

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 bus route supervisor who teaches a dance class at her depot while encouraging her coworkers to embrace healthy lifestyles;
- a seminar/webinar to help us understand why we seem to constantly crave sweets and offer techniques to help us gain control;
- a chance to climb the world's tallest buildings;
- another chance to Quit for Good;
- how to stress less this winter; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free seminar/webinar— **Manage Your Sugar Cravings**

This seminar will help participants understand why they are constantly craving sweets and offer techniques, which don't require willpower or deprivation, to help them gain control.

Tuesday, January 9, 2018
 10:00–11:00 a.m.

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

Wednesday, January 17, 2018
 10:00–11:00 a.m.

West Farm Depot
 11920 Bournefield Way
 Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

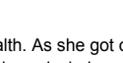
Thursday, January 18, 2018
 4:00–5:00 p.m.

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**.

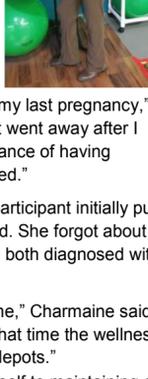
Presented by:



Wellness Champion Teaches Dance to Inspire Her Coworkers to Lead Healthy Lives

Charmaine M. Francis, Shady Grove South Transportation Depot

It was an increased risk for developing diabetes that first got the attention of Charmaine M. Francis, bus route supervisor at Shady Grove South Transportation Depot. But her family members' actual diagnoses was her wake-up call.



"I had gestational diabetes with my last pregnancy," Charmaine said. "Even though it went away after I gave birth, I was told that my chance of having diabetes later in life had increased."

This now longtime Well Aware participant initially put that news in the back of her mind. She forgot about it until her father and brother were both diagnosed with the disease.

"That was the wake-up call for me," Charmaine said. "Luckily enough, it was around that time the wellness classes were introduced to the depots."

At that point, she committed herself to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Charmaine not only started taking the free classes at the depots, she took on a leadership role by teaching her coworkers during a once-a-week line dance class at the depot.

"To the beat of four, one can dance to anything," Charmaine said. "Line dance is soft on the feet and the knees and can get you grooving while working up a sweat—if it is done for a long period."

Charmaine had always wanted to make better choices for her health. As she got older, she realized that maintaining a healthy lifestyle is a commitment of body *and* mind.

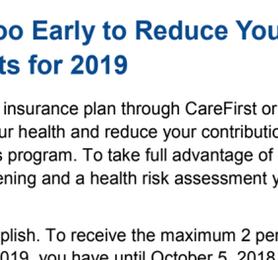
"I tried to take tiny steps of progress, but life happens and I would fall off the bandwagon," Charmaine said. "It wasn't until I totally embraced my choices on a daily basis, that I saw change. Lasting permanent change happens one step at a time and that will come when you change your *shoulds* into *musts*."

Through her inspiring story and encouragement, Charmaine hopes her coworkers also are making lasting lifestyle changes to ensure their long-term health.

"All it takes is someone moving their body without prejudice," Charmaine said. "Just picture yourself vacuuming at home dancing to the beat of four. Let's count 1, 2, 3, 4, to the right. Next, 1, 2, 3, 4 to the left and repeat!"

Flights to Fitness: World's Tallest Buildings

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 world's tallest buildings! If travel to far-away lands is out of the question, you can climb the equivalent of these buildings in flights of stairs. You can form a team and complete the buildings together to share your sense of achievement! And, what a way to stay in shape during the cold winter months!

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

Wellness Initiatives: It Is Not Too Early to Reduce Your Share of Health Insurance Costs for 2019

If you are covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan through CareFirst 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 2019, you have until October 5, 2018, 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**.



Hike for Your Health Final Results

Nearly 6,000 Montgomery County Public Schools employees spent 10 weeks in training this fall during the *Hike for Your Health* physical activity challenge. They competed for prizes and, more importantly, adopted or maintained healthy lifestyles. Each of the top 15 schools averaged at least 85 minutes of physical activity per employee per day. This is an increase of 9 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***.

