

September Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion—a counselor at Winston Churchill High School who just completed her first 5K race and is more motivated than ever to sign up for races and keep running a part of her life;
- a seminar/webinar that will help you get reorganized, manage your time, and set aside some "me" time;
- a new physical activity challenge for the fall;
- another chance to Run Farther & Faster;
- a new class on healthy nutrition; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free seminar/webinar—**Four Steps Toward a More Organized Life**

Have you found that your life is no longer as organized as you would like it to be? Would you like to begin using your time better? This seminar/webinar will teach you the reasons lives sometimes become disorganized, effective ways to create action plans and set goals, and techniques for managing time effectively. In addition, you will learn the importance of "me" time and other tips you can begin implementing right away.

Wednesday, September 27, 2017
 10:00–11:00 a.m.

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

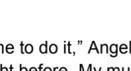
Thursday, September 28, 2017
 4:00–5:00 p.m.

Webinar

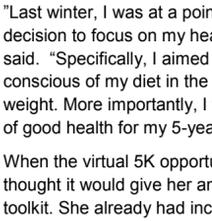
Please register for the seminar or webinar by e-mailing [Well Aware](#) with the date and time you plan to attend. If you register for the webinar, you will receive a link in your Outlook e-mail as well as an Outlook calendar reminder.

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

Presented by:



Wellness Champion Makes Running a Regular Part of Her Life



Angela Mastromatteo, counselor, Winston Churchill High School

Angela Mastromatteo, a counselor at Winston Churchill High School, joined the spring 5K running group and has not looked back. She just completed her first 5K race and is more motivated than ever to continue signing up for races to keep running a part of her life.

"Last winter, I was at a point where I had made the decision to focus on my health," Angela said. "Specifically, I aimed to be more active and more conscious of my diet in the hopes of losing some weight. More importantly, I wanted to become a model of good health for my 5-year-old daughter."

When the virtual 5K opportunity came up, Angela thought it would give her another activity to add to her toolkit. She already had incorporated yoga and aerobics into her regular schedule, but she wanted to break out of her comfort zone even more by trying something new.

"I had never been a runner, but was always amazed by those who were and how it helped them to 'clear their heads,'" Angela said. "I started running more to see if I could get to that place where the stress of the day going through my head would just let go so I could enjoy the quiet of the moment."

Why did the virtual running program work for Angela?

For one thing, she liked the fact that it was virtual. The practical program fit her life. Between work and home commitments, including her daughter's activities, it was hard to carve the days out of her schedule to get to the gym. With the virtual running program, she didn't need to go anywhere other than out her front door and through her neighborhood.

"As soon as my husband got home, I could take 30 or so minutes for an evening run," Angela said.

Another quality of the program that Angela appreciated was that the schedule allowed her to build up her endurance over time. She found this gradual approach meant that running became easier over time and she was able to run more.

"I had never run before and this was the most basic way to get me to do it," Angela said. "Never once did I wake up cursing the running from the night before. My muscles were appropriately fatigued, but never sore and certainly never to that point where I wound up stopping because I couldn't move."

Angela has found that running really helps to counteract her daily stress.

"When I've had a busy, crazy few days and haven't had time to get to the gym for a class, a quick run is able to help me reduce any anxiety I may have," Angela said. "I have learned to tune out the stressful dialog in my head and can just let it go and enjoy the run."

For Angela, being accountable has made a big difference. She suggests MCPS coworkers can do the same and has a suggestion to help you get started.

"Find a friend who is willing to run with you," Angela said.

When she began the virtual program, a friend who lived close by joined her on some of her runs. There were days when her friend couldn't go, however, and that's when the accountability really kicked in.

"I would go anyway and send a text to her with my stats from the run or even a selfie of my sweaty face," Angela said. "Even when her schedule got too much for her to continue, I kept it up and decided to sign up for a 5K so I knew I had something to continue to work for."

Have You Taken the [Wellness] Initiative for 2018?

