



eNews

The education you need for the health you want

December 2011 Well Aware eNews

Welcome to the December issue of the Well Aware eNews!

Read on to learn about—

- how this month's wellness champion motivates others to run toward their goals;
- updates on fitness competitions and tips for finishing strong;
- how to get involved in a free tobacco cessation program;
- tools to help you enjoy a healthier holiday season; and more!

Wellness Champion Runs Toward Her Goals



**Meet Jen Rucker,
Teacher
Garrett Park
Elementary
School**

Jen Rucker had not run in a while. Motivated

by a friend's weight loss, she decided to pick up the sport again. That inspiration has in turn inspired others—when her coworkers at Garret Park Elementary School saw her begin training for marathons, they decided also to get moving. With Jen's guidance and encouragement, 30 Garrett Park Elementary School staff members recently participated in the King of the Road 5k in Rockville. Following Jen's weekly training plans, staff trained together for the race since September. One staff member noted that "My real inspiration to do this was Jen! Over a year ago I weighed more than ever. I now work out at least two to

Don't miss it!

**The Low-Stress Diet:
Eating for a Healthy
Immune System in a
Stressful World**

Tuesday, December 6
4:00–5:00 p.m.
Northwood High School
Cafeteria
919 University Blvd West
Silver Spring, MD 20901

Wednesday, December 7
10:00–11:00 a.m.
Shady Grove Bus Depot
Training Room
16651 Crabbs Branch Way
Rockville, MD 20855

Tuesday, December 13
4:00–5:00 p.m.
Seneca Valley High School
Cafeteria
19401 Crystal Rock Drive
Germantown, MD 20874

Wednesday, December 14
10:00–11:00 a.m.
West Farm Bus Depot
Training Room
11920 Bournefield Way
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Thursday, December 15
4:30–5:30 p.m.
Carver Educational Services
Center Cafeteria
850 Hunnerford Road

three times a week. I will likely run/walk this 5k but that is much better than I would have done a year ago!"

In the above photo: Jen Rucker is in the back row, second from the left. She appears here at the King of the Road 5K with her Garrett Park Elementary School teammates.

300 Hangover Road
Rockville, MD 20850

Presented by:



MCPS on the Move and Work It Circuit: It's Time to Finish Strong!



MCPS on the Move and the Work It Circuit Challenge wrap up December 23, 2011. Since October, staff members from across the county have been getting out, getting active, and getting prizes for their efforts. So far, 160 deliveries of fresh fruit and vegetables have been awarded to employees just for participating. In addition, staff members, teams, and locations have been awarded prizes at the three and six week marks to reward them for their high activity. Nine week prizes will be awarded next week.

It is not too late to see yourself counted among the winners! Step up your game for your chance at one of the grand prizes:

- \$5,000 grant for physical education equipment or to promote staff wellness for the top two elementary schools with the highest average activity
- \$7,000 grant for physical education equipment or to promote staff wellness for the high school with the highest average activity
- \$7,000 grant for physical education equipment or to promote staff wellness for the middle school with the highest average activity
- \$2,000 grant for staff health and wellness for the top two central services teams with the highest average activity
- \$2,000 grant for staff health and wellness for the top central services team with the highest average decrease in BMI

Grand prizes will be awarded after all final activity is tallied when the competition ends, December 23, 2011. Now is the time to keep working toward those prizes and finish your competition strong—stronger and healthier than you were when you began!

And remember: random drawings to receive healthy fruit and vegetable deliveries are ongoing every two weeks—just for participating in the competition.

Some tips for finishing strong

- When the holiday goodies beckon, remind yourself that final prizes are just around the corner.
- Schedule time each day in your calendar to log your activity. This will hold you accountable for being active every day.
- Plan to incorporate healthy activities in your holiday get-togethers. See below for ideas and inspiration.

Got spirit?

If you have a teammate who has done a phenomenal job of inspiring others to get moving, make sure your coach knows! Coaches will be asked to nominate staff members for a spirit award, and depending on the competition, spirit award winners will receive either a \$100 gift card to Dick's Sporting Goods or a yoga or Zumba class at their work locations. Don't wait! Coaches must submit their nominations by December 9, 2011. Talk to your coach today!

