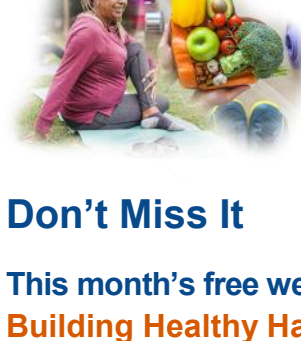


February Well Aware eNews

Welcome to the February 2023 issue of the *Well Aware eNews*! Read on to learn about—

- this month's wellness champion, a bus attendant and breast cancer survivor who made a number of healthy changes last fall and earned a prize as a Try-Athlon challenge participant;
- a webinar on establishing and using healthy habits to build a sustainable healthier lifestyle;
- this year's National Wear Red Day;
- Cigna's and Kaiser Permanente's online tools and resources;
- this year's *Flights to Fitness* program;
- healthy habits to prevent heart disease; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar—**Building Healthy Habits That Last**

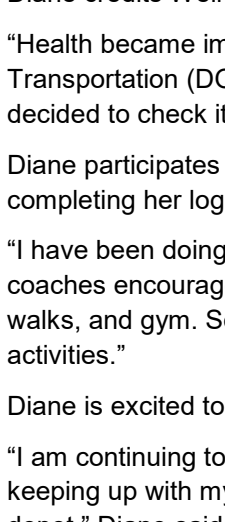
More than 40 percent of the things you do are habits. In this webinar, we will explore how habits are established and how to use them to your advantage to build a sustainable, healthier lifestyle. A quality self-care routine that becomes habitual can help you stay healthier and happier, perform better at work, take better care of family members, and accomplish more in a day.

Thursday, February 23, 2023
4:30 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](#).

Wellness Maintains Her Health By Keeping Motivated Through Well Aware Activities and Challenges



Diane F. Sharer

Ms. Diane F. Sharer, bus attendant special education, Randolph Transportation Depot

Last fall, Diane Sharer, bus attendant special education and breast cancer survivor, made many healthy changes in her life. She even earned a prize by participating in Well Aware's fall Try-Athlon physical activity challenge.

Diane credits Well Aware for getting her motivated to live a healthier life.

"Health became important to me when the wellness program came to the Department of Transportation (DOT) about 12 years ago," Diane said. "I was lazy and unmotivated. I decided to check it out and liked it, so I kept coming back, and I am still here."

Diane participates in the wellness challenges and is consistent with her activity and in completing her logs.

"I have been doing the challenge every year, and this year is no different," Diane said. "Our coaches encouraged me to log my activity. They know I am a regular at the on-site classes, walks, and gym. Sometimes I didn't do it daily, but I always made sure to log my weekly activities."

Diane is excited to keep her healthy habits going.

"I am continuing to keep up my healthy habits by making better choices in what I am eating, keeping up with my exercise program, and staying involved with the classes offered at the depot," Diane said. "I want to get better in not bringing unhealthy food home. It's very tempting and the bag usually disappears before I know what happened!"

As a breast cancer survivor, Diane has an important goal.

"I have been cancer-free for seven years, and my goal is to see my granddaughter grow up," Diane said. "Keeping my body in the best possible health is vital to me."

Diane encourages other DOT staff to get active and stay healthy.

"We have so much to offer in Transportation, and I wish more people would get involved in the wellness activities," Diane said. "I spread the word to anyone who will listen."

As a new employee mentor for bus attendants, she supports her new coworkers as they start their positions to help them be more comfortable before heading out on their own.

"I always tell them about the wellness program and encourage them to get involved. I also tell them the Well Aware activities are free!"

American Heart Association's National Wear Red Day

The American Heart Association (AHA) is holding its yearly National Wear Red Day on Friday, February 3, 2023, to call attention to heart disease. Why "Go Red?" According to AHA, "Heart disease and stroke cause one in three deaths among women each year, killing approximately one woman every 80 seconds. Fortunately, we have the power to change that because 80 percent of cardiac and stroke events may be prevented with education and action.

