

September Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion, a staff development teacher who, after reading Well Aware's announcement about its summer physical activity challenge, decided to make her health and wellness a priority by participating;
- a webinar on the importance of relaxing to prevent emotional and physical burnout;
- this fall's physical activity challenge;
- another RUN@WORK Day;
- a 5k training program to be held this fall;
- an upcoming workshop series on mindfulness; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar—Relaxation RX

Most of us feel too busy to even think about taking time out to relax. But the reality is that regular relaxation is crucial—if we do not stop regularly to refuel, we risk emotional and physical burnout. Even a small investment of 5–10 minutes a day can have a huge return.

This interactive workshop will include demonstrations of relaxation techniques that provide immediate as well as long-term benefits. We also will learn how to detect burnout triggers and discover ways to regain a sense of balance and motivation. We will leave feeling recharged and better able to tackle our daily demands.

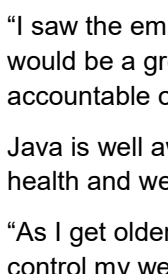
Thursday, September 22, 2022
4:30–5:30 p.m.

Please **email Well Aware** to register for the webinar. After registering, you will receive a link to the webinar in your Outlook calendar 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 Tops the Leaderboard for Summer Activity



Mrs. Java M. Robinson,
staff development teacher,
Piney Branch Elementary School

Mrs. Java M. Robinson, staff development teacher at Piney Branch Elementary School, decided to make her health and wellness a priority this summer. After seeing an email from Well Aware announcing the *Ola* summer physical activity challenge, she decided to join. Since then, Java has been at the top of the leaderboard for summer activity!

"I saw the email about the challenge and decided it would be a great thing to do to hold myself accountable over the summer," Java said.

Java is well aware of the need to be more focused on health and wellness as she ages.

"As I get older, I am finding it harder and harder to control my weight," Java said. "I have always tried to exercise on a regular basis to keep fit; however, the last two years have taken a toll, and I am trying to get back into shape. Also, my mom died young, and I am looking to be healthy and surpass that." Java believes that prioritizing her health is very important in her role as a staff development teacher.

"I need to be healthy so I can be available to support the staff and students at my school," Java said. "They count on me to be present and available. I cannot do that if I am out sick all the time. Also, there are lots of flights of stairs at my school and I must be fit to go up and down them every day."

Java has some great advice for fellow MCPS coworkers looking to start their health and wellness journey.

"Take baby steps," Java said. "If you try to do everything at once, you are setting yourself up for failure. Set small, attainable goals to start off with like walking for 30 minutes a day or increasing the amount of water you drink each day. As you attain those goals, then set new ones."

Moreover, Java understands the importance of asking for and accepting support and encouragement from others.

"Have family and friends do your health and wellness journey with you so you can support one another and hold each other accountable," Java said. "Celebrate your successes no matter how small or how long it took to get there. Don't give up if it takes a lot longer than you anticipate, just readjust your goals to something attainable and try again."

Well Aware Announces Its Fall Physical Activity Challenge: The *Try-Athlon*

A typical triathlon is a race consisting of three events over various distances. This fall, Well Aware is putting its own spin on this empowering competition. We invite MCPS employees to—

- Pick three health goals,
- Set measurable objectives, and
- Make and implement a plan for reaching them.

Join us for the 10-week *Try-Athlon* fall physical activity challenge to meet your objectives and reach your goals!

Let's give behavior change a try! Dedicate yourself to your goals, objectives, and plan. By the end of the challenge, you will cross the finish line as a healthy Try-Athlete!

The *Try-Athlon* continues Well Aware's goal of helping the MCPS community build long-lasting healthy habits. Participate as an individual or on a team! Schools and offices can work together to create their own *Try-Athlon* teams, encourage activity, and support each other throughout the challenge.

Learn more about the Well Aware *Try-Athlon*, including incentives, rules, and more by visiting the **Well Aware web page**. You also can search for "*Well Aware Try-Athlon*" from any MCPS web page.

Get InStep with Diabetes

InStep with Diabetes is a series of three one-hour classes that will help you better understand diabetes and the lifestyle changes needed to support healthy living. A Kaiser Permanente health educator will discuss not only why healthy eating, physical activity, and blood sugar control are important for diabetes management, but also ways to incorporate these changes into your life. The facilitator will also share resources and travel tips to further support you.

RUN@WORK Day Is Coming!

The Road Runners Club of America will present the 16th Annual RUN@WORK Day nationwide on September 16, 2022. The goal is to encourage adults to get 30 minutes of exercise each day, in accordance with the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans.

