

December Well Aware eNews

Welcome to the December 2022 issue of the *Well Aware eNews*! Read on to learn about—

- this month's wellness champion, a program achievement specialist who has made her health and wellness a priority and is helping her coworkers to do the same;
- a webinar to help you identify the sources of holiday stress and minimize that stress with strategies to promote a joyful holiday season;
- other ways to stress less over the holidays;
- establishing a sweet-free zone at your school or office;
- this year's Flights to Fitness opportunity;
- Wellbeats *Create Your Calm* and *Healthy for the Holidays* programs; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar— Promote a Joyful Holiday Season

This webinar will help participants recognize their sources of holiday stress and tension. Once identified, these stressors can be minimized by developing strategies to promote a joyful holiday season.

Tuesday, December 13, 2022
 4:30–5:30 p.m.

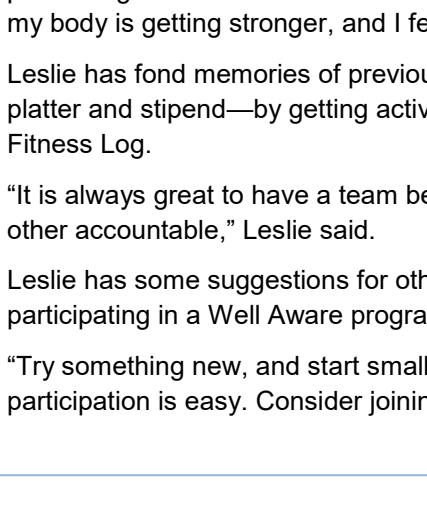
Please [email Well Aware](#) to register for the webinar. After registering, you will receive a link to the webinar in your Outlook email as well as an Outlook calendar reminder.

Spread the word with our [printable flyer](#). Visit the [Wellness Webinar Library](#).

Presented by: Kaiser Permanente

Wellness Champion Prioritizes Her Health and Wellness While Encouraging Others to Do Likewise

Ms. Leslie J. Chavis, program achievement specialist, Department of English Learners and Multilingual Education



Leslie J. Chavis, program achievement specialist in the Department of English Learners and Multilingual Education, has made her health and wellness a priority this fall and is helping her coworkers to do the same. Her participation in *Colorful Choices* and in the 5k Running Group is improving her health and setting a positive example for others.

Leslie believes that health and wellness is important for all MCPS staff.

"Wellness is important to staff for a number of reasons," Leslie said. "It helps to improve the climate in the workplace; builds relationships by bringing people together; and, when people are well, increases their work productivity and improves collaboration."

Leslie has discovered a lot of positives from joining Well Aware's wellness programs.

"For me, joining the programs adds an accountability component to achieving my own personal goal toward better health and fitness," Leslie said. Personally, I'm living healthier, my body is getting stronger, and I feel great!"

Leslie has fond memories of previous incentives and prizes her office has won—a fruit platter and stipend—by getting active and logging their activity into the online Well Aware Fitness Log.

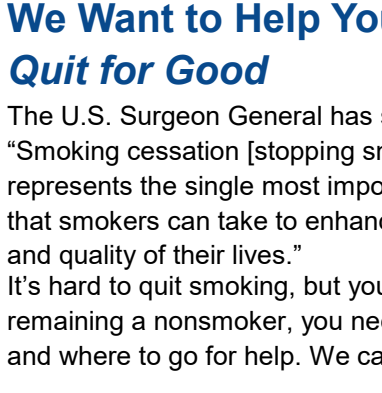
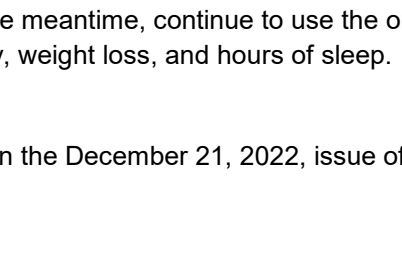
"It is always great to have a team because we can encourage each other and hold each other accountable," Leslie said.

Leslie has some suggestions for other MCPS staff members who are thinking about participating in a Well Aware program.

"Try something new, and start small," Leslie offered. "The programs are fun, and the participation is easy. Consider joining a team or creating one at your office or school."

MCPS Named a Healthiest Employer of Greater DC!

Montgomery County Public Schools has been recognized in the 2022 Healthiest Employers of Greater Washington DC. Healthiest Employers is an awards program created to honor people-first organizations that prioritize the well-being of their employee population. MCPS was recognized because of its commitment to workplace wellness and its exceptional health and benefits offerings. Award applicants were evaluated across six key categories: Culture and Leadership, Foundational Components, Strategic Planning, Communication and Marketing, Programming and Interventions, and Reporting and Analytics.



One Week Left to Enter the Try-Athlon Challenge

Since October 3, 2022, MCPS employees have been working to reduce risk for chronic illness, reduce depression, and strengthen their hearts and bones in the *Try-Athlon* physical activity challenge. Across MCPS, employees have enjoyed the camaraderie with their coworkers, along with the associated health gains.

Although the challenge ends on December 11, 2022, there is still one week left to experience the *Try-Athlon*! After that, you can look forward to Well Aware's winter *Flights to Fitness* challenge, which will begin in January. In the meantime, continue to use the online [Well Aware Fitness Log](#) to enter your daily activity, weight loss, and hours of sleep.

Stay tuned

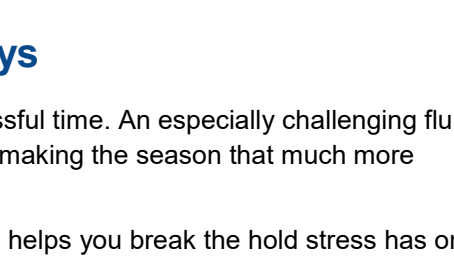
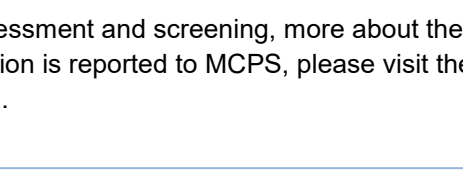
Grand prize *Try-Athlon* winners will be announced in the December 21, 2022, issue of *The Bulletin*!

