

August Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion, a bus operator, wellness coach, and personal trainer, who is regaining her health through exercise and clean eating after suffering from Lyme disease;
- a webinar to review common health concerns and screenings and find strategies to keep your family members healthy while practicing self-care;
- the Be Well 365 web page;
- this fall's 5k training program;
- how to save money on your health insurance;
- Well Aware's online classes for stress management and physical activity; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar—Family Health

Join us for this webinar to review common health concerns and screenings and find strategies to keep your family members healthy while practicing self-care.

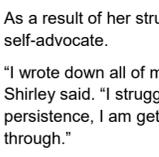
Wednesday, August 25, 2021
4:00–5:00 p.m.

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 Suffers Setback, Overcomes It By Exercising, Eating Clean, and Encouraging Others



Shirley B. Gonzales, bus operator, Randolph Depot

Shirley B. Gonzales, bus operator, wellness coach, and personal trainer, has been involved with wellness activities for more than five years. Recently though, she went through a three-month period of inexplicable pain. Since being diagnosed with Lyme disease, she is working to reclaim her health and wellness through exercise and clean eating.

"My body ached from head to toe," Shirley said. "I had excruciating headaches, major inflammation in my knee, and severe pain in my upper body and shoulder that felt like they were going to break!

As a result of her struggle with the disease, she became more self-aware and more of a self-advocate.

"I wrote down all of my questions for my doctor and didn't give up until I had an answer," Shirley said. "I struggled for the first time in my life, and my workouts suffered! With persistence, I am getting better. I can truly say that my clean eating has helped me through."

Now, Shirley encourages her coworkers to adopt the same clean eating habits.

"I love helping my coworkers eat healthy," Shirley said. We start with detailed recipes for breakfast, lunch, and dinner and a healthy grocery shopping list."

Shirley maintains a monthly calendar that she updates with healthy recipes. She believes that following a healthy eating plan can be fairly simple if you plan ahead and stick with it.

She currently leads the wellness classes at the Randolph Depot. She also is a CPR Instructor and has assisted with Well Aware's onsite CPR classes.

"I started living a healthy lifestyle at a young age," Shirley said. "I was enrolled in gymnastics and karate. As I got older, I realized a healthy lifestyle can prevent diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, cholesterol, cancer, arthritis, knee problems, back injuries, and so much more!"

Shirley's passion to help others feel and look better led her to taking on the wellness coach role at her depot. She leads a group walk to Brookside Gardens where they walk around the park and then up to Wheaton Regional Park where they have outdoors equipment for circuit training.

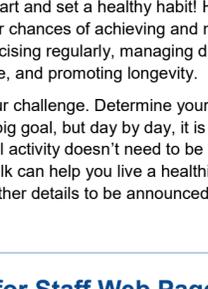
"I saw that there was a need to help motivate my colleagues, so I became a coach," Shirley said. "I feel great when I'm able to show how easy it is to feel better with nutrition and movement."

"I have a faithful group that walks on Tuesdays and Fridays," Shirley said. "We put in more than 8,000 steps with a half-hour, full-body workout."

Shirley has advice to others looking to lead a healthy lifestyle.

"No matter your age, you can believe in your own beauty—both inside and out," Shirley said. "Treasure your health every day, practice positive thinking, never stop moving, and always smile!"

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.

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 lifestyle goals such as sticking to an eating plan, exercising regularly, managing diabetes/ other medical conditions, increasing your quality of life, and promoting longevity.

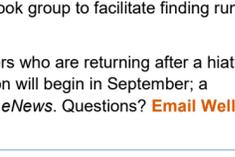
This fall, Well Aware is challenging you to choose your challenge. Determine your goal of 100, 200, or 300 miles walked in 100 days. This is a big goal, but day by day, it is attainable! The goal of this challenge is to show you that physical activity doesn't need to be complicated. Something as simple as a daily brisk walk can help you live a healthier life. The challenge starts in September. Stay tuned for further details to be announced in the September *Well Aware eNews*.

Have You Visited the Be Well 365 for Staff Web Page?

Last year, MCPS launched a well-being web page for its employees, **Be Well 365**. 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. This has been a challenging time for all of us, and MCPS is committed to ensuring that its staff members stay safe and feel supported.

It's Time to Quit for Good

TOBACCO CESSATION PROGRAM



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.

All classes will be held online and registration is open! **Learn more about upcoming classes**. You must register to participate by **emailing Well Aware**.

Get Ready to Run in this Fall's 5K Training Program

Running is an accessible, inexpensive, and effective way to improve your health and fitness, relieve stress, and boost your confidence. Whether you have never run or it has been a while since you last ran, the cooler fall weather will be the perfect time to start training!

Following a successful spring session, the Run Farther & Faster MCPS Fall Virtual Group 5K Training Program will begin on Monday, September 20, 2021, and run through Thanksgiving. Participants will receive a comprehensive nine-week training calendar, weekly emails with training support and running-related information, as well as email access to certified running coaches should you have questions or concerns.

The training calendar begins with run/walk intervals and progresses safely and gradually toward continuous running. It also includes strength workouts and form drills. Interested participants also will have access to a private Facebook group to facilitate finding running partners.

The program is appropriate for new runners or runners who are returning after a hiatus. Space is limited to the first 50 registrants. Registration will begin in September; a registration link will be in the September *Well Aware eNews*. Questions? **Email Well Aware**.

Wellness Initiatives

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.

If you do, you will pay 2 percent less of the total cost of your health insurance. See your doctor for an annual physical or complete the *Biometrics Incentive Alternative 2022 Benefit Year* training (course number 90270) on **Professional Development Online (PDO)**. Then, 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 your participation in the program. Without your consent, your information will not be reported.

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

Stress Less This Summer

These days, everyone is adjusting post-quarantine, which can be very stressful. 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—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.

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.

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.

Share Your Wellness Stories and Encourage Your Coworkers Through Twitter!

Well Aware is proud of all of the hard work that MCPS employee are doing to live a healthy and well life. It is time to share your stories and your spirit! Or, do you need motivation to start a staff wellness program or change an individual behavior? Follow @mcpswellaware for incredible stories, wellness ideas, encouragement from your MCPS coworkers, tips on living a healthy life, or updates on MCPS staff wellness activities.

Check Out Our Online Health and Wellness "Toolbox"

Well Aware, the MCPS employee wellness program, has launched the *Well Aware Wellness Toolbox*, a web page with many resources to help MCPS staff live healthy and well lives. 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!

BurnAlong: Our Second Annual Virtual Summer Camp Is Here!

MCPS and CareFirst have partnered to give you access to BurnAlong, a health and wellness platform that 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**.

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**.