

April Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champions—25 members of a 21 Day Challenge team from Gaithersburg High School whose motivation to lose weight led them to adopt mindful eating habits;
- this month's seminar/webinar from Cigna on what it takes to start a successful walking program;
- National Cancer Control Month;
- another chance to stress less;
- the American Heart Association's Healthy for Good movement;
- the effect drinking soda has on sleep; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free seminar/webinar— **These Shoes Were Made for Walking**

Step up and find out what it takes to start a successful walking program—for yourself, your school, or your group.

Thursday, April 20, 2017
 10:00–11:00 a.m.

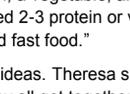
Shady Grove Bus Depot
 16651 Crabbs Branch Way
 Rockville, Maryland 20855

Thursday, April 27, 2017
 4:00–5:00 p.m.

Webinar

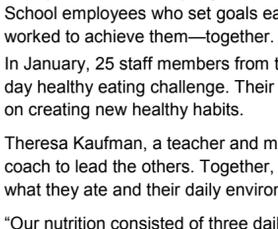
Please register for the seminar or webinar by e-mailing **Well Aware** with the date and time you plan to attend. If you register for the webinar, you will receive a link in your Outlook e-mail as well as an Outlook calendar reminder.

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



Wellness Champions Motivated to Adopt Mindful Eating Habits Through 21 Day Challenge

Theresa R. Kaufman, teacher, and her 21 Day Challenge Team, Gaithersburg High School



Theresa R. Kaufman, teacher, center, and Gaithersburg High School's 21 Day Challenge team

A new year provides an excellent time to recommit to health and wellness and set new goals. Those who are most successful in sticking to their resolutions do so because they have a strong support system. This was clearly demonstrated by a group of Gaithersburg High School employees who set goals early this year and worked to achieve them—together.

In January, 25 staff members from the school teamed up to support each other during a 21-day healthy eating challenge. Their goals were to jump-start their metabolism and to work on creating new healthy habits.

Theresa Kaufman, a teacher and member of the team, used her training as a certified health coach to lead the others. Together, they decided to focus on finding a balance between what they ate and their daily environment.

"Our nutrition consisted of three daily meals containing a protein, a vegetable, and a small portion of a starch or grain," Theresa said. "We also incorporated 2-3 protein or veggie snacks to eat between meals. We stayed away from sugars and fast food."

Each team member received a grocery list, recipes, and snack ideas. Theresa suggested activities for ensuring balance like exercise and meditation. They all got together for a midweek check-in too. Now, team members are hard at work planning their next 21-day challenge: *Mindful eating and cutting out sugars*.

Theresa has some great advice to other school and office staff who might be thinking about starting a wellness challenge.

"Start with a shorter program rather than a longer one to help people slowly ease into changing their bad habits to good ones," Theresa said. "And be sure to hold small celebrations along the way."

Join Us for Spring Training!

We are four weeks into the *Spring Training* challenge and MCPS staff members are working hard to increase their physical activity! So far, 24 individual prizes have been given out for logging activity, and we seem to have the spring back in our steps!

It is not too late to join! If you haven't already, register for the online **Well Aware Fitness Log** by creating an account and start logging your activity. Learn more about *Spring Training*, including incentives, rules, and more by visiting the **Well Aware website**.



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 this April, we remember those we have lost, support Americans fighting this disease, and recommit to progress toward 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, living tobacco-free, and taking advantage of appropriate regularly scheduled cancer screenings.

Adapted from: www.cms.gov. Used by permission.

Learn more about screening for many types of cancers.

Wellness Initiatives: Know Your Numbers

If you are covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan through CareFirst, Cigna, or Kaiser Permanente, you can learn more about your health and reduce your contributions to your 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.

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

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

To learn more about how to complete these tasks, 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 this spring.

For information on dates, times, and class locations, **e-mail Well Aware**.

Quit for Good! We Can Help You 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 can be 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 are up against, what your options are, and where to go for help.

Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente can help!

They have teamed up to produce an eight-week tobacco cessation class for MCPS staff and significant others. The next session of *Quit for Good* begins on Monday, May 1, 2017, at 4:30 p.m. in the Maple Room at 45 West Gude Drive, Rockville. To register, **e-mail Well Aware**. To learn more about the program, including the week-by-week course content, visit the **Well Aware website**.

Remember: By quitting, you can avoid paying the 3 percent tobacco surcharge on your MCPS-provided health insurance premiums. **Learn more about the surcharge.**

American Heart Association: Healthy For Good

Each April, MCPS and Well Aware have participated in the American Heart Association's (AHA's) annual National Walking Day. This year, National Walking Day has been expanded to a month-long initiative to Move More in April as part of the AHA's Healthy For Good movement.

Healthy For Good is intended to motivate Americans to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles to create lasting change. AHA's approach is: *Eat smart. Add color. Move more. Be well.*

Share the following resources for each week in April with your coworkers. The tip sheet offers ways to Move More in April.

Week 1—**Walk Your Way to a Healthier Life**

Week 2—**Get in the Game: Sports Fitness**

Week 3—**Fun for the Whole Family**

Week 4—**Stress Less with Mindful Movement**

Daily Tips to Help You Move More

Sleep Solutions Is Soda Affecting the Quality of Your Sleep?

If you're not getting enough sleep at night, consider what you're drinking during the day. While coffee and alcohol are often blamed for their negative impact on sleep, there's another drink that has been linked with poor sleep: soda.

People who drink a lot of sugary, caffeinated drinks tend to sleep for five or fewer hours a night. While it's unclear whether the drinks lead to sleeplessness or under-sleeping causes people to reach for sugary sodas, there is an association between the two. There are a number of reasons that soda doesn't do you any favors when it comes to healthy sleep. Here are a few—

- **The caffeine can keep you up.** Starting with the most obvious culprit, caffeine is a well-known stimulant that blocks chemicals in the brain that make you feel sleepy, temporarily helping you to feel more alert. It's safe in moderation, but can stay in your bloodstream for about six hours. If you have a soda with dinner, you may well still feel the effects at bedtime.

- **It may worsen nighttime heartburn symptoms.** The carbonation in soft drinks can lead to bloating and stomach pressure that contributes to heartburn. Heartburn has a tendency to flare up at night and make you more likely to suffer from sleep problems like insomnia, daytime sleepiness, and restless legs syndrome.

- **It's a contributor to obesity.** Sugar-sweetened drinks like soda are the number one source of sugar in the American diet, making up nearly half of the added sugars that Americans consume. A 20-ounce bottle of regular cola packs about 240 calories from sugar. Yet, paradoxically, even without containing any calories, diet soda can contribute to weight gain too. That's bad news for sleep quality, since obesity raises the risk of sleep apnea and more sleep loss, creating a vicious cycle.

The good news is that cutting out soda and replacing it with water or seltzer can leave you feeling hydrated and refreshed—without hurting your sleep.

Adapted from: <https://sleepfoundation.org>.

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**.