

March Well Aware eNews

Welcome to the March 2021 issue of the *Well Aware eNews!* Read on to learn about—

- this month's wellness champion, a middle school special education teacher who improved her running skills by participating in Well Aware's fall virtual running program;
- a webinar on identifying and targeting unhealthy behaviors and exploring ways to create healthy habits that stick;
- a new physical activity challenge for the spring;
- National Nutrition Month;
- National Walking Day;
- Diabetes Alert Day;
- Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar—Ready, Set, Goal

Join this webinar to learn to identify and target unhealthy behaviors and explore ways to create healthy habits that stick.

Thursday, March 24, 2021
 4:00–5:00 p.m.

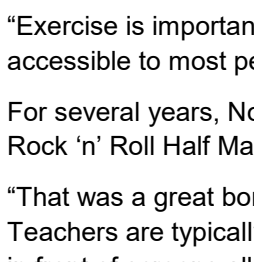
Please **email Well Aware** to register for the webinar. After registering, you will receive a link to the webinar in your Outlook email as well as an Outlook calendar reminder.

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

Presented by: CareFirst

Wellness Champion Runs Fastest Mile in Well Aware's Fall 5K

Sarah E. Henderson,
special education teacher,
North Bethesda Middle School



Sarah E. Henderson (third from right) with other NBMS Rock 'n' Roll Half Marathon runners

Last fall, Sarah E. Henderson, special education teacher at North Bethesda Middle School joined Well Aware's Fall Virtual Running Program to develop her running skills. By the end of the program, not only had she had improved her mile time, she ran the fastest mile of the event's more than 50 participants. At 51 years young, that was quite an accomplishment!

"I have been running on and off for fitness since college," Sarah said. "I was a competitive swimmer in high school but, for me, running is just so much more fun. You can listen to music or talk to people while you run. We all feel so isolated right now, it is important to get outside, and, for me, that means going on a run."

Sarah decided to join the Virtual Running Program to help increase her mile time. She encourages MCPS staff to run as well.

"Exercise is important for everyone," Sarah said. "Running is particularly good, because it is accessible to most people, is free, and can be done alone or with friends."

For several years, North Bethesda Middle School had a running group. School staff ran the Rock 'n' Roll Half Marathon together and the Ragnar Relay race.

"That was a great bonding experience for co-workers," Sarah said. "We had so much fun. Teachers are typically in constant motion during the school day. Now that we are all sitting in front of screens all day, exercise is more important than ever."

Sarah's advice for getting started?

"Just do it," she said. "Lace-up and get out there!"

Now is *your* chance to join the Virtual Running Program! See "MCPS 5K Training Program Returns This Spring" below for details! If you're not interested in running, lace up your sneakers and go for a walk!

Well Aware: Join the Mind/Body Reboot!

With our intense focus on technology over the past year, we all know the importance of rebooting our chrome books and laptops. Rebooting helps keep systems running efficiently and can often speed up their performance. Well Aware soon will challenge you to also focus on rebooting your mind and body!

Our systems have been under a lot of emotional and physical stress due to the pandemic. When under stress, our bodies produce fight or flight hormones. While this is important, if these hormones stay elevated long term we start to experience mental fog and physical exhaustion.

This spring, unplug, reboot your mind and body, and create new healthy behaviors by joining Well Aware's 10-week *Mind/Body Reboot* physical activity challenge.

While the mind/body reboot will look different for everyone, having an accountability team can help you stay on track. Teams can work together to encourage healthy habits, and support each other during this activity challenge.

Interested in participating independently? That's fine too! Follow the hashtag *#mcpstaffwellness* on Twitter for challenge pictures, inspiration, and healthy tips. For your efforts, you could win exciting prizes, including healthy cooking or smoothie demonstrations via Zoom, grants to promote wellness at your school or office, and other recognition.

