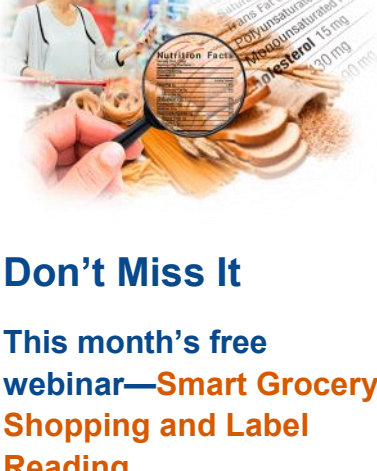


October Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion, a middle school math teacher who has spent much of the pandemic outside of her exercise comfort zone by undertaking an intense workout regime;
- a webinar to discover how to shop smarter to meet your health needs and read food labels to make healthy choices;
- how the *Pile on the Miles* physical activity challenge is stacking up;
- this year's depression screening;
- the importance of getting a flu shot;
- breast cancer awareness efforts; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar—Smart Grocery Shopping and Label Reading

Join us to discover how to shop smarter to meet your health needs and learn to read food labels to make healthy choices.

Wednesday, October 27, 2021
 4:00–5:00 p.m.

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.

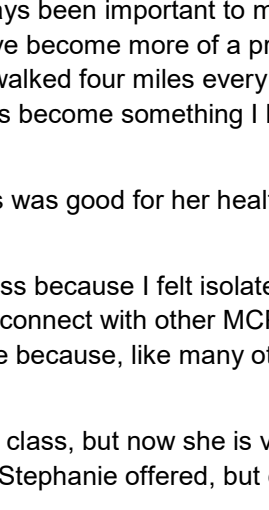
Spread the word with our **printable flyer**. Visit the **Wellness Webinar Library**.

Presented by:
Kaiser Permanente

Wellness Champion Overcomes Her Fear to Get Fit

Mrs. Wendy F. Salzman, math teacher, Robert Frost Middle School

Wendy F. Salzman, a math teacher at Robert Frost Middle School, spent much of the pandemic outside of her exercise comfort zone by undertaking an intense workout regime. After initially feeling intimidated by the HIITCamp class, she spoke with the teacher and, with some modifications, signed up. As a result, she has seen some huge improvements in her stretch and conditioning.



Stephanie Bumgarner, HIITCamp instructor, (top); Wendy Salzman (bottom)

"Health and wellness have always been important to me, but over the last 18 months, exercise and healthy eating have become more of a priority," Wendy said. "I am an avid walker. During the pandemic I walked four miles every single day. Since starting the HIITCamp classes, exercise has become something I look forward to. I encourage everyone to give it a try."

Wendy knew that the HIIT class was good for her health, but she also was looking to gain a social connection too.

"I decided to try Stephanie's class because I felt isolated during virtual teaching," Wendy said. "I was looking for ways to connect with other MCPS adults and teachers. I also needed to up my exercise game because, like many others, I had gained weight during COVID."

Wendy was hesitant to take the class, but now she is very glad she did! Initially, she took advantage of the modifications Stephanie offered, but eventually found she didn't need them.

"I was terrified that Stephanie's HIITCamp class would be too hard for me, and I wouldn't be able to keep up," Wendy said. "I was pleasantly surprised that she provided modifications for every move. At first, I chose to do many of the modifications, but as the weeks went on, I needed them less and less. Now, I rarely modify the exercises. I am so proud of my fitness level!"

Wendy has gotten so much out of taking this particular class and recognizes the many benefits she's gained.

"I feel stronger and more physically fit after doing the HIITCamp classes consistently," Wendy said. "Stephanie is always upbeat and positive, which makes the classes super fun! I always feel a sense of accomplishment after completing a class and a lot less stressed, too."

She discovered another benefit to having taken the classes.

"As a result of exercising more, I have started eating a healthier and more balanced diet," Wendy said.

Wendy has advice for MCPS staff who are a little hesitant to take a class like HIITCamp.

"Give these classes a try!" Wendy said. "You will be surprised at how much you can do. The classes are free for MCPS employees, so there's nothing to lose. I highly recommend Stephanie's HIITCamp class. I promise you will leave feeling amazing! She is motivating, supportive, and the greatest cheerleader you will ever have."

Wellness Initiatives One Week Left to Save Money on Your Health Insurance in 2022

The Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Wellness Initiatives program provides you with incentives to reduce your health insurance costs. If you are covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan, complete a biometric health screening and your insurance provider's online health risk assessment by October 8, 2021—and yearly thereafter—to take advantage of the rate reductions in 2022 and beyond.

You can pay 1 percent less of the total cost of your health insurance in 2022 by seeing your doctor or visiting a CVS Minute Clinic (if you are a CareFirst member) for an annual physical. Not able to schedule a physical this year? Instead, complete the *Biometrics Incentive Alternative 2022 Benefit Year* training (course number 90270) on **Professional Development Online (PDO)** to earn biometrics credit. For an additional 1 percent credit, complete a health risk assessment on your medical plan's website by October 8, 2021. Both CareFirst and Kaiser Permanente members must log in to their medical plan's web page to consent to their participation in the program. Without your consent, your information will not be reported.

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

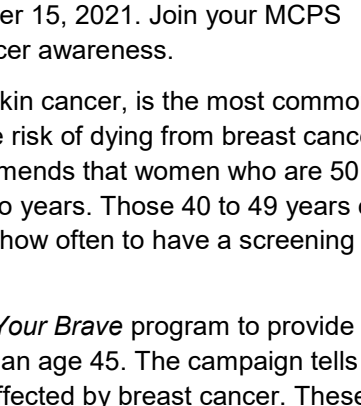
Pile on the Miles During this Fall's Physical Activity Challenge!

