

December Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion, an ESOL teacher who ran in the New York City Marathon in early November, along with 50 other teachers from across North America selected to join Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) All-Teachers Team;
- a webinar to learn the benefits of healthy sleep and ways to get your best sleep;
- how you can ensure the holidays are safe and healthy;
- a holiday cooking demonstration via Zoom;
- a Flights to Fitness challenge coming in January; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar—Getting Healthy Sleep

Join us to learn the benefits of healthy sleep and ways to get your best sleep.

Thursday, December 16, 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.

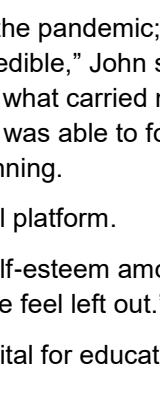
Spread the word with our **printable flyer**. Visit the **Wellness Webinar Library**.

Presented by:
Kaiser Permanente

Wellness Champion Ran New York City Marathon After Being Selected for Tata Consultancy Services All-Teachers Team

Mr. John P. Ladesic, ESOL teacher, Sally K. Ride Elementary School

John P. Ladesic, ESOL teacher at Sally K. Ride Elementary School, ran in the 2021 New York City Marathon on November 7, 2021, along with 50 other teachers from across North America selected to join Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) All-Teachers Team. TCS is the title sponsor of the marathon.



John and the other educators gained VIP entry into the marathon after a series of applications and interviews. The race was particularly special because it marked the return to live, in-person racing at the World Marathon Majors.

Despite a series of injuries he suffered following a marathon win in September, which impacted his training for the New York City event, John thoroughly enjoyed the race.

"I have raced a lot of smaller races during the pandemic; but to be a part of the world's largest and most iconic marathon was incredible," John said. The magic and energy of the millions of spectators in the streets are what carried me through the race. The adrenaline and emotions were infectious. I was able to form friendships with many educators who also share a passion for running.

He also was able to showcase his personal platform.

"Running is a way to build inclusion and self-esteem among students," John said. This is especially true for those who may otherwise feel left out."

John believes that health and wellness is vital for educators.

"Health and wellness is so important for educators right now," John said. "We need to take time for ourselves to channel our challenges and stresses into something positive. Exercise is one thing that can be done to offset these things. By making physical activity a priority, we can reward ourselves with a dedicated part of the day to both unwind and be fit."

John has some great advice for those interested in running or training for a race.

"My advice would be to start with a goal and then work backwards from the goal to create a plan," John said. "I'm a firm believer in having a training plan that is posted and visible for accountability. It is important to be realistic in goal-setting and to be flexible with it, depending on how you feel throughout training."

John also suggests integrating walking or cross-training into the early stages of a plan, which he believes can be as effective as running. He says that listening to your body and knowing when it needs rest or more of a challenge is also key.

"I journal about each of my runs so that I can look back to reflect and analyze to help me plan what's next," John said. "Running is a sport that can be done individually or socially. If being a solo runner works for you and your schedule, go for it! If you need an accountability partner or group, go for it!"

What is next for John?

"I am invited to be a part of the Elite Men's field at the Illinois Marathon in April," John said. "I feel confident in my training, and I'm ready to push myself to the next level."

As part of John's prize package as a TCS All-Teachers Team member, the organization has provided MCPS with STEM resources for the classroom.

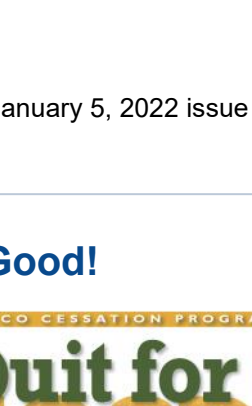
Have You Been Piling on the Miles?

Since September 13, 2021, MCPS employees have been working to reduce risk for chronic illness, reduce depression, and strengthen their hearts and bones in the *Pile on the Miles* physical activity challenge. Across MCPS, employees have enjoyed the camaraderie with their coworkers, along with the associated health gains.

