at work.

Research shows that sitting for long periods of time increases the risk of health complications. The ADA recommends breaking up sitting time with three or more minutes of light physical activity—such as walking, leg extensions, or overhead arm stretches—every 30 minutes.

Here are some resources with ideas to get you moving:

- **8 Ways to Be More Active During the Workday**
- **Desk Moves**

Excerpted from the American Diabetes Association website.

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**.