

February Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion—a physical education teacher and his colleagues, who have moved their school's wellness program to the next level through collaboration, administrative support, and grants;
- a seminar/webinar on planning for healthy meals;
- this year's National Wear Red Day;
- another chance to climb *Flights to Fitness*;
- healthy habits to prevent heart disease; and
- more!

Wellness Champions Move Staff Wellness to the Next Level

Kyle Finke and Harmony Hills Elementary School



Kyle Finke, center, with other Harmony Hills staff

Harmony Hills Elementary School has been at the forefront of MCPS staff wellness activities for many years. Recently, Kyle Finke, physical education teacher, and the school's wellness committee have established even more ways to promote wellness at the school—for staff and students.

One way they have done this is by forming a partnership with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. After completing an assessment through the Alliance of the school's wellness efforts, the wellness committee determined that overall staff wellness and classroom activity breaks would be its primary focus this school year.

"During pre-service week, we built a Wellness Wednesday into our agenda, during which staff had an opportunity to participate in a wide variety of physical activities like yoga, Dane Dance Revolution, and an obstacle course," Kyle said. "Staff members also were able to participate in a mindfulness session, and we offered healthy snacks to encourage healthy eating."



Don't Miss It

This month's free seminar/webinar— Become a Master Meal Planner

Each of us has a unique lifestyle. Creating meal plans that meet your nutritional needs while accommodating your lifestyle can be challenging. It also can help to motivate you to eat better and more efficiently. At this seminar/ webinar, you will hear about the different types of foods, their benefits, and the best way to incorporate them into your daily life. You will also learn to plan healthy meals and maintain a healthy attitude in the process.

Thursday, February 14, 2019 10:00–11:00 a.m. Shady Grove Bus Depot

16651 Crabbs Branch Way Rockville, Maryland 20855

Wednesday, February 20, 2019 10:00–11:00 a.m. West Farm Bus Depot 11920 Bournefield Way Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

Thursday, February 21, 2019 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: CareFirst

The wellness committee also initiated several wellness clubs for the school's staff. The clubs were selected based on results from a staff survey and include yoga, fitness workouts, sports/games, and a walking club.

"The wellness team is continually looking to gather our coworkers' ideas and opinions and incorporate them into the decisions we make," Kyle said.

In addition to staff wellness, the school has adopted classroom activity breaks to support student wellness and learning. Activities during the brief breaks may include stretches, squats, or marching in place.

"The benefits of physical activity for students throughout the school day are many," Kyle said. "They include increased attentiveness, reduced behavioral distractions, and more engagement in learning tasks."

The Harmony Hills wellness team is working hard to promote its wellness events. Every Wednesday, the committee sends an e-mail to school staff to celebrate all of the healthy happenings at the school. Sending the weekly Wellness Wednesday e-mails also helps to cultivate a culture of wellness school-wide.

"Our e-mails highlight various staff members and their wellness accomplishments and provide resources for classroom teachers to use during classroom activity breaks," Kyle said.

Kyle credits the Harmony Hills administration for the success of the wellness committee's initiatives. The administration has supported the committee in acquiring grants to help fund wellness activities, helped promote wellness initiatives by highlighting them in the *Staff Bulletin*, and built time into the pre-service agenda for staff to focus on their own personal wellness. They also allowed committee members to lead active team builders before staff meetings to further promote wellness.

"We certainly have the support from the top, which has led to our success," Kyle said.

Kyle also acknowledges the importance of financial support and team building when developing a school-wide culture of wellness.

"The grants we've received from Well Aware and the Alliance for a Healthier Generation have certainly helped our efforts," Kyle said.

Just as important has been the collaborative approach the committee has taken to addressing the schools' wellness needs. Harmony Hills has wellness committee representatives from the classroom, the health room, and its Linkages Center.

"Collaboration has definitely made the committee's work more manageable and practical when implementing action items," Kyle said. "There are so many resources available out there to support wellness endeavors, and having a wellness team can really help to maximize our impact, especially at the local level."

Today is National Wear Red Day!

As announced in *The Bulletin* last month, the American Heart Association (AHA) is holding its yearly National Wear Red Day today, Friday, February 1, 2019, to call attention to heart disease. According to AHA, "Heart disease and stroke cause 1 in 3 deaths among women each year, killing approximately one woman every 80 seconds." It doesn't have to be that way, however. AHA tells us that "80 percent of cardiac and stroke events may be prevented with education and action."

Well Aware encourages all MCPS employees to make heart health a priority. Schedule your annual preventive check-up to review your overall health, measure your blood pressure, check your cholesterol and look for signs of heart disease, stroke, and other illnesses.

Do your part to educate yourself, your friends, and your family this year. Join the movement to end heart disease and strokes in women because it's not just a man's disease. Let's *all* Go Red!

- **G**: Get Your Numbers
- O: Own Your Lifestyle
- R: Realize Your Risk
- E: Educate Your Family

D: Don't Be Silent

Is your school, office, or depot wearing red today? Share pictures of your coworkers participating in National Wear Red Day by **e-mailing them to Well Aware**.

Watch this video to learn more about National Wear Red Day.



The Best Time to Quit ... Is Now!

Are you ready to quit? *Quit for Good* is a free, eight-week tobacco cessation class for MCPS staff and their spouses. The class covers everything from nicotine replacement therapy, coping techniques, stress management, nutrition, and more.

Tobacco-users who complete the *Quit for Good* tobacco cessation program can have the 25 percent tobacco-user surcharge waived and, depending on when the program is completed, refunded. Learn more.

For more information on the *Quit for Good* tobacco cessation program, visit the *Quit for Good* web page. E-mail Well Aware to reserve your spot in the next class.

Flights to Fitness: Climb the Tallest Buildings in the U.S.!

