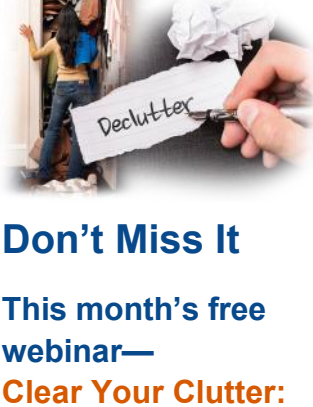


June Well Aware eNews

Welcome to the June 2022 issue of the *Well Aware eNews!* Read on to learn about—

- this month's wellness champions, staff from a middle school physical education department who practice what they preach: They regularly team up for Well Aware's physical activity challenges and encourage their coworkers to do the same;
- a webinar on the negative impacts of clutter and how you can clear it for good;
- a physical activity challenge this summer from Kaiser Permanente;
- how to stay safe in the sun;
- the gift of good health for the men in your life;
- how to stay active this summer; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar— **Clear Your Clutter: A Comprehensive Guide**

Living with clutter is exhausting. Clutter can make you anxious, and impact your sleep and ability to focus. Learning how to clear the clutter can feel daunting; the task itself overwhelming. This webinar will offer specific, strategic ways to approach clearing clutter and staying organized! We will go room-by-room to help you have an organized and restful home.

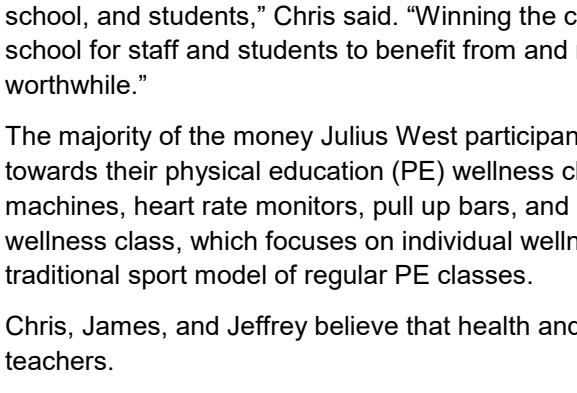
Tuesday June 14, 2022
4:30–5:30 p.m.

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**.

Wellness Champions Practice What They Preach

Mr. Christopher Tao, Mr. James Little, Mr. Jeffrey Brink, and the Physical Education Department at Julius West Middle School



Christopher Tao, James Little, and Jeffrey Brink, and the physical education department at Julius West Middle School practice what they preach. Not only do they regularly team up for the Well Aware physical activity challenges, they encourage their coworkers to join them to maintain their health and wellness too.

Julius West Middle School has always been competitive in Well Aware's challenges. Christopher Tao recognizes the benefits they offer, both the physical and social ones.

"These competitions make [physical activity] fun and give you some extra motivation and accountability because you are working, not just for yourself, but for your teammates, school, and students," Chris said. "Winning the challenges brings added resources to the school for staff and students to benefit from and makes participation even more worthwhile."

The majority of the money Julius West participants have won from the challenges has gone towards their physical education (PE) wellness class. They have purchased rowing machines, heart rate monitors, pull up bars, and other specialized equipment for the wellness class, which focuses on individual wellness and fitness, as opposed to the traditional sport model of regular PE classes.

Chris, James, and Jeffrey believe that health and wellness are vital for middle school teachers.

"Movement allows us to feel renewed and ready for what comes next," Chris said. "When we are moving we typically choose to move with other people and, since we crave connection, getting outside to move with other people is the perfect remedy. Movement really does help our total wellness. If we are balanced and happy, instead of feeling the day-to-day stress, we will all be much more able to be there for our colleagues and students. If you happen to choose an outdoor activity for your self-care, connecting with nature also has a positive impact on your spiritual wellness."

The PE department's motivation for wellness has impacted many coworkers and community members. Over the years, they have held a variety of activities to improve not just life for their coworkers, but for the entire Julius West community.

Staff have enjoyed morning and afternoon workouts including CrossFit activities, Insanity DVDs, basketball, jogging, and walking the track. They have a staff softball team, a Peloton support group and school hashtag to encourage each other. With the help of their principal, staff donations, and wellness challenge money, they have been able to furnish a staff wellness room with rowing machines, dumbbells, a squat rack, and a treadmill for staff to use.

To motivate staff to participate in the Well Aware challenges, they have held healthy food staff luncheons using wellness challenge money. They hold weekly check-ins to make sure staff have logged all of their activity in the **Well Aware Fitness Log**. They have held a variety of activities for the school community, including "Fall and Spring Into Fitness Night."

