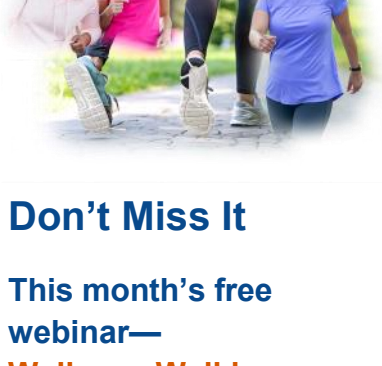


October Well Aware eNews

Welcome to the October 2020 issue of the *Well Aware eNews!* Read on to learn about—

- this month's wellness champion, a paraeducator who lost 11 pounds by taking advantage of Well Aware's virtual classes and other wellness resources;
- a webinar on the benefits and proper techniques of walking;
- the *Going the (Physical) Distance Relay* challenge;
- this year's Breast Cancer Awareness/Wear Pink Day;
- the importance of getting a flu shot (especially this year);
- a *Financial Fitness for Educators* webinar series; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar— Wellness Walking

In this webinar, we will review the benefits of walking and proper techniques and tips to help you incorporate more walking into your daily life.

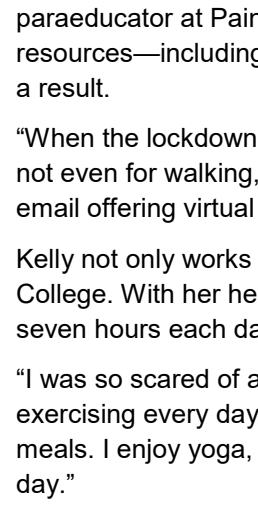
Thursday, October 22, 2020
4:00–5:00 p.m.

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 Refuses to Let Pandemic Slow Her Down

Kalyani (Kelly) Bezwada, Paraeducator, Paint Branch High School

Kelly Bezwada has refused to let the pandemic slow her down. The 63-years-young paraeducator at Paint Branch High School has taken advantage of many wellness resources—including a number of Well Aware's virtual classes—and has lost 11 pounds as a result.

"When the lockdown hit in March, I noticed that I was stuck in the house and not going out, not even for walking," Kelly said. "I didn't know what to do at the time. I saw the Well Aware email offering virtual exercise classes, and I decided to join. That was the turning point."

Kelly not only works five days a week for MCPS, she also works weekends at Montgomery College. With her hectic schedule, she found herself sitting in front of the computer six to seven hours each day.

"I was so scared of all the new changes during the quarantine," Kelly said. "I started exercising every day and also began watching my diet by eating three healthy home-cooked meals. I enjoy yoga, Zumba, tai chi, and meditation classes. I do yoga and Zumba every day."

Kelly feels that focusing on health and wellness is very important for school staff.

"We need to exercise to relieve the stress and rejuvenate for the next day," Kelly said. "Exercise boosts our mood and helps us to sleep well so we are ready for the next work day."

Kelly believes it's never too late to begin exercising and eating right. What else does she have to say about the importance of establishing a healthy lifestyle?

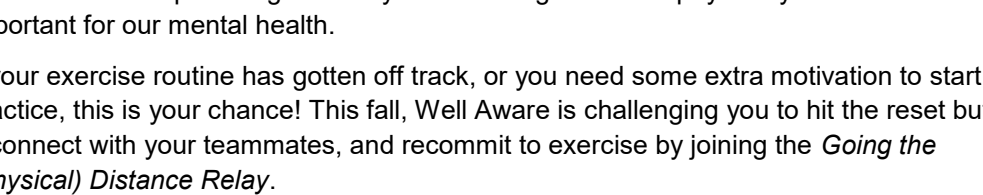
"I am 63-year-old breast cancer survivor. I used to give excuses when it came to exercise. I always used to say, 'I am busy with work and family and don't have time for exercise.' But now, with the pandemic, things have changed so much. WE need to change. We need to live healthier lives to protect ourselves, our families, and the people in our communities."

Kelly is proud of her accomplishment, and rightly so. Who better to advise those of us who have yet to begin exercising and eating right?