Take these steps to get started:

- Register on the online **Well Aware Fitness Log** beginning March 8, 2021. If you registered previously for another challenge, you do not need to register again. Simply make sure your location is updated in your profile, especially if you changed schools or offices.
- To join a team, designate a colleague as the team captain. The captain will use the Fitness Log to create and register your team. Accept the email invitation when it arrives from the Fitness Log.
- Log your activity in the Fitness Log each week beginning March 15, 2021.
- Earn prizes while improving your health!

Learn more about the *Mind/Body Reboot* challenge, including incentives, rules, and more by visiting the **Well Aware website**. Or, simply search for *Mind/Body Reboot* from any MCPS web page.

MCPS 5K Training Program Returns 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 has been a while since you last ran, the warmer weather is the perfect time to start training.

Following a successful fall session, the MCPS Spring Virtual Group 5K Training Program will begin on March 20, 2021, and run through May 29, 2021.

Participants will receive a comprehensive 10-week training calendar, weekly emails with training support and running-related information, as well as the ability to email Certified Running Coaches with questions or concerns. The training calendar begins with run/walk intervals and progresses safely and gradually towards continuous running. It also includes strength workouts and form drills. Participants also have access to a private Facebook group to facilitate finding running partners. **Register here**.

March Is National Nutrition Month

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

The theme for the 2021 National Nutrition Month is *Personalize your Plate*. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to nutrition and health. We are all unique with different bodies, goals, backgrounds, and tastes!

The Academy recommends balancing nutritious foods with physical activity most days of the week. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' physical activity guidelines, adults should participate in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity per week.

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

- **20 Health Tips for 2021**
- **Eating Right on a Budget**
- **Nutrition Month Crossword**

How will you celebrate National Nutrition Month? Get creative and send us a picture of how you chose to have a healthy celebration.

This Year's National Walking Day Is April 7, 2021

The first Wednesday in April is National Walking Day. The American Heart Association (AHA) sponsors this 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 clothing.
- Take a friend to pass the time. Be sure to wear a mask.
- Stretch those muscles.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Move your arms too.
- Make sure you have good posture.

As part of AHA's efforts to promote healthy living, National Walking Day was started in 2007. **Learn more**.

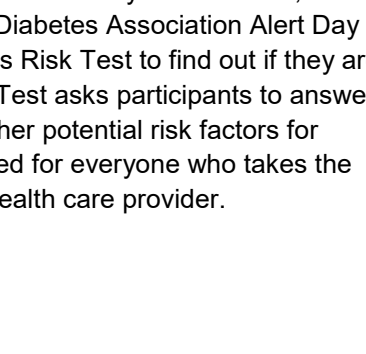
How will your school or office celebrate the event? **Email your stories and photos to ERSC**.

We Want to Help You 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 is 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're up against, what your options are, and where to go for help. We can help!

Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente have teamed up to offer *Quit for Good*, a tobacco cessation class for MCPS staff and significant others, held via three one-hour weekly webinars. To register for an upcoming session of *Quit for Good*, **email Well Aware**.



A Diabetes Wake-up Call: Are You at Risk?

One in three Americans is at risk for developing type 2 diabetes, a serious disease that can lead to complications such as kidney disease, blindness, and amputations. But type 2 diabetes doesn't have to be permanent; it can be prevented or delayed with healthy lifestyle modifications.

Be sure to participate in the American Diabetes Association Alert Day on March 30, 2021. Held the last Tuesday of March each year, the American Diabetes Association Alert Day is a one-day wake-up call asking Americans to take a Diabetes Risk Test to find out if they are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. The Diabetes Risk Test asks participants to answer simple questions about weight, age, family history, and other potential risk factors for prediabetes or type 2 diabetes. Preventive tips are provided for everyone who takes the test. Those at high risk are encouraged to talk with their health care provider.

- **Take the Type 2 Diabetes Risk Test now!**
- **Learn risk factors for Type 2 diabetes**

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 in 2022 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.

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**.