Although *Hike for Your Health* has come to an end, the challenge continues! Well Aware's next physical activity challenge will begin in March. Look for details in future issues of the *Well Aware eNews* and *The Bulletin* and on the **Well Aware website**. In the meantime, the **Well Aware Fitness Log** continues to provide a resource for you to track your physical activity and diet.

Another Chance to Quit is Coming Next Month



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. It also has an excellent success rate.

The next class will begin in February. For more information on the tobacco cessation program, visit the **Quit for Good website**. E-mail **Well Aware** to reserve your spot in the class.

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 starting January 22, 2018

5:00–5:45 p.m.

Room 223

850 Hungerford Drive

Rockville, Maryland 20850

Seated Yoga

Wednesdays starting January 10, 2018

4:30–5:30 p.m.

Café 45 (unless otherwise announced)

45 West Gude Drive

Rockville, Maryland 20850

Tai Chi (Rocking Horse Road Center)

Beginning Wednesday, January 3, 2018

5:00–6:00 p.m.

Room 148

4910 Macon Road

Rockville, Maryland 20852

Tai Chi (45 West Gude Drive)

Beginning Thursday, January 4, 2018

4:45–5:45 p.m.

Lower Level Gym (unless otherwise announced)

45 West Gude Drive

Rockville, Maryland 20850

To register for any of these classes, **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**

Sit and Be Fit!

Are you looking for an exercise class that increases your heart rate, helps build muscle, but is low impact? Look no further! You can have all that and seated in a chair! Join Well Aware for—

Sit and Be Fit

February 20 and 27

March 6, 14 (Robinson Conference Room), and 20

April 3, 10 (Robinson Conference Room), 17, and 22

May 1, 8 (Robinson Conference Room), 15, and 22

4:30–5:30 p.m.

Café 45 (unless otherwise noted above)

45 West Gude Drive

Rockville, Maryland 20850

To register, **e-mail Well Aware**.

My Brain Solutions: A New Year, a New Mindset!

MyBrainSolutions, a scientifically based online platform that helps individuals relieve stress, increase resiliency, and enhance mindfulness, is now available to all MCPS employees. Take an easy 15-minute assessment to learn more about your brain health, then get ready to develop better brain habits through fun and engaging exercises. The program is completely confidential and your information will never be shared with MCPS. **Watch a one-minute introductory video** on MyBrainSolutions.

Interested? **Register here**.

Your Thyroid: Small but Powerful

January is Thyroid Awareness Month. The thyroid is a small, butterfly-shaped gland found in the base of the neck, below the Adam's apple. Despite the thyroid's small size, it produces a hormone that affects every cell, tissue, and organ in the body. Your thyroid needs to be healthy and work properly to regulate your body's metabolism. Risk factors for thyroid disorders can range from family history, history of radiation therapy, and even age.

Following are two of the most common thyroid disorders:

Hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid)

- Hypothyroidism is a disease where the thyroid does not make enough hormones to meet your body's needs. As a result, your body's functions slow down. Some symptoms of an underactive thyroid include fatigue, weight gain, often feeling cold, joint and muscle pain, dry skin, depression, and high cholesterol.

Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid)

- With hyperthyroidism, the thyroid makes more hormones than your body needs. As a result, your body's functions speed up and push your metabolism into overdrive. Some symptoms of an overactive thyroid include nervousness/anxiety, fatigue or muscle weakness, trouble sleeping, shaky hands, rapid irregular heart rate, mood swings, weight loss.

If you are experiencing any of the symptoms listed above, you should contact your primary care provider (PCP). If your PCP suspects a thyroid problem, they will run blood work to measure hormone levels. Whether you are treating an underactive or overactive thyroid, you should always follow physician's directions for treatment.

Note that many of the symptoms of thyroid disease are the same as other conditions. Regular checkups with your PCP are the best way to ensure your medical practitioner knows you and will make the right diagnosis.

Sources: **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases** and the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**.