"Since March, I have lost 11 pounds," Kelly said. "That's a big achievement! My advice to my colleagues is to take small steps. You don't need to dance for one hour or spend an hour in yoga class. Even if you start with a half hour in the beginning, that's a good move."

Kelly also gives a lot of praise to her exercise instructors.

"They motivate me every day to do my best," she said.



Well Aware's Fall Physical Activity Challenge: *Going the (Physical) Distance Relay*

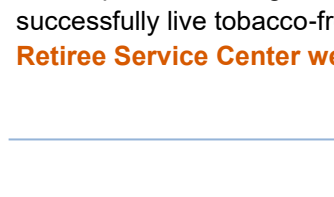
These are strange times we are living in. It is certainly easy to lose focus on exercise since so many gyms have closed and races cancelled. However, it is really important for adults to be active and keep moving. Not only is exercise good for us physically but it is also really important for our mental health.

If your exercise routine has gotten off track, or you need some extra motivation to start a practice, this is your chance! This fall, Well Aware is challenging you to hit the reset button, reconnect with your teammates, and recommit to exercise by joining the *Going the (Physical) Distance Relay*.

Registration for *Going the (Physical) Distance Relay* begins Monday, September 21, 2020. The challenge begins a week later on September 28, 2020 and ends December 6, 2020. Participants will log their activity throughout the 10-week challenge and track their progress using the online **Well Aware Fitness Log**. Based on participation, you will be eligible to win prizes for your team and your school or office.

Gather your team! The 10-week challenge started on Monday, September 28, but there is still time to register. Join your coworkers as a team or train as an individual. Learn more about the *Going the (Physical) Distance Relay*, including incentives, rules, and more by visiting the ***Going the (Physical) Distance Relay web page***.

TOBACCO CESSATION PROGRAM



Quit for Good: Now a Webinar!

Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente are teaming up again this fall 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 with Kaiser Permanente.

Now shorter in length and held as three, one-hour webinars, it is easier than ever take the first steps to becoming tobacco free. The webinars cover the skills necessary to quit and successfully live tobacco-free. Learn more about the program by visiting the **Employee and Retiree Service Center website**. You must register to participate by **emailing Well Aware**.

Wear Pink to Raise Breast Cancer Awareness

Wear Pink Day will be held this year on Friday, October 16, 2020. Join your MCPS coworkers and wear pink that day to raise breast cancer awareness.

Among American women, breast cancer, along with skin cancer, is the most common cancer. 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.

The Centers for Disease Control launched the *Bring Your Brave* program to provide information about breast cancer to women younger than age 45. The campaign tells real stories about young women whose lives have been affected by breast cancer. These stories about prevention, risk, family history, and survivorship bring to life the idea that young women can be personally affected by breast cancer. Through these testimonials, *Bring Your Brave* aims to inspire young women to learn their risk for breast cancer, talk with their health care provider about their risk, and live a breast-healthy lifestyle.

- **Learn more about the importance of family history, genetic counseling, and lifestyle choices.**
- **View testimonials from the *Bring Your Brave* campaign.**

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

If you are living with high levels of stress, you are putting your entire well-being at risk. Stress wreaks havoc on 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—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.

This fall, Well Aware is offering many classes virtually to help you learn tools to manage stress. From Mindfulness and Meditation, to Seated Yoga, Yoga, Stretch and Mobility, and Pilates, there is something for everyone. **Email Well Aware** for a monthly schedule of classes.

Online Physical Activity Classes for Fall

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.

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

Email Well Aware to request a monthly calendar of classes.

EAP to Hold Depression Screening Day

The MCPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) will conduct screenings for depression, anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder on Thursday, October 8, 2020. The screenings take less than 30 minutes and are available for all MCPS employees and their family members.

The screenings are free and confidential. They provide an opportunity to learn more about depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders; 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.

Call the EAP at 240-314-1040 if you have questions and/or to schedule an appointment. Appointments are available from 9:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. by telephone and via Zoom.

This Year, 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 this year—in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic—a flu shot is essential.

