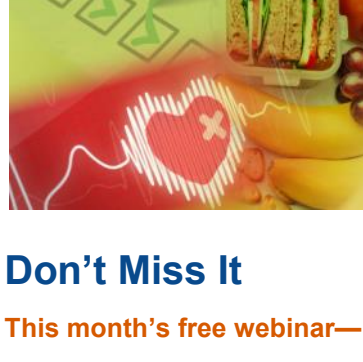


## February Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion—a bus operator who, by changing his mindset, initiated improvement in his and others' lifestyle habits;
- this month's seminar/webinar from Cigna on recognizing the signs and symptoms of a heart attack or stroke and what to do when an attack happens;
- Well Aware's new spring physical activity challenge;
- another chance to take the InSTEP with Diabetes course;
- why you might see a lot of people wearing red today; and
- more!



## Don't Miss It

**This month's free webinar—Heart Attack and Stroke**

Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of a heart attack or stroke, and what to do when an attack happens. Also, find out how to reduce your risk of heart attack or stroke.

**Wednesday, February 10, 2016**

10:00–11:00 a.m.  
Bethesda Transportation Depot  
10901 Westlake Drive  
Rockville, Maryland 20852

**Tuesday, February 23, 2016**

10:00–11:00 a.m.  
Randolph Transportation Depot  
1800 Randolph Road  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20902

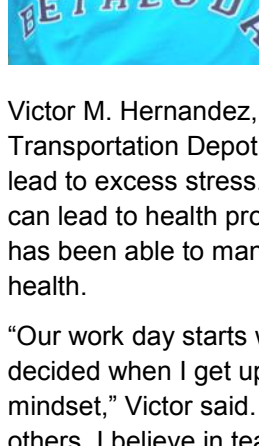
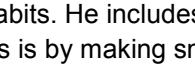
**Thursday, February 25, 2016**

4:00–5:00 p.m.  
Webinar

Please register for the seminar/webinar by e-mailing **Well Aware** with the date and time you plan to attend. If you register for the webinar, you will receive a link in your Outlook e-mail as well as an Outlook calendar reminder.

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

Presented by:



## Wellness Champion Changes His Thinking; Spurs Healthy Lifestyles

**Victor M. Hernandez, bus operator, Bethesda Transportation Depot**

Victor M. Hernandez, a bus operator with the Bethesda Transportation Depot, understands that life and work can lead to excess stress. He knows too that too much stress can lead to health problems. By changing his thinking, he has been able to manage his stress and improve his health.

"Our work day starts when most people are still asleep, so I decided when I get up in the morning to have a happy mindset," Victor said. "If I'm sick and frustrated, I can't help others. I believe in teaching by example."

Victor has found a way to have fun while getting exercise. The Department of Transportation's wellness program encouraged each depot to form their own softball team, and the depots challenge each other to friendly games. Victor joined his depot's team and plays regularly.

"Being active energizes me," Victor said. "I love softball and practice it every day. I encourage the members of the softball team to move more during our practices and to make better quality food choices."

Victor is a champion of the wellness program at the Bethesda depot.

"It was a great feeling seeing the guys come to the first practice," Victor said. "After a month, they are energized and happy as young kids going to the first game. Their excitement is contagious!"

In addition to getting more activity, Victor is altering his eating habits. He includes more fruits and vegetables in his and his family's diet. One way he does this is by making smoothies.

"I learned to make them at a wellness presentation and have been offering them to my family ever since," Victor said. "It's a great way to get good nutrition, plus they taste good."

Along with encouraging them to eat better, Victor models other healthy behaviors for his children, such as exercise. He is hopeful that by giving them a good foundation in healthy living, they will continue to practice those behaviors throughout their lives.

Victor also hopes that his example will encourage even more coworkers to jump on board.

"Many bus operators think they are too tired, too old, or can't exercise," Victor said. "I want to change that mindset. They can work at their own level. Wellness can be many things, and I encourage them to find one activity that they enjoy doing and do it."

It's clear he has already made progress into altering others' attitudes about exercise and good nutrition. Some of his coworkers are now walking after their morning bus route.

Victor credits having a wellness program in the workplace for a lot of this progress and acknowledges the importance of his own mindset in motivating others to participate.

"The wellness program is an asset that I wish more people would take advantage of," Victor said. "Getting the guys to play ball after years of being inactive, I have had to be mentally prepared and more patient. It's about encouraging teamwork and teaching by example. At the end of the day, it's so worth it."

Well Aware is offering a new physical activity challenge this spring—*Built to Move*. The aim is to get you moving and the reason is clear. As a magnificent machine of intricate moving parts, your body was built to move. It *needs* to move to stay healthy.

But many of us have lives that are out of balance. We have been taught to seek efficiency; as a result, we have engineered activity right out of our lives. We spend much of our time just sitting.

Sit a moment with this: Sitting is to your body as sugar is to your teeth. This lack of movement actually deteriorates your body. Sitting is a public health risk because it—

- increases the risk for back pain;
- slows metabolism, which can lead to weight gain and other health-related issues;
- lowers healthy cholesterol; and
- is associated with an elevated risk of cancer and cardiovascular disease.

