

## December Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion—a bus operator with diabetes who has lost weight and lowered her A1C count by participating regularly in Department of Transportation wellness activities;
- this month's seminar/webinar from Cigna where you will learn the differences between a cold and the flu, how to boost your immune system to prevent them, and the truth about flu vaccinations;
- ways to enter the sweet-free zone;
- how we are doing in the Go for the Gold challenge;
- options for minding your wellness during the holidays; and
- more!



### Don't Miss It

**This month's free seminar/webinar—  
Ah-Ah-Ahchoo: The Common Cold and the Flu**

Is it a cold or the flu? Learn the difference, how to boost your immune system and protect yourself from these nasty viruses, and also common myths and tips about flu vaccination.

**Wednesday, December 7, 2016**  
10:00–11:00 a.m.

West Farm Depot  
11920 Bournefield Way  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

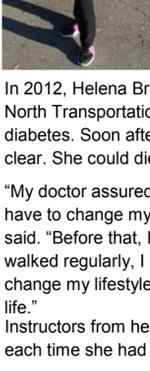
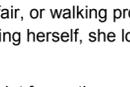
**Thursday, December 15, 2016**  
4:00–5:00 p.m.

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**.

Presented by:



### Wellness Champion Changed Her Life to Make It a Long and Healthy One

**Helena Bryant, bus operator, Shady Grove North Transportation Depot**

In 2012, Helena Bryant, bus operator, Shady Grove North Transportation Depot, was diagnosed with diabetes. Soon after, the reality of her situation became clear. She could die, and she was afraid.

"My doctor assured me that I would live, but I would have to change my diet and exercise habits," Helena said. "Before that, I ate whatever I wanted. Although I walked regularly, I had to make a mental decision to change my lifestyle in order to live a long and healthy life."

Instructors from her depot's wellness programs had frequently asked her to participate, but each time she had declined their invitation.

"The Zumba instructors always invited me to come to their class but I never would," Helena said. "One day, I looked around and realized there were a lot of unhealthy people. I didn't want to be part of that anymore, so I started going to the Zumba classes."

She had so much fun with Zumba that she started participating in every program the depot offered. Now, whether it's a health seminar, line dance, health fair, or walking program, you will find her there. The best part? In the process of totally enjoying herself, she lost 35 pounds and lowered her A1C level.

Helena has received a lot of encouragement and has learned a lot from other participants in the depot's wellness program. She has taken full advantage of the support and lessons and has changed her life.

"The instructors are so encouraging, the seminars teach me to make better eating choices, and I love the live cooking demos," Helena said. "I registered for a diabetes management and nutrition class at my local health center, which reinforces what I am learning at the depot."

She has learned about the importance of portion size, and how to read food labels and count carbs.

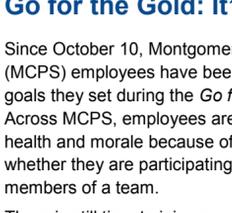
"I gave up refined carbs and now drink teas without sugar," Helena said. "I have been encouraging my fiancé to join me and he is now down 14 pounds! It is so worth it. Now I know what it really means to feel good."

Helena now finds herself encouraging others to find their path to wellness.

"You only have one life, so make it the best life possible by getting healthy," Helena said. "All classes at the depot are free, so take advantage of them. There is something for everyone, no matter your level of fitness and it is *fun!*"

Helena looks forward to maintaining her healthy lifestyle through the depot's wellness program.

"I think we are on the right path with a good balance of health and wellness classes and activities," Helena said. "I would love to see more participation from my co-workers. They are missing out on such a good thing. I am spreading the message to all who will listen."



### Enter the Sweet-Free Zone

This year, Well Aware is once again challenging you to designate your school or office as a Sweet-Free Zone. By establishing a sweet-free zone at work, you pledge to do your best to celebrate the holidays in a healthy way.

Is your school or office interested in taking the sweet-free challenge? Post **this flyer** on the staff lounge or break room door to designate the area as a sweet-free zone. Then, follow the suggestions on the flyer for changing the food culture in your school or office.

Are you doing something special to stop the influx of sweet and treats in your work location? **Share your story and photos** with Well Aware!

Do you know what you should be eating over the holidays? Take this **holiday sweets and treats quiz!**

### Go for the Gold: It's Not Too Late!

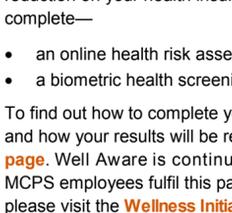
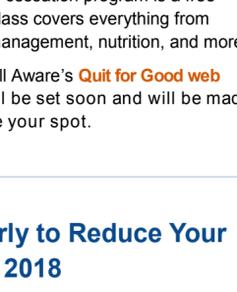
Since October 10, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) employees have been working to achieve the goals they set during the *Go for the Gold* challenge.

