

January Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion—a content specialist who reduces stress and finds joy in her Zumba classes;
- this month's seminar/webinar from Cigna on what it really takes to burn fat, lose weight, and keep it off;
- a new Flights to Fitness challenge;
- the benefit of taking a healthy brain break;
- ways to stress less this winter; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

**This month's free webinar—
The Key to Long-term
Weight Loss**

Learn what it really takes to burn fat, lose weight, and keep it off. You can do it! With the right information and guidance, it truly is possible.

Wednesday, January 13, 2016

10:00–11:00 a.m.

West Farm Bus Depot
11920 Bournefield Way
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

Tuesday, January 19, 2016

10:00–11:00 a.m.

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

Thursday, January 21, 2016

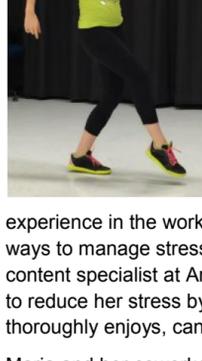
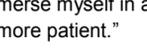
4:00–5:00 p.m.

Webinar

Please register for the seminar/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 Sheds Stress, Finds Joy in Zumba

**Maria N. Lunsford,
content specialist,
Argyle Middle School**

Most school-based employees would agree that the rewards of working with young people far outweigh the stress they experience in the workplace. Like any job, however, finding ways to manage stress is essential. Maria Lunsford, content specialist at Argyle Middle School, has found a way to reduce her stress by participating in an activity she thoroughly enjoys, can do regularly, and teach others.

Maria and her coworkers know they are much more likely to exercise regularly if the activity they choose is something they enjoy. For them, that activity is Zumba.

"During my first year teaching, my school hosted a Zumba class for staff," Maria said. "A coworker asked if I wanted to sign up with her. Neither of us had tried it before and had low expectations, but we had so much fun!"

Two years later, Maria became a Zumba instructor and, for nearly four years, has been spending many afternoons each week dancing with her coworkers!

"As school employees, we prioritize and consider students' needs throughout the work day," Maria said. "By exercising, I take time to also care for myself, relax, and fully immerse myself in a focused activity. As a result, I have more energy, am more relaxed, and more patient."

Throughout high school and college, Maria enjoyed being active by jogging or attending yoga class. After becoming a teacher, however, she had trouble finding an activity she enjoyed and could participate in regularly. Her first few years of teaching were challenging, but she made time for Zumba, which she says has helped immensely.

Now Maria thinks everyone should try Zumba. For her, it's all about joy.

"The vibe in a Zumba class has been described as 'freeing, electrifying joy,'" Maria said. "My coworkers and I come in tired and leave energized! It's amazing what a little hip-shaking and salsa can do—not just for the body but also for the brain and the spirit. I leave my classes in a fantastic mood!"

For Maria, dancing in Zumba class for an hour feels like an expression of joy and not at all like trudging through a workout just to get enough steps in or burn calories.

"Zumba takes my mind off of my stress and worries for a full hour," Maria said. "It also helps me become healthier and stronger. There are brain benefits to Zumba and all exercise too like improved balance, memory, and focus."

Maria benefits as well by teaching Zumba to her coworkers after school.

"It's definitely deepened my relationships with my coworkers and introduced me to new friends I'd never have met if it weren't for my classes," Maria said. "Teaching Zumba is very rewarding. I am thrilled when my Zumba participants share success stories like weight loss, improved balance, or even an enthusiastic, 'I listened to that Reggaeton song in my living room and danced while I cleaned up!'"

Even better, Maria is showing a generation of students how important exercise is.

"One day early this year, I told one of my classes I couldn't stay after school past 4:00 p.m. because I had to teach a Zumba class," Maria said. "One of my students responded with, 'That explains everything!' When I asked what she meant, a couple of others chimed in with, 'You always have so much energy in the morning!' and 'You're always so happy!'"

We teach by example. What better example than that?

Flights to Fitness is Back!

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. There are benefits to your heart, your mind, as well as your leg muscles!