On the other hand, movement—

- builds muscle strength and bone;
- increases stamina and aerobic capacity;
- releases endorphins that increase happiness;
- pumps the body full of oxygen, which it needs to operate;
- releases toxins through breath and sweat;
- releases stress and tension; and
- supports a healthy nervous system and a healthy mind and body.

*Built to Move* will challenge you to realize these benefits by MOVING. You decide how you will move, then enter your activity into the online **Well Aware Fitness Log**. If you do, you can compete to win prizes.

Like most things, you cannot go from zero to 60 overnight. Movement is something you need to build up over time. If you do not exercise at all right now, don't start training for a marathon tomorrow. Start small and build up. Add in more movement in your day-to-day activities.

Interested? Be on the lookout for the March Well Aware eNews where you will find links to Built to Move challenge details, including dates and rules. Questions about Built to Move? **E-mail Well Aware**.

## Take the Wellness Initiative and save on your health insurance!

### Wellness Initiatives: Know Your Numbers

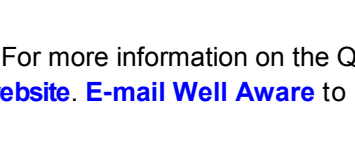
We live our lives by the numbers: phone numbers, PIN numbers, and stock market numbers.

But do you know the heart health numbers that could literally save your life? Healthy numbers mean a healthy heart. If you follow a healthy lifestyle—eat a balanced diet, get regular exercise, and avoid smoking—you can even turn bad numbers around.

You can learn about these vital health numbers and reduce your financial contribution to your health insurance by participating in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Wellness Initiatives program. To take full advantage of the program, complete a biometric health screening and health risk assessment yearly. And, if you and/or your spouse smoke (if you are married), consider quitting. Doing so will go a long way toward improving your numbers.

For more information on the Wellness Initiatives program and to see a schedule of upcoming on-site biometric health screenings, visit the **Wellness Initiatives for Employees web page**.

### Quit for Good and Save Money



If you would like to quit smoking to save money on your health insurance, Well Aware can help. Consider Quit for Good, a free, eight-week class for MCPS staff and their spouses. This class covers everything from Nicotine Replacement Therapy, coping techniques, stress management, nutrition, and more.

The next class begins on Tuesday April 5, 2016, at 4:30 p.m. For more information on the Quit for Good Tobacco Cessation Program, visit the **Well Aware website**. **E-mail Well Aware** to reserve your spot in the class.

### Flights to Fitness is Back!

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

Well Aware is challenging you to climb the number of flights of stairs in 11 of the tallest buildings in the Baltimore/Washington area. At the end of this challenge, you will have climbed 309 flights of stairs. What an achievement! And what a way to stay in shape during the cold winter months!

For more information, visit Well Aware's **Flights to Fitness web page**.

### Brain Breaks: They Are Not Just for Kids!

Brain breaks are a quick and effective way of changing or focusing your physical and mental state. They are a useful tool for brain breaks to also help activate, energize, and stimulate their brains. Research indicates that brain breaks also improve students' concentration and relieve stress. So why don't we use them as adults? Is it that we don't have enough time, or are we not making our health and mental well-being a priority?

Do you have three minutes to spare? Take the time for a healthy brain break. In just three minutes, you will accomplish something for yourself and for your health. Enjoy this **brain break** on being mindful and simply breathing.

### Stress Less This Winter

Well Aware is offering two ways to help you manage stress during the dark winter months.

#### Seated Yoga

**Wednesdays through March 2, 2016**

4:30–5:30 p.m.  
Maple Room (unless otherwise noted)  
45 West Gude Drive  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

#### Tai Chi

**Thursdays through February 25, 2016**

4:30–5:30 p.m.  
Café 45 (unless otherwise noted)  
45 West Gude Drive  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

To register, **e-mail Well Aware**.

### Diabetes Corner

#### InSTEP with Diabetes

Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente will present once again a diabetes educational program to help pre-diabetics, diagnosed diabetics, and caretakers of diabetics. The program has helped staff members lower their A1C levels, control their sugar intake, and lose body fat.

Based on participant feedback, we have revamped the program to condense the weeks and focus more on nutrition.

Join Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente for this four-week course.

**Tuesdays, March 1–22, 2016**

4:30–5:30 p.m.  
Maple Room  
45 West Gude Drive  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

#### Diabetes Information and Resources

People are unique and have different needs when it comes to managing diabetes. Well Aware is excited to offer you self-paced, monthly resources with content tailored to where you are in your diabetes journey. Monthly topics include healthy eating, active living, diabetes medication, and blood-sugar tracking.

Learn more about **reading nutrition labels** and **making better fast-food choices**.

For more information or to register to receive the monthly information and booklets, **e-mail Well Aware**.

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 e-mail newsletter as a .pdf document, click **here**. Questions or comments about your employee wellness program? Contact ERSC at 301-517-8100 or **e-mail Well Aware**.