How do you participate in RUN@WORK Day? Try this **at-home training program**! Or, simply make time to run, walk, or do some other form of exercise for at least 30 minutes on September 16, 2022. Be sure to encourage a coworker or family member to exercise too. Plan a safe route for you and your coworkers and set off on a run together either before work, during lunch, or after work.

Tweet your RUN@WORK Day photos and tag us @mcpswellaware.

Get Ready to Run in this Fall's 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 will be the perfect time to start training!

Following a successful spring session, the Run Farther & Faster MCPS Fall Virtual Group 5K Training Program will begin on Sunday, September 18, 2022, and run through Sunday, November 27, 2022. Participants will receive a comprehensive training calendar, weekly emails with training support, and running-related information, as well as email access to certified running coaches should you have questions or concerns.

The training calendar begins with run/walk intervals and progresses safely and gradually toward continuous running. It also includes strength workouts and form drills. Interested participants also will 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 September 18, 2022.

Wellness Initiatives Deadline Approaching to Save Money on Your Health Insurance in 2023

The Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Wellness Initiatives program provides you with incentives to reduce your health insurance costs. 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 7, 2022—and yearly thereafter—to take advantage of the rate reductions in 2023 and beyond.

You can pay 1 percent less of the total cost of your health insurance in 2023 by seeing your doctor or visiting a CVS Minute Clinic (if you are a CareFirst member) for an annual physical. Not able to schedule a physical this year? Instead, complete the *Biometrics Incentive Alternative 2023 Benefit Year* training (course number 90899) on **Professional Development Online (PDO)** to earn biometrics credit. For an additional 1 percent credit, complete a health risk assessment on your medical plan's website by October 7, 2022. Both CareFirst and Kaiser Permanente members must log in to their medical plan's web page to consent to their participation in the program. Without your consent, your information will not be reported.

Note to CareFirst members: If you complete your biometric health screening and health risk assessment by the October 7, 2022, deadline, you will receive credit for 2023 even though you no longer will be covered by CareFirst in 2023.

Take the Wellness Initiative! **Learn more**.

Mindfulness Series for School Staff

Join Well Aware for a workshop series on mindfulness. This workshop will provide knowledge/practice to create more wellness in your life both professionally and personally! The workshop will cover breathing, body scanning, present moment awareness, eating meditation, and much more. To register, **email Well Aware**. **Learn more**.

Stress Less This Fall

As summer winds down and we get back into the fall routine, we need to find time for stress management. Stress can negatively affect your emotional wellness, as well as 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—with 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.

This fall, Well Aware is continuing our online virtual live and recorded classes for your convenience. We have also added some onsite classes. From yoga and seated yoga, to mindfulness and tai chi, there is something for everyone. Give them all a try to see what you like best.

Email Well Aware to request the full schedule of classes. **Opt in to receive the daily wellness email** for class links and updates.

Join Us for Online Physical Activity Classes

Physical activity and exercise can have immediate and long-term health benefits. Regular movement can improve your physical and mental health (in part by helping you manage stress) and your overall wellness. It actually can reduce the risk of developing serious illness, such as Type 2 diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease.

This fall, Well Aware is continuing its online virtual live recorded classes for your convenience and has added some onsite classes as well. From Zumba, and HIITCamp, to yoga and core workout classes, there is something for everyone. Give them all a try to see what you like best!

Email Well Aware to request the full schedule of classes. **Opt in to receive the daily wellness email** for class links and updates.

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!

Take Care of You with Wellbeats

Be sure to check out this month's free Wellbeats *Take Care of You* program. Feel like you're running on empty by the end of the day? Do you tend to put your own needs last? Take some time to refocus on you and your wellbeing. This four-week program includes a daily schedule of classes to restore energy, elevate your mood, and focus on your own health and happiness. Choose whichever class option fits your needs on any given day: whether it's a relaxing meditation or yoga class (such as *Gratitude Meditation* and *Therapeutic Yoga*), or a feel-good workout (such as *Power Circuits* and *Sunrise Run*). Class categories include yoga, meditation/mindfulness, HIIT (High Intensity Interval Training), walking/running, and strength training.

Be sure to give these back-to-school classes a try:

- **School Lunches**
- **Stocking a Healthy Pantry**
- **Getting Kids Interested in Nutrition**

MCPS staff continues to have free access to Wellbeats, which offers 24/7 virtual fitness, nutrition, and mindfulness classes. 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 **Wellbeats is for All**. If you haven't already, **get started today!**

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 full of resources to help MCPS staff adjust to the return to schools and offices. 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!

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.

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 email newsletter as a **PDF document**. Questions or comments about your employee wellness program? Contact ERSC at 301-517-8100 or **email Well Aware**.