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Colorectal cancer is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death in men and women combined in the United States. The American Cancer Society estimates that this year 95,520 people will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer, 39,910 will be diagnosed with rectal cancer, and 50,260 will die from this disease.

On average, the lifetime risk of developing colorectal cancer is about one in 23 for men and women combined (4.5 percent). This varies widely according to individual risk factors, however.

With regular screening, colorectal cancer can be found early, when treatment is most effective. In many cases, screening can prevent colorectal cancer by finding and removing polyps before they become cancer. And if cancer is present, earlier detection means a chance at a longer life. Generally, the more advanced colorectal cancer is at detection, the lower the five-year survival rates are.

Since the mid-1980s, the colorectal cancer survival rate has been increasing, due in part to increased awareness and screening. By finding polyps and cancer in the earlier stages, it is easiest to treat. Improved treatment options have also contributed to a rise in survival rates. **Learn more** about colorectal screenings.

Share Your Wellness Stories and Encourage Your Coworkers Through Twitter!

Well Aware is proud of MCPS employee for all of the hard work they are doing to lead healthy lives. It is time to share your stories and your spirit! Or, perhaps you need some extra motivation to begin a staff wellness program at your school, depot, or office, or to turn life-long unhealthy habits into healthy ones. Follow *@mcpswellaware* for incredible wellness stories, ideas, and encouragement from your MCPS coworkers. You also will read tips on living a healthy life and receive updates on MCPS staff wellness programs.

BurnAlong Classes Available to Help You and Your Family Stay Well and Fit

MCPS and CareFirst have partnered to give you access to *BurnAlong*, a health and wellness platform that comes with four free accounts for you and your family, and friends. The 1000+ classes available range from meditation, boxing, yoga, bootcamp, and spin. There are even classes on nutrition and financial literacy and specialized senior classes for you or older members of your family who may need physical activity but need to remain in the house. Classes can also be taken as a group, so you can work out with a friend or family member while seeing and talking to each other during the class. **Register and log in**.

Did you miss the introductory webinar for *BurnAlong*? **Watch the webinar** now and learn about all of the exciting features the platform offers.

Montgomery County Offers MCPS Employees Free Access to Its Recreation Facilities

As a permanent MCPS employee, you have free access to all Montgomery County (MC) recreation facilities, including swimming pools and gymnasiums. You also are eligible for a 20 percent discount on an annual pool pass for your family members.

Interested? **Learn more** and visit the **MC Recreation website** for general information. You may **apply online** for the individual Total Rec Pass. The **Employee Family Pool Pass application** also is available online. Both passes are valid for one year; you may reapply each year to continue your access to the facilities.

For more information, contact MC Government at 240-777-6840 or **email MC Recreation**.

Online Physical Activity Classes for Winter

Physical activity or exercise can improve your health and reduce the risk of developing several diseases like type 2 diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. Physical activity and exercise can have immediate and long-term health benefits. Most importantly, regular activity can improve your heart, your mind, and your overall wellness.

Consider trying Well Aware's online classes to see what kind of physical activity is best for you. We offer many classes to meet your needs, including Zumba, HIIT Camp, Stretch and Mobility, Core workouts, Yoga, and toning.

Email Well Aware for a monthly calendar of classes.

Be Well 365 for Staff

MCPS has launched a well-being web page for its employees. This online resource is a one-stop shop where employees can find information to help them navigate and balance their work, home, personal, and community lives. The emphasis is on staff well-being and self-care. This has been a challenging time for all of us, and MCPS is committed to ensuring that its staff members stay safe and feel supported. **Browse Be Well 365**.

Stress Less This Winter

Yoga, meditation, and mindfulness are wonderful practices that help you to lower your stress levels. In addition, they help you learn techniques for managing pressure and anxiety.

Well Aware offers many classes virtually to help you learn tools to manage stress. From Mindfulness and Meditation, to Seated Yoga, Yoga, Stretch and Mobility, and Pilates, you are sure to find something that will meet your individual needs. **Email Well Aware** to request a monthly schedule of classes.