The typical flu is active from October through April each year. An estimated 5-20 percent of Americans get the flu each year with symptoms lasting up to two weeks. Although no one knows for certain how having the flu and coronavirus at the same time would affect your health, it could lead to further complications and/or more intense respiratory symptoms.

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 laid out detailed plans for getting this year's flu shot.

- **CareFirst Regional Flu Network**
- **CareFirst National Flu Network**
- **Kaiser Permanente Flu Shots**

Review these **other ways to protect yourself from colds and flu**.

Financial Fitness for Educators Webinar Series

Well Aware and the University of Maryland Extension are partnering to offer *Financial Fitness for Educators*, a four-part financial education webinar series. In these challenging times, getting financially fit by making positive decisions about your money is more important than ever. The webinar series is for adults of all ages and life stages. **Learn more.**

Immunity Boosting Foods Cooking Demonstration

Join Well Aware and Chef Fantastic Debbie on Zoom as we learn what types of foods boost immunity and prepare some fantastic dishes on Zoom as we make in your own kitchen. Recipes will be provided in advance so you can cook along with us or simply watch for the cooking techniques.

Zoom Cooking Demonstration

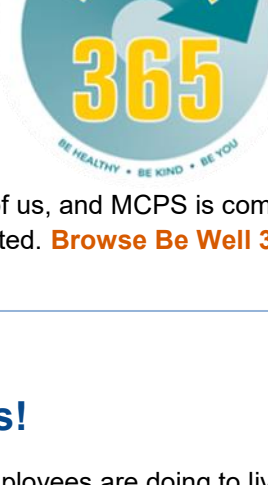
Wednesday, October 21, 2020
4:30–5:30 p.m.

Email Well Aware to register and we will send you the Zoom sign-in details.

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.

The last few months have been challenging ones for all of us, and MCPS is committed to ensuring that its staff members stay safe and feel supported. **Browse Be Well 365.**



Share Your Wellness Stories with Us!

Well Aware is proud of all of the hard work that MCPS employees are doing to live healthy and well lives. It is time to share your stories and your spirit via Twitter! Perhaps you need motivation to start exercising, change a behavior that is negatively impacting your health, or begin a virtual staff wellness program. Follow @mcpowellaware for incredible stories, wellness ideas, and encouragement from your MCPS coworkers. Read tips on living a healthy life and updates on MCPS staff wellness programs.

Have You Taken the [Wellness] Initiative for 2021? Alternative to Biometric Health Screening Available Starting September 8, 2020

An alternative way to complete the Wellness Initiatives biometric health screening—with an extended deadline—now is available for MCPS employees.

Due to COVID-19, Well Aware has been unable to hold onsite biometric health screenings. For that reason, beginning September 8, 2020, MCPS employees will be able to register for and complete *Wellness Initiatives: Biometrics Credit Alternative 2021 Benefit Year training** (course number 89555) on **Professional Development Online (PDO)**, in lieu of a biometric health screening. Employees who complete the training by **December 18, 2020**, will pay 1 percent less of their health insurance costs in 2021.

Employees who are able to complete their yearly physical with their doctor or at a MinuteClinic (for CareFirst members) have until **Friday, October 9, 2020**, to complete the physical and earn the 1 percent discount. **The deadline extension applies to the PDO training only.**

The Wellness Initiatives program provides employees covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan with incentives to reduce their health insurance costs. Be sure to take advantage of the rate reductions by following these steps:

1. See your doctor for an annual physical or, if you are a CareFirst member, have your physical at a CVS Minute Clinic by **October 9, 2020**;
OR
Register and complete the *Biometrics Credit Alternative* training by **December 18, 2020**.
2. Complete the health risk assessment on your medical plan's website by **October 9, 2020**, to pay an additional 1 percent less of your health insurance costs. This is the *Real Age Test* for CareFirst, and the *Total Health Assessment* for Kaiser Permanente.

Kaiser Permanente members: Be sure to log in to the Kaiser Permanente web page to consent to your participation in the program. Without your consent, your information will not be reported.

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

**Be sure to use the Chrome web browser for this training.*