Quit for Good: Next Class Forming Now

Quit for Good is a **free** eight-week tobacco cessation program that aims to provide all employees with the tools you need to kick the nicotine habit for



life. The next session of *Quit for Good* is now forming. The session will begin after the new year, with a start date and location based on interest level. Each session will serve 25 employees to ensure the personal attention necessary to support you in your goal of quitting.

The first session filled up quickly—[e-mail Well Aware](#) to reserve your spot today!



Want to know more?

The program is course-based, and consists of once-a-week classes led by a nurse practitioner with assistance from Kaiser Permanente clinicians and health experts. Sessions are open to all MCPS employees, regardless of whether or not you carry Kaiser Permanente health insurance.

▶ Learn more about the program on [the wellness website](#).

Start Some Healthful Holiday Traditions

The month of December can produce extra stress, a breakdown in healthy eating habits, even depression. But you and your family can adopt some new traditions that may help relieve the season's stress and make your holidays healthy and happy.

Your physical health

When the holidays become more than you bargained for, your physical health can be compromised because you may put aside healthy habits. And stress can put additional demands on your body. Here are some tips on maintaining your health during the holiday season:

- Share the workload. Let everyone play an active role; make the holidays a family affair so you're not burdened with all the work.
- Establish priorities. You can't do everything; say no to some demands on your time.
- Simplify your life. Be less elaborate this year. Relax your housekeeping and holiday preparations.
- Continue to exercise. Don't let your regular regimen lapse.
- Eat healthy foods and limit your consumption of high-fat holiday treats. Serve healthy fare at your family's holiday party.

Your emotional health

It's easy to become overwrought this time of year, especially if you believe something is lacking in your holiday celebration. Here are some ways to create new holiday traditions that will help level your emotions:

- Ask yourself if you really enjoy all the rituals or whether they have merely become habits. Try adopting less elaborate traditions of holidays past.
- Don't be afraid to scale down gift giving. You'll probably receive a lot of support.
- If your annual party is too much to handle, postpone it until after the holidays when you have more time to prepare. This also will help alleviate post-holiday letdown by giving you something fun to anticipate.
- If you are unable to be with your family, get out around people. Plan to be with friends or volunteer to help others who also may be separated from their families.



Resources for Handling Holiday Stress

You know the increased stress the holidays can bring—whether it's the stress of avoiding high-calorie temptations, funding holiday gifts, or dealing with difficult family members. As an MCPS employee, you have various resources available to assist you in handling stress throughout the holiday season and beyond.

Free Wellness Seminar on Stress and Nutrition

Attend this month's seminar to learn how you can use your diet to help your body handle stress. Dates, times, and locations, are listed at the top of this e-mail. Be sure to register with the date you plan to attend by e-mailing wellness@mcpsmd.org.

Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) helps MCPS employees identify and resolve personal concerns including those pesky family and financial concerns that are typically

Happy and healthy kids

Children are especially vulnerable to commercial stimuli during the holiday season. But basically, all kids really need are realistic expectations about gifts, an even-paced holiday season and strong, loving family traditions. Here are some ways to make the holidays special for your children:

- Spend more time with your kids. Entertain less and attend fewer parties that exclude children.
- Watch less television and do more activities as a family.
- Include your kids in all preparations. Let your children help you decorate and bake, even if it means your creations aren't perfect.
- Teach children the meaning of giving. Adopt a needy family and have your youngsters help you prepare a meal for them. Suggest that your children buy a gift for an underprivileged child with their own money. Or ask them to donate one of their own gifts to a less fortunate child.
- Teach your children that gifts don't have to be tangible. Trade intangible gifts with each other, such as helping with homework, washing the dishes and polishing shoes. Let your children come up with their own ideas of what they can offer.

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heightened during the holiday season. Visit the [EAP website](#) to learn more about their services or call them at 240-314-1040.

Discounts on Wellness Services

The scientific link between exercise and stress reduction is well documented. Your health insurance company offers discounts on items to help you get or stay active, such as gym memberships and exercise equipment. Choose from the list below to see what your plan offers:

- [Aetna Dental Participants](#)
- [CareFirst Participants](#)
- [Kaiser Permanente Participants](#)
- [UnitedHealthcare Participants](#)

The employee wellness newsletter is brought to you by the Employee and Retiree Service Center (ERSC). To learn more about employee wellness, visit our [website](#). To view this email as a .pdf document, click [here](#).

Questions or comments about your employee wellness program? Contact ERSC at 301-517-8100 or wellness@mcpsmd.org.