WELL AWARE

# eNews

The education you need for the health you want

## February Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion, a wellness coach whose encouragement, in part, led her coworkers to stick to their fitness routines and even implement their own monthly fitness challenges at their school;
- a seminar/webinar on maintaining a healthy heart;
- the Check. Change. *Control.* program;
- another chance to Quit for Good;
- how you can Sit and Be Fit; and
- more!

## Wellness Champion's Leadership Inspires Coworkers to Start Fitness Challenge at School

**Sharzad A. Benze, speech pathologist, Clearspring Elementary School**

*Clearspring planning in action*

Sharzad "Shadi" A. Benze, speech pathologist and wellness coach at Clearspring Elementary School, is proud of her coworkers for sticking to their fitness routine through the toughest months of the year. Inspired by a story they read in the *Well Aware eNews*, they started their own monthly fitness challenges at the school.

The first, "Plankspiring," had staff members working their abdominal muscles by holding planks all over the school during the month of November. In December, they celebrated "Christma-Hanu-Squatica" by completing 12 days of squats.

Shadi believes that leading a healthy lifestyle provides many benefits, both physical and mental.

"Eating well, exercising, managing stress, and getting enough sleep all contribute to feeling physically better," Shadi said. "It leads to a positive outlook as well as to feeling more energetic."

Shadi and her coworkers enjoy working out together at the school. Not only does she acknowledge that group workouts keep members motivated, but the regular check-ins with each other help them to stay accountable to themselves and to each other.

"Feeling accountable keeps you on the right track, even when the temptation to skip a workout or eat poorly breaks up on you," Shadi said. "Working out together also provides an outlet to celebrate successes and face any challenges that may arise together."

It is clear that Clearspring doesn't lack for creativity. Along with Plankspiring and Christma-Hanu-Squatica, the group is also—

- coordinating a school-year-long salad bar, (The Wellness committee provides the greens and staff bring the fixings.) and
- working with the PTA to obtain funding for an in-house stress management event. (They are aiming for chair massages later in the school year.)

Shadi suggests that other school and office staff keep their ideas simple. Holding monthly fitness challenges and providing information about nutrition and healthy eating has been most successful.

"Over the years, we have tried a variety of things at Clearspring to encourage a healthy lifestyle," Shadi said. "I have found that keeping it simple is the best way to encourage participation. We let our coworkers know that moving your body daily in an activity that brings you joy is the best approach."

## Today is National Wear Red Day!

As announced in *The Bulletin* last month, the American Heart Association (AHA) is holding its yearly National Wear Red Day today, Friday, February 2, 2018, to call attention to heart disease. According to AHA, "Heart disease and stroke cause 1 in 3 deaths among women each year, killing approximately one woman every 80 seconds." It doesn't have to be that way, however. AHA tells us that "80 percent of cardiac and stroke events may be prevented with education and action."

Well Aware encourages all MCPS employees to make heart health a priority. Schedule your annual preventive check-up to review your overall health, measure your blood pressure, check your cholesterol and look for signs of heart disease, stroke, and other illnesses.

Do your part to educate yourself, your friends, and your family this year. Join the movement to end heart disease and stroke in women because it's not just a man's disease. Here's what it means to Go Red:

G: Get Your Numbers
O: Own Your Lifestyle
R: Realize Your Risk
E: Educate Your Family
D: Don't Be Silent

Did your school, office, or depot Go Red today? If not, consider holding a Wear Red Day in honor of women's heart health. **E-mail a favorite photo from the event to Well Aware.**

**Watch this video** to learn more about National Wear Red Day.

## Check. Change. *Control.* Is Here!

Maintaining a healthy blood pressure is one of the many ways you can help keep your heart healthy. To help you understand your risk for high blood pressure (HBP), Well Aware is bringing the American Heart Association's Check. Change. **Control.** program to MCPS employees. Check. Change. **Control.** empowers you to learn about, and actively manage your blood pressure through a combination of resources.

Get started! Sign up for your Check. Change. Control. account (use Campaign Code MCPS1) today! Review **flyers** on the consequences of high blood pressure and modifications you can make to improve your blood pressure.

Questions about Check. Change. **Control.**? **E-mail Well Aware**.

## Your Chance to Quit for Good Begins in March

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.

**E-mail Well Aware** to reserve your spot in the next class, which begins on Monday, March 5, 2018. Class already full? E-mail anyhow to have your name added to a waiting list for a future class. For more information on the tobacco cessation program, visit the **Quit for Good website**.