Across MCPS, employees are experiencing better health and morale because of their involvement, whether they are participating as individuals or as members of a team.

There is still time to join us and win prizes! Your activity updates need to be entered into the online **Well Aware Fitness Log** by 12 noon on Monday, December 19, 2016.

Stay tuned! Go for the Gold grand prize winners will be announced in the December 20th issue of *The Bulletin!*

**Learn more about Go for the Gold.**



### It's Time to Quit—for Good.

It is always a good time to quit! The Quit for Good tobacco cessation program is a free eight-week class for MCPS staff and their spouses. This class covers everything from nicotine replacement therapy, coping techniques, stress management, nutrition, and more.

For more information about Quit for Good, please visit Well Aware's **Quit for Good web page**. The next class will begin in the spring. Dates will be set soon and will be made available on the web page. **E-mail Well Aware** to reserve your spot.

### Wellness Initiatives: It Is Not Too Early to Reduce Your Share of Health Insurance Costs for 2018

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.

The Wellness Initiatives are very simple to accomplish. To receive the maximum 2 percent reduction on your health insurance premiums in 2018, you have until October 6, 2017, to complete—

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

To find out how to complete your biometric health screening and health risk assessment, and how your results will be reported to MCPS, please visit the **Wellness Initiatives web page**. Well Aware is continuing to offer onsite biometric health screenings to help MCPS employees fulfill this part of the incentive program. For dates, times, and locations, please visit the **Wellness Initiatives web page**.

### Mind Your Wellness

Are the holidays stressing you out? Join Well Aware to learn how to manage your stress!

#### Stress Reduction and Mindfulness for a Healthy Holiday Season

Learn strategies and tips to help you minimize stress and increase peace of mind and well-being as you prepare for the upcoming holiday season. You will learn exercises to help you embrace mindfulness, moderation, and wellness in your approaches to work, family, and food.

Monday, December 5, 2016  
4:30 p.m.  
Café 45  
45 West Gude Drive  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

#### Meditation

Mondays, December 5, 12, and 19, 2016  
5:00 p.m.  
Aspen Room  
45 West Gude Drive  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

#### Seated Yoga

Wednesdays, December 7 and 14, 2016  
4:30–5:30 p.m.  
Maple Room  
45 West Gude Drive  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

#### Tai Chi

Thursday, December 8, 2016  
4:30–5:30 p.m.  
Café 45  
45 West Gude Drive  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

### Join Us for Zumba!

Join Well Aware for Zumba! Classes will be held at two elementary schools. For details, see the **Weller Road Elementary School flyer** and the **Washington Grove Elementary School flyer**.

### Let's All #Commit2Ten

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation is launching #Commit2Ten, a campaign challenging the nation to add 10 more minutes of physical activity a day. Individuals, families, schools, after-school programs, companies, and communities are invited to prove that a little more physical activity every day makes a big difference.

Enjoy this **short video** from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation to see how to get the Wellness Program at your school or office up and running.

Spread the word! How do you intend to #Commit2Ten? Join other Maryland public schools and share your stories on social media with the #Commit2Ten hashtag.

### Sleep Solutions Sleep and Meditation

Do you ever have a hard time quieting your mind at bedtime? Or find it hard to sleep because your thoughts keep going to tomorrow's to-do list?

Have you tried meditation? Meditations can be used to calm your anxiety, overcome negative thinking, increase your confidence, and more. Doing this at night right before bed can help to eliminate some of the reasons you find it hard to sleep.

Meditation does not have to mean sitting in a quiet room. Guided imagery is a great way to meditate. Listening to a voice tell a story, or drawing an image in your mind is a wonderful way to melt away the stress before bed.

Or, try a podcast! A podcast is an audio file made available on the Internet for downloading to a computer, portable media player, or smart phone. Podcasts are usually available as a series that subscribers can receive automatically. Here are links to podcasts that you can listen to at bedtime to help you relax and sleep:

- **Meditation Oasis** features guided meditation and music to help you meditate.
- **Sleep to Strange** will help you get to sleep and overcome your insomnia. The podcast of silly stories gets progressively more boring via "pointless meanders, lulling soothing tones, and strange asides" to "distract your racing brain and let you drift off to dreamland."
- The Mindful Awareness Research Center at UCLA has free **guided meditations** in English and Spanish.

Sweet dreams!

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**.