

September Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champions, members of a wellness team who actively participate and encourage each other in every challenge that Well Aware offers;
- a webinar to lessen time stress, create healthy boundaries, and build more self-care and downtime into your day;
- the *Pile on the Miles* physical activity challenge for fall;
- this year's RUN@WORK day;
- the Fall 5k training program;
- ways to stress less this fall; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar—Finding More Margin in Your Days

Join us for this webinar for tips to lessen time stress, create healthy boundaries, and build more self-care and downtime into your day.

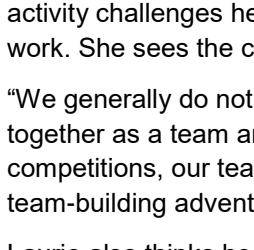
Thursday, September 23, 2021
4:00–5:00 p.m.

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:
Kaiser Permanente

Wellness Champions Participate in Every Well Aware Challenge Offered While Encouraging Each Other



**Wellness Team,
Lathrop E. Smith
Environmental
Education Center**

Members of the wellness team at Lathrop E. Smith Environmental Education Center actively participate in every physical activity challenge that Well Aware offers. Not only do they participate year after year, they also continue to support and encourage each other. Along the way, they have won grant money to support the center's wellness efforts.

Laurie Jenkins, supervisor, is proud to be a part of the team and believes the physical activity challenges help her and her coworkers in many ways, both inside and outside of work. She sees the challenges as a vital part of their office culture.

"We generally do not work in the same location, so this is a great way for us to come together as a team and focus on health and fun," Laurie said. "In addition to the competitions, our team has used our grant winnings to hold some amazing outdoor team-building adventures!"

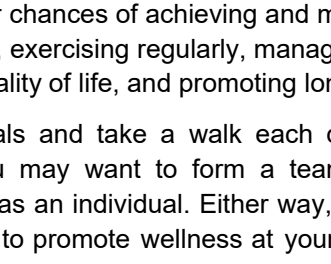
Laurie also thinks health and wellness is essential for educational staff.

"If we are not healthy, everything suffers," Laurie said. "It is important for us to take care of ourselves and each other to not only create a healthy work environment, but to also be a great example to the students and community."

Laurie has some advice for fellow MCPS staff.

"Try to include as many people as possible in your school/office/depot wellness activities," she said. "It is also very important to have a motivational leader to keep everyone going!"

Be Sure to Pile on the Miles During this Fall's Physical Activity Challenge!



Walking can reduce your risk for chronic illnesses such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease and more. A walk every day can reduce depression, strengthen bones and balance, and even reduce your risk for Alzheimer's disease.

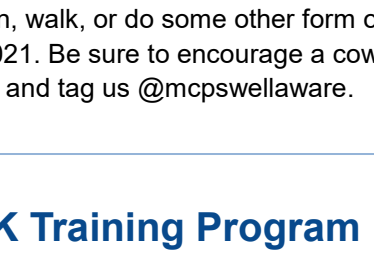
This fall, Well Aware is challenging you to incorporate a daily walk into your lifestyle in the *Pile on the Miles* physical activity challenge. You determine the level of your challenge by selecting a goal of walking 100, 200, or 300 miles in 100 days. This is a big goal, but day by day, it is attainable! Another goal of this challenge is to show you that physical activity doesn't need to be complicated. Something as simple as a brisk daily walk can help you live a healthier life.

How many of us have started a fitness journey only to give up a few weeks or days in? Well Aware is challenging you to take this opportunity to start and set a healthy habit! Habits are essential to your health. They can make or break your chances of achieving and maintaining other lifestyle goals such as sticking to an eating plan, exercising regularly, managing diabetes/other medical conditions, increasing your quality of life, and promoting longevity.

Encourage your coworkers to set their walking goals and take a walk each day of the challenge, which begins September 13, 2021. You may want to form a team to work together to compete in the challenge. Or, participate as an individual. Either way, you could win exciting prizes, including fruit platters and grants to promote wellness at your school or office.

Learn more about the *Pile on the Miles* challenge, including incentives, rules, and more, by visiting the **Well Aware web page**. Or, simply search for *Pile on the Miles* from any MCPS web page.

Another Chance to Quit for Good



MCPS and Kaiser Permanente are teaming up again 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.

Our next class will begin on Tuesday, October 12. The class will be online and registration is open! **Learn more about the upcoming class**. You must register to participate by **emailing Well Aware**.

RUN@WORK ... Remotely!

The Road Runners Club of America will present the 15th Annual RUN@WORK Day nationwide on September 17, 2021. In lieu of runs and walks around your workplace, Well Aware is encouraging you to plan virtual workouts with your MCPS coworkers that day.

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 immediately after work.

So how do you participate in the RUN@WORK Day from your home office? 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 17, 2021. Be sure to encourage a coworker or family member to exercise too. Tweet your 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 Monday, September 20, 2021, and run through Thanksgiving. Participants will receive a comprehensive nine-week 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 17, 2021.

Wellness Initiatives Deadline Approaching to Save Money on Your Health Insurance in 2022

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 8, 2021—and yearly thereafter—to take advantage of the rate reductions in 2022 and beyond.

You can pay 1 percent less of the total cost of your health insurance in 2022 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 2022 Benefit Year* training (course number 90270) 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 8, 2021. 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.

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

Stress Less This Fall

There isn't much in our lives that hasn't been impacted by COVID-19. While ordinary change can be difficult, change brought on by a pandemic, as we are learning, is especially stressful. 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—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. 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 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.

This fall, Well Aware is continuing its online virtual live recorded classes for your convenience. 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 all of the hard work that MCPS employee are doing to live a healthy and well life. It is time to share your stories and your spirit! Or, do you need motivation to start a staff wellness program or change an individual behavior? Follow @mcpswellaware for incredible stories, wellness ideas, encouragement from your MCPS coworkers, tips on living a healthy life, or updates on MCPS staff wellness activities.

MCPS Receives Healthiest Maryland Businesses Wellness Exemplar Award

Montgomery County Public Schools and Well Aware were recently awarded a 2021 Healthiest Maryland Businesses Wellness Exemplar Award. At the exemplar level, businesses have well-established worksite wellness practices that promote a culture of health at all levels. Their work is guided by a workplace health improvement plan, and implements four strategies: policy, programming, benefits, and environmental supports. These businesses and organizations conduct evaluation activities, which are used to inform future planning and implementation.

BurnAlong Help MCPS Become America's Healthiest Company!

MCPS is competing to become America's Healthiest Company in the BurnAlong platform! Starting on September 7, 2021, employees will compete by taking classes, from any category, on the BurnAlong platform throughout the six-week challenge. The winner is chosen based on the highest number of average minutes completed per employee.

MCPS and CareFirst partnered to give you access to BurnAlong, a health and wellness platform that comes with four FREE accounts for your friends and family members. The thousands of available classes include meditation, boxing, yoga, bootcamp, spin, nutrition, and even financial literacy. Specialized senior classes for you or older members of your family who may need physical activity but need to remain at home also are offered. Classes can be taken as a group, so you can work out with a friend or family member while seeing and talking with one another during the online class.

Interested in joining the healthy competition? **Register and log in**.

Check Out Our Online Health and Wellness "Toolbox"

Well Aware, the MCPS employee wellness program, has launched the *Well Aware Wellness Toolbox*, a web page with many 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**.