## Let's Climb the Tallest Buildings in the United States




Stair climbing can be a wonderful way to keep fit. Most of us work in or live 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 encouraging you to climb some of the tallest buildings in the United States! We will climb the equivalent of these buildings in flights of stairs. You can form a team and complete the buildings together to share your sense of achievement! And, what a way to stay in shape during the cold winter months!

For details, visit the **Flights to Fitness web page** on the Wellness website.

## Stress Less This Winter

Don't let the winter blues get you down. Try these alternative ways to beat them this winter.

**Guided Meditation**
Mondays
5:00–5:45 p.m.
Room 223
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

**Seated Yoga**
Wednesdays
4:30–5:30 p.m.
Café 45 (unless otherwise announced)
45 West Gude Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

**Tai Chi** *(Rocking Horse Road Center)*
Wednesdays
5:00–6:00 p.m.
Room 148
4910 Macon Road
Rockville, Maryland 20852

**Tai Chi** *(45 West Gude Drive)*
Thursday
4:45–5:45 p.m.
Lower Level Gym (unless otherwise announced)
45 West Gude Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

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

Can't make it to a class? Try some of these online resources to manage your stress this winter:

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

## Sit and Be Fit!

Are you looking for an exercise class that increases your heart rate, helps build muscle, but is low impact? Look no further! You can have that all and seated in a chair! Join Well Aware for—

**Sit and Be Fit**
February 20 and 27
March 6, 14 (Robinson Conference Room), and 20
April 3, 10 (Robinson Conference Room), 17, and 24
May 1, 8 (Robinson Conference Room), 15, and 22
4:30–5:30 p.m.
Café 45 (unless otherwise noted above)
45 West Gude Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

To register, **e-mail Well Aware**.

## Wellness Initiatives: Get to Know Your Numbers

We live our lives by the numbers: phone numbers, PIN numbers, and our social security numbers.

But do you know the heart health numbers that could literally save your life? Healthy numbers mean a healthy heart. If you follow a healthy lifestyle—eat a balanced diet, get regular exercise, and avoid smoking—you can turn any bad numbers around.

You can learn about these vital health numbers and reduce your financial contribution to your health insurance by participating in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Wellness Initiatives program. To take full advantage of the program, complete a biometric health screening and health risk assessment yearly. And, if you and/or your spouse smoke, consider quitting. Doing so will go a long way toward improving your numbers.

For more information on the Wellness Initiatives program and to see a schedule of upcoming on-site biometric health screenings, visit the **Wellness Initiatives for Employees web page**.

## My Brain Solutions

MyBrainSolutions, a scientifically based online platform that helps individuals relieve stress, increase resiliency, and enhance mindfulness, is now available to all MCPS employees and is sponsored by Kaiser Permanente.

Take an easy 15-minute assessment to learn more about your brain health, then get ready to develop better brain habits through short and engaging exercises. The program is completely confidential and your information will never be shared with MCPS. **Watch a one-minute introductory video** on MyBrainSolutions.

Interested? **Register here**.

## A Spring Physical Activity Challenge is Coming!

In the fall, MCPS employees trained hard in the Hike for your Health physical activity challenge. With another challenge just around the corner, think of the progress you can make before the end of the school year! Gather your team, or get yourself ready for the individual competition. Look for details in next month's issue of *Well Aware eNews*. Challenge registration will begin on March 5, 2018.

## Diabetes Management Program

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) employees who have diabetes and are covered by a CareFirst medical plan have the option of participating in a diabetes case management program to have their copayments waived for diabetes supplies.

In order for copayments for diabetic supplies and medication to be waived in 2019 and each year thereafter, MCPS employees who are diabetic and covered by a CareFirst medical plan are required to—

- maintain their participation in the diabetes management program, and
- use medications prescribed to treat their diabetes exactly as their doctor has instructed without missing any days.

CareFirst will begin tracking your adherence to these requirements on January 16, 2018. If, as of January 1, 2019, you have not met any days between prescription refills, i.e., you have refilled your prescription regularly to ensure you have enough medication for daily use, your copayments for diabetes supplies will continue to be waived.

If you have diabetes, maintaining regular use of your prescription medications is a key component in controlling the disease. By meeting these two requirements every year, CareFirst members with diabetes will continue to receive diabetic diabetes supplies without a copayment while more closely managing their disease.

If you have diabetes and are covered by a CareFirst medical plan and would like to participate in the diabetes case management program, or you would like to confirm your status as a program participant, please contact the customer service department of your medical plan.

For more information, please **e-mail Well Aware**.

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