Although the challenge ends on December 21, 2021, there are still a couple of weeks left to pile on as many miles as you can! Then, you can look forward to Well Aware's winter *Flights to Fitness* challenge, which will begin in January. In the meantime, continue to use the online **Well Aware Fitness Log** to enter your daily activity, weight loss, and hours of sleep.

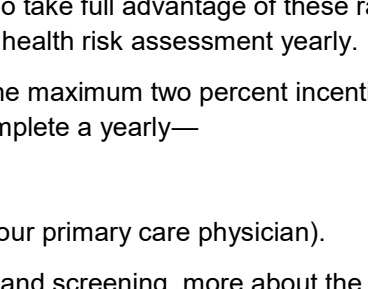
Stay tuned

Grand prize *Pile on the Miles* winners will be announced in the January 5, 2022 issue of *The Bulletin*!



It Is Always a Good Time to Quit ... for Good!

MCPS and Kaiser Permanente are teaming up again to bring you *Quit for Good*, Well Aware's free tobacco cessation program. The 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 Permanente.



A previous session of this class has been recorded for your convenience. Visit the **Well Aware video library** to watch the *Quit for Good* series on your own timeline.

To learn more about *Quit for Good*, visit the **Quit for Good web page**. **Email Well Aware** for information on future classes.

It's Not Too Early to Take the Wellness Initiative for 2023

If you are covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan through CareFirst or Kaiser Permanente, you can learn more about your health and reduce your contributions to your 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 easy to complete. To earn the maximum two percent incentive toward your health insurance premiums, you need to complete a yearly—

- online health risk assessment, and
- biometric health screening (usually a physical with your primary care physician).

To find out how and when to complete your assessment and screening, more about the benefits of participating, and how your participation is reported to MCPS, please visit the **Wellness Initiatives for Employees web page**.

Stress Less During the Holidays

The holiday season is typically a happy, yet stressful time. Living through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is making the season that much more challenging.

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 will meet your needs. **Email Well Aware** to request a monthly schedule of classes.

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.

Consider trying one of Well Aware's many classes to see what kind of physical activity is best for you. From Zumba and HIITCamp, to Stretch and Mobility, Core, Yoga, and toning classes, there is truly something for everyone!

Email Well Aware to request the full schedule of classes.

Holiday Wellness

Make the most wonderful time of year a safe and healthy time of year. With just a little preparation and caution, your holidays can be remembered for all the good reasons. Here are some tips on staying healthy, safe and stress free.

- Don't skimp on sleep while getting ready for the holidays. Lack of sleep leads to—
 - ◆ overeating and weight gain;
 - ◆ safety hazards at home, work, and on the road; and
 - ◆ a negative mood.
- Keep your immune system strong by staying physically active, eating healthy, and limiting alcohol. You don't have to say no to all of the holiday treats, just don't overindulge.
- Get the flu vaccine.

Try **these tips** to ensure a healthy holiday season.



Flights to Fitness to Return in January

Flights to Fitness (F2F) is a program designed to encourage physical activity MCPS employees through stair climbing. Stay tuned for more information on the latest *Flights to Fitness* challenge starting in January!

Share Your Wellness Stories and Encourage Your Coworkers Through Twitter!

Well Aware is proud of all of the hard work that MCPS employees 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 @mcpowellaware and #mcpstaffwellness for incredible stories, wellness ideas, encouragement from your MCPS coworkers, tips on living a healthy life, or updates on MCPS staff wellness activities.

Cooking Demonstration: Make Your Holiday Meals Healthier!

Join Well Aware for a cooking demonstration on Zoom to learn how to make healthy alternatives to holiday favorites.

Zoom Cooking Demonstration
Tuesday, December 14, 2021
4:30 p.m.

Email Well Aware to request Zoom sign-in details and a list of recipes and ingredients.

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.

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 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!

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**.