Well Aware encourages all Montgomery County Public Schools employees to make their heart health a priority. Schedule your annual preventive check-up to review your overall health, measure your blood pressure, check your cholesterol, and look for signs of heart disease, stroke, and other illnesses.

Do your part to educate yourself, your friends, and your family this year. Join the movement to end heart disease and strokes in women because it's not just a man's disease. Here is what it means to "Go Red":

G: Get Your Numbers
O: Own Your Lifestyle

R: Realize Your Risk
E: Educate Your Family
D: Don't Be Silent

[Watch a video that explains why you should Go Red.](#)

Did your school, office, or depot plan a Wear Red Day in honor of women's heart health? Take a picture of your staff and [email it to Well Aware](#).

Medical Plan Online Tools and Resources

Both Kaiser Permanente and Cigna offer many online tools and resources to help you on your health and wellness journey. These programs are included in your monthly premium cost, so make sure to take advantage of what is available to you!

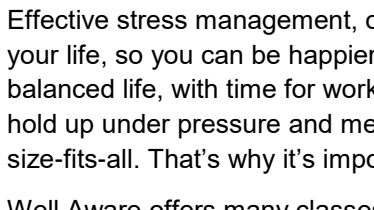
Cigna tools:

- Coaching
- Apps
- Cigna Healthy Rewards

Kaiser Permanente tools:

- Coaching
- Apps (English/Spanish)
- Healthy Resources

F2F Flights TO FITNESS



Flights to Fitness: World Landmarks

Stair climbing can be a wonderful way to keep fit. Most of us live and/or work in or near a building with stairs. Stair climbing can be done anytime throughout the day as a break in your routine. The activity benefits your heart, your mind, as well as your leg muscles.

Well Aware is challenging you to climb world landmarks, or climb the equivalent of these landmarks in flights of stairs. Form a team and complete these landmarks together to share your sense of achievement! It is a great way to stay in shape during the cold winter months.

For details, visit Well Aware's [Flights to Fitness web page](#).

Dare to Walk 10K a Day?

Join Well Aware for a step program that will motivate you to walk more as you visit international cities, including Sydney, Mexico City, Dublin, Bangkok, Cairo, and Buenos Aires. The program integrates with 60+ of your favorite devices and mobile apps, including Apple Health, Fitbit, and more!

Even though the challenge started in January, you can participate until February 24, 2023. [Email Well Aware](#) for details.

Stress Less this Winter

Shorter days with less sunlight combined with cold weather lead to a more sedentary lifestyle. This can make a big difference in your mood and stress levels.

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 to meet your needs. [Email Well Aware](#) to request a monthly schedule of classes.

Take the Wellness Initiatives Reduce Your Share of Health Insurance Costs for 2024

If you are covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan through Cigna or Kaiser Permanente, you can learn more about your health and reduce your contributions to your 2023 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 very simple to accomplish. To receive the maximum 2 percent reduction on your health insurance premiums in 2024, you have until October 6, 2023, to complete your annual—

- online health risk assessment, and
- biometric health screening*.

To find out how to complete your biometric health screening* and health risk assessment, more about the benefits of participating, and how your participation will be reported to MCPS, please visit the [Wellness Initiatives web page](#).

* Please note that Biometrics Incentive Alternative training, which has provided an alternative to the biometric health screening since 2020 due to COVID-19, will NOT be offered in 2023. Employees will need to complete a biometric health screening and their medical plan's health risk assessment to receive full Wellness Initiatives credit for 2024.

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.

Healthy Habits to Prevent Heart Disease

February is Heart Disease Awareness Month. Did you know that every 40 seconds, someone in the United States has a heart attack? One of the most important lifestyle modifications that can significantly reduce the risk of developing heart disease is regular exercise, which can be hard to fit into our busy lives. Read about the [link between exercise and a lowered risk of heart disease](#). Learn [more](#) about the three types of exercises that boost heart health.

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.

Share Your Wellness Stories and Encourage Your Coworkers Through Twitter!

Well Aware is proud of MCPS employees 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!

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](#).