

## September Well Aware eNews

Welcome to the September 2024 issue of *Well Aware eNews*! Read on to learn about—

- this month's wellness webinar on how to shift your priorities and mindset to fit movement into each day,
- another reprise of Well Aware's inaugural physical activity challenge: *MCPS on the Move*,
- your chance to get InStep with Diabetes,
- Suicide Prevention Month,
- this fall's Virtual Staff Wellness Day, and
- more!



### Don't Miss It

**This month's free webinar—  
Make Movement  
Your Mission**

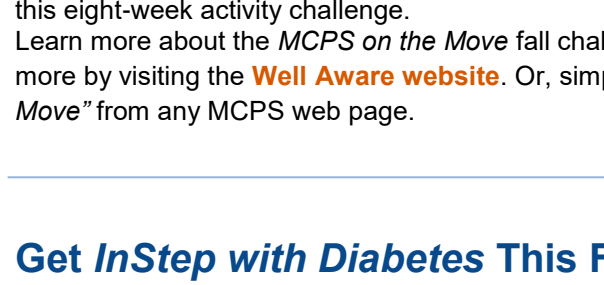
Don't have time to work out? Let us help you shift your mindset and priorities so you can discover what exercise should look like and how to fit it in during your day. Learn about movement opportunities you may be missing out on throughout the day. You could be making movement your mission—without a gym!

**Wednesday, September 25, 2024**  
Webinar  
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**.

## MCPS On the Move Is Back!



In 2010, Well Aware held its inaugural physical activity challenge: *MCPS on the Move*. The challenge encouraged staff to adopt lifelong exercise and healthy eating habits. *MCPS on the Move* emphasized consistency over athleticism and encouraged participants to incorporate simple, physical activities into their daily routines.

Last fall, we reprised *MCPS On the Move*, and we're doing it again! We hope you will join us as we continue Well Aware's goal of building long-lasting healthy habits. Participate as an individual or on a team! Schools and offices can work together and create their own *MCPS on the Move* teams, encourage activity, and support each other through this eight-week activity challenge. Learn more about the *MCPS on the Move* fall challenge, including incentives, rules, and more by visiting the **Well Aware website**. Or, simply search for "*Well Aware MCPS on the Move*" from any MCPS web page.

## Get InStep with Diabetes This Fall

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 also will share resources and travel tips to further support you.

You do not have to be diabetic or pre-diabetic (or a Kaiser Permanente member) to attend this course. You can attend to support a friend or family member by learning helpful information.

Our next class begins in October. For more information **email Well Aware** and **see this flyer**.

## The Fall 5K Training Program Will Be Here Soon

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's 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 begin on Tuesday, September 3, 2024, and run through Saturday, November 9, 2024. This will prepare participants for the Rockville 5K, upcoming Turkey Trots, and any of the other fall races.

Participants will receive a comprehensive training calendar, weekly emails with training support and running-related information, as well as the ability to email certified running coaches with questions or concerns. The training calendar begins with run/walk intervals and progress 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. **Learn more and register**.

## Wellness Initiatives

### Deadline Approaching to Save Money on Your Health Insurance in 2024

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 4, 2024—and yearly thereafter—to take advantage of the rate reductions in 2025 and beyond.

You can pay 1 percent less of the total cost of your health insurance in 2025 by seeing your doctor or, if you are a Cigna member, visiting a Quest Patient Services Center for an annual physical. For an additional 1 percent credit, complete a health risk assessment on your medical plan's website by October 4, 2024.

Take the Wellness Initiative! **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—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.

This fall, Well Aware is continuing its online, live, recorded, and on-site classes for your convenience. From yoga and seated yoga, to mindfulness and tai chi, there is something for everyone. Consider giving them all a try to see what you like best.

**Email Well Aware** to get the full schedule of classes. Register for the daily wellness email for class links and updates. **Opt in to this email distribution list**.

## Join Us for Online Physical Activity

Movement 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 and mind, and help you manage your stress and overall wellness.

This fall, Well Aware is continuing its online, live, and recorded classes and will add some on-site, in-person classes for your convenience. From Zumba and HITCamp, to yoga and core workouts, there is something for everyone. Give them all a try to see what you like best.

**Email Well Aware** to get the full schedule of classes. Register for the daily wellness email for class links and updates. **Opt-in to this email distribution list**.

## Share Your Wellness Stories and Encourage Your Coworkers!

Well Aware is proud of MCPS employees for all of the hard work they are doing to lead healthy lives. Share your stories and your spirit on X (formerly Twitter). 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. Be sure to also follow [#mcpsstaffwellness!](#)

## Develop Healthy Habits with Wellbeats Wellness

Taking small steps can make a big difference when it comes to improving health and wellness. Whether it's walking for 5–10 minutes a day, eating more fruits and vegetables, or learning to meditate, Wellbeats Wellness can help guide and support you in your pursuit of better health.

As an MCPS employee, you have free access to Wellbeats. Here's what's included:

Safe, expert-led classes to help ease or reduce the risk of bone or joint injuries;

- 60+ goal-based programs, including:
  - Daily Mobility
  - Get Started
  - Food and Mood
  - Healthy Back
  - Intro to Strength, and
  - Relieve Stress
- Guided meditations to reduce stress and muscle tension
- Healthy recipes, cooking demonstrations, and nutrition education to improve healthy eating habits, and
- More!