We Want to Help You to 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's 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 a three-week virtual tobacco cessation class, *Quit for Good*, for MCPS staff and their significant others. The next class begins on January 18, 2023. [Learn more](#).



Take the Wellness Initiative

If you are covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan, 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.

The Wellness Initiatives are easy to complete. To earn the maximum two percent incentive toward your health insurance premiums, you need to complete a yearly—

- online health risk assessment, and
- biometric health screening (usually a physical with your primary care physician).

To find out how and when to complete your assessment and screening, more about the benefits of participating, and how your participation is reported to MCPS, please visit the [Wellness Initiatives for Employees web page](#).

Stress Less During the Holidays

The holiday season is typically a happy, yet stressful time. An especially challenging flu season and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is making the season that much more challenging for many of us.

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 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, we offer many classes will meet your needs. [Email Well Aware](#) to request a monthly schedule of classes.

Join Us for Online Physical Activity Classes

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 heart and mind health, help you manage stress, and enhance your overall wellness.

Consider trying one of Well Aware's many classes to see what kind of physical activity is best for you. From Zumba and HIITcamp, to Stretch and Mobility, Core, Yoga, and toning classes, there is truly something for everyone!

[Email Well Aware](#) to request the full schedule of classes.

Holiday Wellness Tips

Make the most wonderful time of year a safe and healthy time of year. With just a little preparation and caution, your holidays can be remembered for all the good reasons. Here are some tips on staying healthy, safe and stress free.

- Don't oversleep on sleep ready for the holidays. Lack of sleep leads to—
 - ◊ overeating and weight gain;
 - ◊ safety hazards at home, work, and on the road; and
 - ◊ a negative mood.
- Keep your immune system strong by staying physically active, eating healthy, and limiting alcohol. You don't have to say no to all of the holiday treats, just don't overindulge.
- Get the flu vaccine.

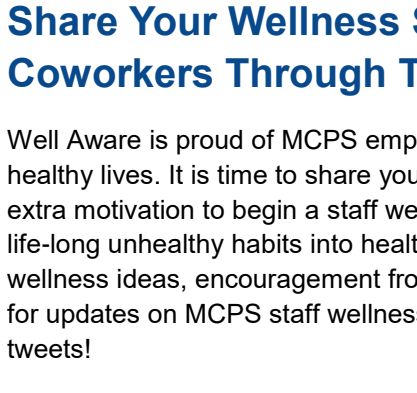
Try [these tips](#) to ensure a healthy holiday season.

Set Your Sweet-free Zone

This year, Well Aware is challenging you to designate your school or office as a sweet-free zone. What does this mean? It means that you pledge to do your best to celebrate the holidays in a healthy way.

During the holidays, print and post [this flyer](#) on the staff lounge or break room door to designate the area as a sweet-free zone. Be sure to read the suggestions in the flyer for changing the culture in your school or office.

Are you doing something special to stop the influx of sweet and treats in your work location? [Let us know](#), and please send pictures!



Flights to Fitness to Return in January

Flights to Fitness (F2F) is a program designed to encourage physical activity MCPS employees through stair climbing. Stay tuned for more information on the latest *Flights to Fitness* challenge starting in January!

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 stories, wellness ideas, encouragement from your MCPS coworkers, tips on living a healthy life, or for updates on MCPS staff wellness programs. Follow the hashtag [#mcpsstaffwellness](#) for tweets!

Cooking Demonstration Make Your Holiday Meals Healthier!

Join Well Aware for a cooking demonstration on Zoom to learn how to make healthy alternatives to holiday favorites.

Zoom Cooking Demonstration
 Wednesday, December 14, 2022
 4:30 p.m.

[Email Well Aware](#) to request Zoom sign-in details and a list of recipes and ingredients.

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 are also 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.

Check Out Our Online Health and Wellness "Toolbox"

Well Aware, the MCPS employee wellness program, brings you the *Well Aware Wellness Toolbox*, a web page with many resources for MCPS staff. These tools include physical and mental health resources, lists of free exercise and mindfulness classes, links to resources for improving sleep, nutrition, and more. MCPS staff are encouraged to take the time for self-care. Studies show that self-care is essential to well-being, especially during times of uncertainty and transition. Check out the [Well Aware Toolbox](#) to see what self-care resources will work best for you!

Join Wellbeats' Create Your Calm and Healthy for the Holidays Programs!

It is the most wonderful—and busiest—time of the year! Amidst the hustle and bustle, it's important to make time for yourself during the holiday season. To find more inner peace, we invite you to join the 14-day *Create Your Calm* program on Wellbeats! This program will guide you through daily breathing exercises, meditations, and mindfulness practices to take care of your mental health. By the end of the program, you will become more aware of how to create moments of calm during stressful times. See the [Create Your Calm flyer](#) and [program calendar](#).

You also can join the *Healthy Holiday Program* on the Wellbeats app or visit the [Wellbeats portal](#). See the [Healthy for the Holidays flyer](#)!

New to Wellbeats? Wellbeats offers 24/7 virtual fitness, nutrition, and mindfulness classes for free to MCPS staff. These classes can be streamed on your personal devices at home, school, or on the go. You can schedule classes in advance and invite your coworkers to join you; you also can download classes to play when you are offline. See [this flyer](#) for log-in information, enjoy this [welcome video](#), and this video announcing that [Wellbeing is for All](#).