Walking can reduce your risk for chronic illnesses such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease and more. A walk every day can reduce depression, strengthen bones and balance, and even reduce your risk for Alzheimer's disease.

This fall, Well Aware is challenging you to incorporate a daily walk into your lifestyle in the *Pile on the Miles* physical activity challenge. You determine the level of your challenge by selecting a goal of walking 100, 200, or 300 miles in 100 days. This is a big goal, but day by day, it is attainable! Another goal of this challenge is to show you that physical activity doesn't need to be complicated. Something as simple as a brisk daily walk can help you live a healthier life.

How many of us have started a fitness journey only to give up a few weeks or days in? Well Aware is challenging you to take this opportunity to start and set a healthy habit! Habits are essential to your health. They can make or break your chances of achieving and maintaining other lifestyle goals such as sticking to an eating plan, exercising regularly, managing diabetes/other medical conditions, increasing your quality of life, and promoting longevity.

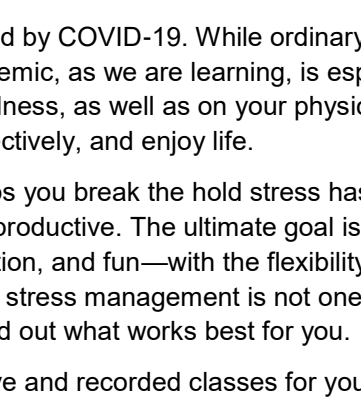
While we are already a few weeks into the challenge, it is never too late to start! **Learn more** about the *Pile on the Miles* challenge by visiting the **Well Aware web page**.



It Is Easier Than Ever to Quit for Good

MCPS and Kaiser Permanente are teaming up again 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 if you participate with Kaiser.

Now shorter in length and held via webinar, it is easier than ever to take the first steps to quitting, for good. Join us as we discuss the skills necessary to successfully give up smoking and live tobacco-free. Our next class will begin on Tuesday, October 12. **Learn more.**



Wear Pink to Raise Breast Cancer Awareness

Wear Pink Day will be held this year on Friday, October 15, 2021. 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

There isn't much in our lives that hasn't been impacted by COVID-19. While ordinary change can be difficult, change brought on by a pandemic, as we are learning, is especially stressful. Stress wreaks havoc on your emotional wellness, as well as on 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—with 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 continuing our online virtual live and recorded classes for your convenience. From yoga and seated yoga, to mindfulness and tai chi, there is something for everyone. Give them all a try to see what you like best.

Email Well Aware to request the full schedule of classes. **Opt in to receive the daily wellness email** for class links and updates.

Join Us for Online Physical Activity Classes

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 heart and mind health, help you manage stress, and enhance your overall wellness.

This fall, Well Aware is continuing its online virtual live recorded classes for your convenience. From Zumba and HIITCamp, to yoga and core workout classes, there is something for everyone. Give them all a try to see what you like best!

Email Well Aware to request the full schedule of classes. **Opt in to receive the daily wellness email** for class links and updates.

EAP to Hold Virtual Mental Health Screenings

The MCPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is conducting virtual screenings for depression, anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. A screening will take less than 30 minutes and is available to all MCPS employees and their family members.

To receive a screening, schedule a virtual appointment by telephoning the EAP at 240-314-1040. Appointments will be available from 9:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. We will send the assessment to you to complete. Once you have completed it, return it to us, and we will score it prior to your scheduled session.

The free and confidential screenings provide an opportunity to complete a brief screening questionnaire; learn more about depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders; and speak one-on-one with a mental health professional. If appropriate, referrals will be made for a complete evaluation.

For more information, telephone the EAP at the number above or **email Robin Rosenbauer**, LCSW-C, CEAP.

Getting a Flu Shot Could Be More Important Than Ever

Flu season is fast approaching. Getting a flu shot is the best way to protect against the flu and stop its spread. In the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its delta variant, a flu shot is essential.

The typical flu is active each year from October through April. An estimated 5-20 percent of Americans get the flu each year with symptoms lasting up to two weeks. Having the flu and coronavirus at the same time likely leads to further complications and more severe outcomes.

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**
- **Kaiser Permanente Flu Shots**

See **other ways to protect yourself from colds and flu.**

BurnAlong Help MCPS Become America's Healthiest Company!

MCPS is competing to become America's Healthiest Company in the BurnAlong health and wellness platform! Through October 15, 2021, MCPS employees are competing by taking classes, from any category, on the BurnAlong platform. The winner will be chosen based on the highest number of average minutes completed per employee.

MCPS and CareFirst have partnered to give you access to BurnAlong, which comes with four FREE accounts for your friends and family members. The thousands of available classes include meditation, boxing, yoga, bootcamp, spin, nutrition, and even financial literacy. Specialized senior classes for you or older members of your family who may need physical activity but need to remain at home also are offered. Classes can be taken as a group, so you can work out with a friend or family member while seeing and talking with one another during the online class.

Interested? **Register and log in.** Help MCPS win this healthy competition!

Check Out Our Online Health and Wellness "Toolbox"

Well Aware, the MCPS employee wellness program, brings you the *Well Aware Wellness Toolbox*, a web page with many resources to help MCPS staff adjust to the return to schools and offices. These tools include physical and mental health resources, lists of free exercise and mindfulness classes, links to resources for improving sleep, nutrition, and more. MCPS staff are encouraged to take the time for self-care. Studies show that self-care is essential to well-being, especially during times of uncertainty and transition. Check out the **Well Aware Toolbox** to see what self-care resources will work best for you!

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.

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**.