

March Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champions—three wellness coaches who used their Well Aware physical activity challenge winnings to establish a spa-like wellness room at their school;
- this month's seminar/webinar from Cigna to help you make good nutrition a way of life;
- a new physical activity challenge for the spring;
- several National Health Observances and related events;
- the return of Well Aware's spring running program; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free seminar/ webinar— Eat Well, Live Better

Make good nutrition a way of life. Come and learn how to balance protein, carbohydrates, and fats; survive the supermarket; and employ strategies for eating out.

Thursday, March 9, 2017
10:00–11:00 a.m.

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

Tuesday, March 21, 2017
10:00–11:00 a.m.

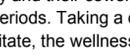
Shady Grove Bus Depot
16651 Crabbs Branch Way
Rockville, Maryland 20855

Thursday, March 23, 2017
4:00–5:00 p.m.

Webinar

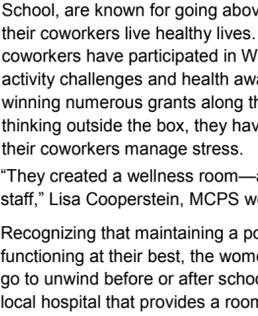
Please register for the seminar or webinar by e-mailing **Well Aware** with the date and time you plan to attend. If you register for the webinar, you will receive a link in your Outlook e-mail as well as an Outlook calendar reminder.

Spread the word with our **printable flyer**. See the **Wellness Webinar Library**.



Wellness Champions Establish a Wellness Room at Their School

Pamela L. Altman, media assistant; Robyn L. Paley, theatre/drama teacher; and Pamela Decederfelt, alternative programs teacher, A. Mario Loiederman Middle School



The Wellness Room at A. Mario Loiederman Middle School

Pam Altman, Robyn Paley, and Pam Decederfelt, wellness coaches at A. Mario Loiederman Middle School, are known for going above and beyond to help their coworkers live healthy lives. They and their coworkers have participated in Well Aware physical activity challenges and health awareness events, winning numerous grants along the way. Now, by thinking outside the box, they have found a way to help their coworkers manage stress.

"They created a wellness room—a calm sanctuary really—for Loiederman Middle School staff," Lisa Cooperstein, MCPS wellness coordinator, said.

Recognizing that maintaining a positive outlook and sufficient energy are essential to functioning at their best, the women saw a need for a place they and their coworkers could go to unwind before or after school or during lunch and break periods. Taking a cue from a local hospital that provides a room for its staff to relax and meditate, the wellness coaches decided to use their grant money to create something similar.

"We envisioned a place in the school for staff to be able to decompress," Robyn said. "The room helps keep us positive and energetic!"

To create the perfect spot, they found a small room that their principal, Nicole Sosik, agreed could be converted and used for staff stress management. To make the room truly beneficial, the team used their grant money to have the room painted a calming color; equipped with soft lighting; and furnished with reclining chairs, a fountain, an aroma therapy diffuser, MP3 players with pre-loaded guided meditations, and foot, neck, and back massagers.

"We wanted a spa-like feeling in the room," Pam Altman said. "It needed to be a place where people could come and relax. There is no other spot like it in the school."

Loiederman staff are definitely excited about their new retreat.

One staff member describes the room as "a little piece of heaven at Loiederman." She is grateful to the wellness coaches for their ideas and efforts that led to the relaxing space.

"Our hope is that having our wellness room will help to keep our staff rejuvenated, positive, and happy," Pam Decederfelt said. "As educators, it's important that we keep a positive mindset so we can stay energetic and fresh for our students each and every day."

What advice does the team have for other schools and offices aiming to do well in the Well Aware challenges and perhaps win some grant money?

"We usually have more than 55 staff members participating in each challenge," Pam Altman said. "Over time, we were able to save money from our winnings to make the wellness room happen. It definitely has produced a happier staff at LMS (Loiederman Middle School)!"

It's Time for Spring Training!

Batter Up! After a long winter, isn't it time for you to step up to the plate and increase your activity? Dust off your sneakers and get ready to hit a fitness home run. Join Well Aware for the *Spring Training* physical activity challenge!

Even professional baseball players need time to adjust from the winter months of inactivity. Whether this is your first challenge, or fifth, it's time to lace up your sneakers and start running the bases or sneaking your physical activity in another way that interests you.

Along the way, Well Aware will offer you incentives to keep you motivated and moving. You could win exciting individual prizes, grants to promote wellness at your school or office, as well as recognition for your efforts.

Learn more about *Spring Training*, including incentives, rules, and more by visiting the **Well Aware website**. Then, log your activity in the online **Well Aware Fitness Log**. If you already have a fitness log account from an earlier challenge, you do not need to register for a new account. Having trouble logging in? **E-mail Well Aware**



National Nutrition Month: Put Your Best Fork Forward!

National Nutrition Month is a nutrition education and information campaign held each March by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association). The campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

The theme for 2017 is "Put Your Best Fork Forward," which acts as a reminder that each bite counts. Making just small shifts in our food choices can add up over time. This year's theme inspires us to start with small changes in our eating habits—one forkful at a time. So whether you are planning meals to prepare at home or making selections when eating out, *Put Your Best Fork Forward* to help find your healthy eating style.

Enjoy these tip sheets from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:

- **20 Ways to Enjoy More Fruits and Vegetables**
- **Eating Healthy on a Budget**

How will your school or office celebrate National Nutrition Month? Get creative and **e-mail Well Aware** a photo of your healthy celebration.