No matter your age, ability level, or interest, it's never too late to start developing healthy habits that can positively impact your life. You can safely ease into these habits and see the benefits starting today. Click [here](#) for log-in instructions. **Learn more**.

## Well Aware Toolbox

Well Aware, the MCPS employee wellness program, offers the Well Aware Wellness Toolbox, a web page with free resources for you to manage your health and wellness. 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. **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 and Pools

As a permanent MCPS employee, you have access to all Montgomery County (MC) recreation facilities, including swimming pools and gymsnasiums. You also are eligible for a 20 percent discount on an annual pool pass for your family members.

Interested? **Learn more** by visiting 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 need to reapply each year to continue your access to the facilities.

## Virtual Staff Wellness Day

During the Professional Day on Wednesday, October 18, 2024, Well Aware, Kaiser Permanente, and Cigna are coming together to present a virtual wellness day! Take a few minutes out of your professional day to give one of our wellness programs a try. This is a great opportunity to sample some of the classes that Well Aware hosts throughout the year, as well as prioritize your health and wellness. **See the class schedule, links, and class descriptions**.

## Well Aware and the Employee Assistance Program

### Monthly Connection: Time Management



*Did you know that mental and physical health are linked? Recent research has shown that an improvement or decline in one can lead to an improvement or decline in the other. The great news is that the body and brain are both very responsive to positive change!*

*For this reason, the MCPS EAP (Employee Assistance Program) and Well Aware (the MCPS Employee Wellness Program), are excited to work together to bring you monthly topics focusing on mental and physical health. These resources will help you align your wellness journey to ensure that you are focusing on both physical and mental health.*

#### EAP Resources

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, and we all have a role in helping prevent suicide in our communities. In recognition of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, below are helpful resources and information to get involved and raise awareness.

- Warning signs and risk factors of suicide, **National Institute of Mental Health's website**.
- World Suicide Prevention Day is observed on September 10 every year to increase global awareness of suicide prevention. **The International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP)** has introduced the theme of Changing the Narrative on Suicide for 2024 with a call to action to "Start the Conversation." Check out its resources on **Taking Time to Reach Out** for tips on starting the conversation to support those in your community.
- The **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's** Out of the Darkness Community Walk is an opportunity to unite in our support to prevent suicide and acknowledge the ways in which suicide has affected our lives and the lives of those we care about. The Montgomery County, Maryland walk is on Sunday, September 22, 2024, at the Maryland SoccerPlex in Germantown, Maryland. Onsite registration is at 9:00 a.m., and the walk begins at 10:00 a.m. You can also **register in advance online**.
- The MCPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is here to help. You may call the EAP at 240-740-6500 (Monday–Friday from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.). If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health emergency, call 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, or call 911 immediately. The Montgomery County Crisis Center is also available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 240-777-4000 or in person at 1301 P iccard Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20850. You may also access the EAP website to view **After-Hours Resources or MCPS Employees**.

#### Well Aware Resources

- Kaiser Permanente members: Review information on suicidal thoughts for—
  - **family**,
  - **teens**, and
  - **adults**.
- Cigna members: **Learn more about Suicide Awareness and Prevention**.

## Have You Been to HFP Live?

MCPS Well Aware and Cigna have partnered to provide all MCPS staff with access to *HFP Live*, a wellness livestream and video library built specifically for employees who are hard at work.

*HFP Live* broadcasts webinars, workshops, demos, and fitness classes in real time and with recordings for employees to view. Each week, we will send a schedule highlighting some of the upcoming events that you can check out. You can access the livestream portal and also view the schedule of upcoming events from any computer, laptop, tablet, or cell phone by using a password-protected link. Can't make a live session? Not to worry. Each livestreamed event is recorded and posted in a video library for you to access for at least 30 days. **Learn more**.

All MCPS staff can participate! **Log in to participate** using password: mcpsmd.

## Head Heart and Hands 12-Week Wellness Program

The Head Heart and Hands 12-week wellness program is a comprehensive program of learning and weekly group coaching, designed to help participants prevent/reverse disease, improve their physical and mental health, and lose weight. Entering its second year, the class has been a great success.

A recent participant had this to say about her experience as a result of taking the class. "I am feeling healthier all around," she said. "Not only have I lost 10-15 pounds, but I'm feeling better in my body and definitely have experienced an improvement in my mental and emotional health. I also finally feel like there's a way forward for me to build a healthy life. Everything I've done previously was short term and ultimately not sustainable. After learning what I've learned and being coached on how to implement that knowledge, I'm finally feeling like a healthy future is actually attainable for me."

This holistic program targets the root causes of common chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, arthritis, and more, while addressing all aspects of health, including nutrition, sleep, stress, mental health, and mindset. The program is designed to be inspiring and fun and to give participants the knowledge, tools, and support to lose weight permanently and reach their health goals. Our fall group is registering. **Email Well Aware** for more information.

## Omada for Cigna AND Kaiser Permanente Members

Omada is a personalized program that helps members lose weight and create healthier habits through one-on-one personal coaching and the tools needed to make long-lasting health changes.

Qualifying participants will receive the following:

- One-on-one support from a personal health coach
- Easy monitoring with a smart scale, which is yours to keep
- Tools for managing stress and creating a healthy mindset
- Actionable tips in weekly lessons
- Encouragement from an online community

To learn more and apply, visit **Omada Health**.

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 240-740-8100 or **email Well Aware**.