The deadline is fast approaching! The Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Wellness Initiatives program provides you with incentives to reduce your health insurance costs for 2018 and beyond. If you are covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan, complete a biometric health screening and your insurance provider's online health risk assessment by October 6, 2017, to take advantage of the rate reductions.

Reduce the Contributions You Make to Your Health Insurance

You can reduce your contributions to your health insurance in 2018 by a full 2 percent. How? There are two steps to complete by October 6, 2017:

1. See your doctor for an annual physical or attend a Well Aware biometric health screening, AND
2. Complete the health risk assessment on your medical plan's website.

Kaiser Permanente members: Be sure to log in to the Kaiser Permanente web page to consent to your participation in the program. Without your consent, your information will not be reported.

Take the [Wellness] Initiative! [Find details here.](#)

Tobacco-user Surcharge to Increase: Remember to Attest During Open Enrollment

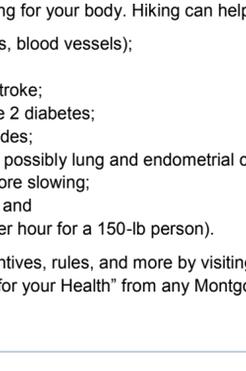
The smoker (tobacco-user) surcharge will increase to 25 percent on January 1, 2018. Be sure to attest online to your and your spouse's tobacco-use status during this fall's Employee Benefits Open Enrollment to be held October 9–November 3.

Will you and your spouse be tobacco free throughout 2017? You must attest to avoid the 25 percent surcharge, effective January 1, 2018. If you or your spouse are tobacco users, you must attest that you have NOT been tobacco free.

Instructions for making your attestation will be provided prior to Open Enrollment in the annual Open Enrollment announcements e-mail, on the Employee and Retiree Service Center website, and in the *For Your Benefit* online newsletter.

Ready to quit? Consider registering for Well Aware's Quit for Good class (see related article above). Once you have been tobacco free for 12 consecutive months, you may reattest online via the [Employee Self-Service web page](#) to have the surcharge removed.

Well Aware Announces Its Fall Physical Activity Challenge: *Hike for Your Health*



The Appalachian Trail is nearly 2,200 miles long, passes through 14 states, eight national forests, two national parks, and numerous state parks, forests, and game lands. Walking end-to-end would earn you nearly 5 million steps!

This fall, Well Aware invites you to *Hike for Your Health* and see how much of the Appalachian Trail you can cover. This physical activity challenge will have you choose and complete a virtual trail during the 10-week challenge.

You know hiking is good for your health. But do you know just *how* good it is? Take a literal hike this fall, and take note of all the good you are doing for your body. Hiking can help you—

- improve cardio-respiratory fitness (heart, lungs, blood vessels);
- improve muscular fitness;
- lower the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke;
- lower the risk of high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes;
- lower the risk of high cholesterol and triglycerides;
- lower the risk of colon and breast cancer, and possibly lung and endometrial cancer;
- increase bone density or lose bone density more slowly;
- reduce depression and improve sleep quality; and
- control weight (hiking burns up 370 calories per hour for a 150-lb person).

Learn more about *Hike for Your Health*, including incentives, rules, and more by visiting the [Well Aware web page](#). Or, simply search for "Hike for your Health" from any Montgomery County Public Schools web page.

Quit for Good!

TOBACCO CESSATION PROGRAM

Are You Ready to Quit Smoking?

MCPS and Kaiser Permanente are teaming up to bring you the Quit for Good tobacco cessation program. The free program is available to employees and their spouses, regardless of whether or not you participate in MCPS employee benefits or if you participate with Kaiser. The next Quit for Good session will begin on Monday October 16, 2017. Join us at 4:30 p.m. in the Robinson Room, 45 West Gude Drive, Rockville.

You must register to participate by [e-mailing Well Aware](#). [Learn more.](#)

RUN@WORK Day Will be Here Soon!

Ask most runners—and they would likely tell you the reason they run is that it helps them to feel better—physically, mentally, and emotionally. Feeling better is reason enough for many to take up the sport. Perhaps you are considering it.