Stair climbing can be a wonderful way to keep fit. Most of us work in or live near a building with stairs. Stair climbing can be done anytime throughout the day as a break in your routine. The activity benefits your heart, your mind, as well as your leg muscles.



Well Aware is challenging you to climb the tallest buildings in the United States! If traveling around the country is not possible, you can climb the equivalent of these buildings in flights of stairs. Form a team and complete the buildings together to share your sense of achievement! It is a great way to stay in shape during the cold winter months.

For details, visit the Flights to Fitness web page on the Wellness website.

Stress Less This Winter

Don't let the winter blues get you down. Try these alternative ways to beat them this winter.

Guided Meditation Mondays 5:00–5:45 p.m. Room 223 Carver Educational Services Center 850 Hungerford Drive Rockville, Maryland 20850

Seated Yoga

Wednesdays February 6, 13, 20, 27 March 6, 13 4:30–5:30 p.m. Café 45 (Lower Level) 45 West Gude Drive Rockville, Maryland 20850

Sit and Be Fit

Looking for an exercise class that increases your heart rate, helps build muscle, but is still low impact and done from a chair? Look no further!

Tuesdays (no class on February 5) 4:30–5:30 p.m. Café 45 (Lower Level) 45 West Gude Drive Rockville, Maryland 20850

Tai Chi

Thursdays 4:45–5:45 p.m. Robinson Room 45 West Gude Drive Rockville, Maryland 20850

Yoga

Mondays and Thursdays 5:00–6:00 p.m. All-purpose Room Rocking Horse Road Center 4910 Macon Road Rockville, Maryland 20852

Zumba

Mondays 4:30–5:30 p.m. Gymnasium Flora M. Singer Elementary School 2600 Hayden Drive Silver Spring, Maryland 20902

Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00 p.m. John F. Kennedy High School 1901 Randolph Road Silver Spring, Maryland 20902 Register here

Wednesdays 3:30 p.m. Auxillary Gym Redland Middle School 6505 Muncaster Mill Road Rockville, Maryland 20855

Fridays 4:30 p.m. Washington Grove Elementary School 8712 Oakmont Street Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877

To register for any of these classes (except for the Zumba class at John F. Kennedy High School), e-mail Well Aware.

Can't make it to a class? Try some of these online resources to manage your stress this winter:

- Yoga for Teachers
- Guided Meditation for Teachers

Wellness Initiatives: Get to Know Your Numbers

We live our lives by the numbers: phone numbers, PIN numbers, and our social security numbers.

But do you know the heart health numbers that could literally save your life? Healthy numbers mean a healthy heart. If you follow a healthy lifestyle—eat a balanced diet, get regular exercise, and avoid smoking—you can turn any bad numbers around.

You can learn about these vital health numbers and reduce your financial contribution to your health insurance by participating in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Wellness Initiatives program. To take full advantage of the program, complete a biometric health screening and health risk assessment yearly. And, if you and/or your spouse smoke, consider quitting. Doing so will go a long way toward improving your numbers.

For more information on the Wellness Initiatives program and to see a schedule of upcoming on-site biometric health screenings, visit the Wellness Initiatives for Employees

Diabetes Management Program

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) employees who have diabetes and are covered by the CareFirst medical plan have the option of participating in a diabetes case management program to have their copayments for diabetes supplies waived.

In order for copayments for diabetic supplies and medication to be waived in 2020 and each year thereafter, MCPS employees who are diabetic and covered by a CareFirst medical plan are required to—

- maintain their participation in the diabetes management program, and
- use medications prescribed to treat their diabetes exactly as their doctor has instructed without missing any days.

Since January 15, 2017, CareFirst has been tracking affected employees' adherence to these requirements. If, during calendar year 2019, you have not missed any days between prescription refills, i.e., you have refilled your prescription regularly to ensure you have enough medication for daily use, your copayments for diabetes supplies will continue to be waived during calendar year 2020.

If you have diabetes, maintaining regular use of your prescription medications is a key component in controlling the disease. By meeting these two requirements every year, CareFirst members with diabetes will continue to receive diabetic supplies without a copayment while more closely managing their disease.

If you have diabetes and are covered by a CareFirst medical plan and would like to participate in a diabetes case management program, or you would like to confirm your status as a program participant, please contact the customer service department of your medical plan.

For more information please e-mail Well Aware.

The Spring Physical Activity Challenge is Coming!

In the fall, MCPS employees trained hard in the *To the Moon* physical activity challenge. With another challenge just around the corner, think of the progress you can make before the end of the school year! Gather your team, or get yourself ready for the individual competition. Look for details in the February 20 issue of *The Bulletin* and on February 25 in an e-mail announcing the challenge. Details also will be in the March issue of *Well Aware eNews*. Challenge registration will begin on February 25, 2019.

Healthy Habits to Prevent Heart Disease

February is Heart Disease Awareness Month. Did you know that every 40 seconds, someone in the United States has a heart attack? One of the most important lifestyle modifications that can significantly reduce the risk of developing heart disease, is regular exercise—which can be hard to fit in to our busy lives!

Click on each link below for important tips on fighting heart disease, as well as simple exercises you can do at your desk, in your classroom, or even on public transportation.

- You Can Fight Heart Disease
- Work Desk Workouts and How to Stop the Sitting

Feel Like a Million

Kaiser Permanente and Well Aware invite you to participate in a six-week challenge to motivate you to *Feel Like a Million*! This fun, interactive game show theme challenge inspires you to adopt habits to help you feel your best. By focusing on simple daily actions in the areas of fitness, nutrition, balance, and purpose, the goal of improved energy, focus, and resilience can become a reality.

The challenge will begin on February 1, 2019. For more information or to register, please **e-mail Well Aware**.

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