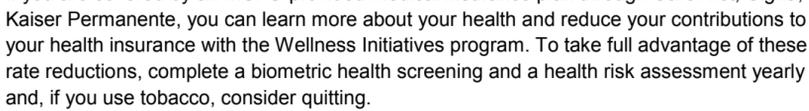
Well Aware is challenging you to climb the number of flights of stairs in 11 of the tallest buildings in the Baltimore/Washington area. At the end of this challenge, you will have climbed 309 flights of stairs. What an achievement! And what a way to stay in shape during the cold winter months!

For more information, visit Well Aware's [Flights to Fitness web page](#).

Brain Breaks: They Are Not Just for Kids!

Brain breaks are a quick and effective way of changing or focusing your physical and mental state. They are a useful tool for students to use to help activate, energize, and stimulate their brains. Research indicates that brain breaks also improve students' concentration and relieve stress. So why don't we use them as adults? Is it that we don't have enough time, or are we not making our health and mental well-being a priority?

Do you have three minutes to spare? Take the time for a healthy brain break. In just three minutes, you will accomplish something for yourself and for your health. Enjoy this [brain break](#) on being mindful and simply breathing.



Wellness Initiatives: Biometric Health Screenings and Health Risk Assessments

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 simple to do. To earn the maximum 2 percent incentive toward your health insurance premiums, you need to complete a yearly—

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

To find out how to complete your Wellness Initiatives and how doing so will be reported to MCPS, please visit the [Wellness Initiatives web page](#).



Your Race, Your Pace: Final Update

Nearly 6,100 Montgomery County Public Schools employees spent 10 weeks in training this fall during the *Your Race, Your Pace* physical activity challenge. They competed for prizes and, more importantly, crossed the finish line by adopting or maintaining healthy lifestyles. Each of the top 10 schools averaged at least 64.7 minutes of physical activity per employee per day. This is an increase of 20 minutes over last year!

Congratulations to all those who improved their health by participating! See a list of the winners' names in [this issue of The Bulletin](#).

Stress Less This Winter

Don't let the winter blues get you down. Join seated yoga and tai chi classes and learn to stress less this winter.

Seated Yoga

Wednesdays through February 24, 2016

4:30–5:30 p.m.

Maple Room (unless otherwise noted)

45 West Gude Drive

Rockville, Maryland 20850

Tai Chi

Thursdays through February 25, 2016

4:30–5:30 p.m.

Café 45 (unless otherwise noted)

45 West Gude Drive

Rockville, Maryland 20850

To register, [e-mail Well Aware](#).



There is Still Time to Quit for Good

Are you ready to quit smoking? Quit for Good 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.

The next class begins on Tuesday April 5, 2016, at 4:30 p.m. For more information on the Quit for Good Tobacco Cessation Program, visit the [Well Aware website](#). [E-mail Well Aware](#) to reserve your spot in the class.

Join Us for Zumba!

Join Well Aware for Zumba! Classes are being held at two elementary schools. For details, see the [Washington Grove Elementary School flyer](#) and the [Weller Road Elementary School flyer](#).

Diabetes Corner

Instep with Diabetes

During the past two summers, Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente have partnered to hold a diabetes educational program to help pre-diabetics, diagnosed diabetics, and caretakers of diabetics. The program has helped staff members lower their A1C levels, control their sugar intake, and lose body fat.

Well Aware is excited to announce that, based on participant feedback, we have revamped the program to condense the weeks and focus more on nutrition.

Join Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente for this four-week course.

Tuesdays, March 1–22, 2016

4:30–5:30 p.m.

Maple Room

45 West Gude Drive

Rockville, Maryland 20850

Diabetes Information and Resources

People are unique and have different needs when it comes to managing diabetes. Well Aware is excited to offer you self-paced, monthly resources with content tailored to where you are in your diabetes journey. Monthly topics include healthy eating, active living, diabetes medication, and blood-sugar tracking.

Learn more about [reading nutrition labels](#) and [making better fast-food choices](#).

For more information or to register to receive the monthly information and booklets, [e-mail Well Aware](#).

The employee wellness newsletter is brought to you by the Employee and Retiree Service Center (ERSC). To learn more about employee wellness, visit our [website](#). To view this e-mail newsletter as a .pdf document, click [here](#). Questions or comments about your employee wellness program? Contact ERSC at 301-517-8100 or [e-mail Well Aware](#).