Running is among the best aerobic exercises for physical conditioning of your heart and lungs. Studies have shown the health benefits to be enormous, reducing the likelihood of everything from the common cold to cancer. Your stamina will increase. Just as important, running—like many forms of exercise—is a great cure for stress, emotional strain, even mild depression. You'll likely find yourself with fewer headaches and more energy, patience, humor and creativity. Studies have found that healthy adults who exercise regularly are generally happier than those who don't.

On Friday, September 15, 2017, the Road Runners Club of America will present the 9th annual RUN@WORK Day nationwide. Well Aware encourages you to plan fun runs and walks with your coworkers around your school or office location. The goal is to encourage adults to get 30 minutes of exercise each day, in accordance with the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, either before work, during lunch, or after work. [Learn more.](#)

To participate, make time to run or walk for 30 minutes on September 15 and bring a coworker or family member to work. Is your school or office participating? [E-mail Well Aware](#) with your story and photos.

Ready to Run? Check Out this Fall 5K Training Program

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 cooler fall weather is the perfect time to start training!

Following a successful spring session, the Run Farther & Faster MCPS Fall Virtual Group 5K Training Program will be held from September 18, 2017, to November 5, 2017. The program will culminate with the Rockville 5K, an optional race to celebrate your training. Participants will receive a comprehensive seven-week training calendar, weekly e-mails with training support and running information, as well as e-mail access to certified running coaches.

The training calendar begins with run/walk intervals and progress safely and gradually towards continuous running. It also includes strength workouts and form drills. For those who are interested, participants also have access to a private Facebook group to facilitate finding running partners.

The program is appropriate for new runners or runners who are returning after a hiatus. Space is limited to the first 50 registrants. [Register here.](#) Registration closes when capacity is reached or on Friday, September 15, 2017.

Wellness Survey: Share Your Ideas and Interests with Us!

Help Well Aware provide you with the wellness program you most need and want.

[Complete this survey](#) to let us know about any programs, activities, and/or incentives you would like us to consider for the coming year. Your personal responses will help us make sure we offer the wellness programming that most interests you.

Healthy Food, Healthy Body

Join Well Aware and CareFirst for a six-week class to help you learn more about nutrition. Participants will learn to make healthier food choices for themselves and their families by developing plans, strategies, and resources for healthy meals and snacks.

Thursdays, October 12–November 16, 2017
 4:30–5:30 p.m.

Aspen Conference Room
 45 West Gude Drive
 Rockville, Maryland 20850

This class is capped at 25 people, so register soon! For more information or to register [e-mail Well Aware](#).

Stress Less This Fall

If you are living with high levels of stress, you are putting your entire well-being at risk. Stress wreaks havoc on your emotional wellness, as well as on your physical health. It makes it harder to think clearly, function effectively, and enjoy life.

Effective stress management, on the other hand, helps you break the hold stress has on your life, so you can be happier, healthier, and more productive. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun—and the flexibility to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on. But stress management is not one-size-fits-all. That's why it's important to experiment and find out what works best for you.

Well Aware will offer the following classes this fall to help you stress less:

Mindfulness and Meditation

Mondays beginning September 11, 2017
 5:00–6:00 p.m.

Room 240 (enter through the North entrance)
 850 Hungerford Drive
 Rockville, Maryland 20850

Seated Yoga

Wednesdays, September 13–December 13, 2017
 4:30–5:30 p.m.

Café 45
 45 West Gude Drive
 Rockville, Maryland 20850

Tai Chi

Thursdays, September 7–December 7, 2017
 4:30 p.m.

Café 45
 45 West Gude Drive
 Rockville, Maryland 20850

To register for any of these classes, [e-mail Well Aware](#).

The employee wellness newsletter is brought to you by the Employee and Retiree Service Center (ERSC). Learn more about employee wellness by visiting our [website](#). View this e-mail newsletter as a [PDF document](#). Questions or comments about your employee wellness program? Contact ERSC at 301-517-8100 or [e-mail Well Aware](#).