National Walking Day Is Coming Soon

The American Heart Association (AHA) will hold this year's National Walking Day on the first Wednesday in April. AHA sponsors the day to remind people about the health benefits of taking a walk. Wear your sneakers to work—or take them with you—and take a 30-minute walk before or after your work day or during a break.

Here are some great ways to make that 30-minutes more enjoyable:

- Wear comfortable clothes.
- Take a friend to pass the time.
- Make sure to stretch those muscles.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Move your arms too.
- Make sure you maintain good posture while walking.

The AHA began National Walking Day in 2007 to promote healthy living. **Learn more.**

E-mail Well Aware your stories and photos of walkers from your school or office.

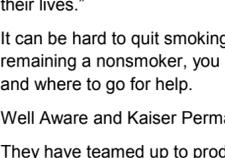
Run With Well Aware This Spring

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's been a while since you last ran, the warmer spring weather is the perfect time to begin training!

Well Aware's Spring Virtual 5K Training Program with Run Farther & Faster will return for a third season from March 26–June 16, 2017. Participants will receive a comprehensive 12-week training calendar, weekly e-mails with training support and running-related information, as well as the ability to e-mail certified running coaches with questions or concerns.

This program is appropriate for new runners or runners who are returning after a hiatus. The training calendar begins with run/walk intervals and progress safely and gradually towards continuous running. It also includes strength workouts and form drills. Participants who are interested in finding training partners will have access to a private Facebook group to facilitate introductions. By the end of the program, runners will be prepared to complete a 5K, and the training calendar will include several optional 5K races where you can celebrate your training progress.

The training program is free to MCPS employees, fills quickly, and is limited to the first 50 registrants. **Register here**. Registration closes when capacity is reached or on Friday, March 24, 2017. **Learn more about Run Farther & Faster.**



You CAN Quit for Good!

The U.S. Surgeon General has said, "Smoking cessation [stopping smoking] represents the single most important step that smokers can take to enhance the length and quality of their lives."

It can be hard to quit smoking, but you can do it. To have the best chance of quitting and remaining a nonsmoker, you need to know what you are up against, what your options are, and where to go for help.

Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente can help!

They have teamed up to produce an eight-week tobacco cessation class for MCPS staff and significant others. The next session of *Quit for Good* begins on Monday, May 1, 2017, at 4:30 p.m. in the Maple Room at 45 West Gude Drive, Rockville. To register, **e-mail Well Aware**. To learn more about the program, including the week-by-week course content, visit the **Well Aware website**.

Remember: By quitting, you can avoid paying the 3 percent tobacco surcharge on your MCPS-provided medical insurance premium. **Learn more about the surcharge.**

Diabetes Alert Day

Are you at risk for diabetes?

Held each year on the last Tuesday of March, the American Diabetes Association Alert Day is a one-day wake-up call to ask Americans to take a Diabetes Risk Test to find out if they are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. The test asks users to answer simple questions about their weight, age, family history, and other potential risk factors for prediabetes or type 2 diabetes.

Be sure to participate in the next American Diabetes Association Alert Day on March 28, 2017. If you wish, you can **take it now**. Preventive tips are provided for everyone who takes the test, including encouraging those at high risk to talk with their health care provider.

Wellness Initiatives: Know Your Numbers

We live our lives by the numbers: phone numbers, PIN numbers, and social security numbers, to name a few. 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 even turn bad numbers around.

And, as part of the Wellness Initiatives program, you can reduce your contributions to your health insurance while learning about these vital numbers. To take full advantage of these incentives, complete a health risk assessment and biometric health screening yearly and, if you smoke, consider quitting.

For more information on the Wellness Initiatives program and upcoming health screenings, visit the **Wellness Initiatives for Employees web page**.

It Is Colon Cancer Awareness Month

In February 2000, President Bill Clinton officially dedicated March as National Colon Cancer Awareness Month. Since then, it has grown to be a rallying point for the colon cancer community. Thousands of patients, survivors, caregivers, and advocates throughout the country join together to spread colon cancer awareness by wearing blue, holding education events, talking to friends and family about screening and so much more.

Colon cancer affects men and women of all racial and ethnic groups and is most often found in people 50 years of age or older. However, incidence of the disease in those younger than 50 is on the rise. Colon cancer takes the lives of more than 50,000 people every year. It is the third most common cancer in the U.S., and the second leading cause of cancer death.

When discovered early, this cancer is highly treatable. **Colon cancer screening** saves lives. Screening detects precancerous polyps and allows them to be removed before they become cancer. Screening also helps find colon cancer if you're stage 50 or are experiencing abnormal **symptoms**, get screened. And urge those you love to do the same.

Wear blue and unite for a future free of colon cancer. Although the Colon Cancer Alliance is holding Dress in Blue Day on Friday, March 3, 2017, consider choosing another date for your school or office staff to wear blue. Help educate your friends and family about the disease's risks and the importance of early detection through screening.

Sleep Solutions

Next Week is National Sleep Awareness Week

The National Sleep Foundation is celebrating its annual Sleep Awareness Week March 6–13, 2017, to raise awareness of the health benefits of sleep and its importance to safety and productivity. It is time to prioritize your sleep and adjust your routines in advance of Daylight Savings Time.

Are you in sleep debt? **Learn how much sleep you really need.**