They have organized staff-versus-student basketball jamborees to raise money for Osteosarcoma research, events similar to The Color Run™ to highlight "Our Minds Matter" and "No Place For Hate" initiatives, as well as a lifetime wellness field trip for students during the last week of school to take students to a variety of destinations to be physically active in the community.

Chris, James, and Jeffrey have advice for staff looking to start a wellness committee or motivate coworkers.

"Create a wellness committee made up of enthusiastic and energetic people who are interested in a variety of movement activities and brainstorm a mission/vision," Chris said. "Once you have a team of individuals and a purpose, it becomes a lot more fun organizing and planning activities. Create healthy competition! It's always fun when trying to create a fun team name and having friendly wagers between teams helps with motivation. And find ways to give back to staff to encourage their involvement. That is essential to a wellness program's success."

Ola Summer Physical Activity Challenge (from Kaiser Permanente)

Ola = Life. What better way to reach the crest of a better, fitter life than a virtual tour of Hawaii's most awe-inspiring tourist attractions as well as locals' out-of-the-way gems. From the southern tip of the Big Island's Hawaii Volcanoes National Park, to the lush rainforest of Haleakala on Maui, to the towering cliffs along Moloka'i's rugged north coast, our summer challenge will have you soaking up stunning scenes as we exercise our way around America's 50th state.

Join Kaiser Permanente's eight-week challenge starting on Monday June 27, 2022. [Learn more](#).

Stay Active (and Stress Less) This Summer

Summer is a great time to get back into walking, biking, yoga, or swimming. Getting active now will make it easier to keep it up when we get back to our more hectic schedules in the fall. From Zumba and yoga to tai chi, Well Aware is offering you several options to help you get fit this summer. For a class list and schedule, [email Well Aware](#).

Learn About Sun Safety

Spending time outside is a great way to be physically active, reduce stress, and get more vitamin D. You can work and play outside without raising your skin cancer risk by protecting your skin from the sun. [Find out what you need to know about sun safety](#). [Learn to identify characteristics of unusual moles](#) that should be seen by a doctor. Add to your fun in the sun by posting your [#sunsafeselfie](#) to social media to show others how to practice sun safety.

June Is Men's Health Month: Attending to Men's Physical and Mental Health

In June, we celebrate Father's Day and honor the men in our lives. What better way than to give them the gift of good health, both physical and mental? Have your husband, father, brother, son, or male friend [review these checklist and screening guidelines for men](#), and encourage him to stay on top of his health.

It is equally important to make men's mental health and wellness a priority. Depression, anxiety, stress, and mood disorders can strike anyone. Introduce him to [Your Head: An Owner's Manual](#) from the Men's Health Network. In it, men's health and wellness experts offer insight into men's emotional needs, and how they can find help while maintaining their dignity.

Have You Taken the [Wellness] Initiative for 2023? Alternative to Biometric Health Screening Available Again This Year

An alternative way to complete the Wellness Initiatives biometric health screening is available again this year for MCPS employees.

MCPS employees are able to register for and complete [Biometrics Incentive Alternative 2023 Benefit Year](#) training (course number 90899) on [Professional Development Online \(PDO\)](#), in lieu of a biometric health screening. Employees who complete the training by October 7, 2022, will pay 1 percent less of their health insurance costs in 2023.

Employees who are able to complete their yearly physical with their doctor (or at a MinuteClinic for CareFirst members) also have until **Friday, October 7, 2022**, to complete the physical and receive the discount.

The Wellness Incentives program provides employees covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan with incentives to reduce their health insurance costs. Be sure to take advantage of the rate reductions by—

- **Completing a biometric health screening OR its alternative by October 7, 2022.** See your doctor for an annual physical OR, if you are a CareFirst member, have your physical at a CVS Minute Clinic. OR register for and complete [Biometrics Incentive](#) training. If you do, you will pay 1 percent less of your health insurance costs in 2023.

- **Complete the health risk assessment on your medical plan's website by October 7, 2022** to pay 1 percent less of your health insurance costs. This is the *Real Age Test* at [CareFirst](#), and the *Total Health Assessment* at [Kaiser Permanente](#).

Both CareFirst and Kaiser Permanente members need to sign the HIPAA waiver on their respective plan's website found at the links above. **Be sure to consent to your participation in the program. Without your consent, your information will not be reported.**

[Learn more about Wellness Initiatives](#).

Online Stress Management Resources Available Through Kaiser Permanente and CareFirst

If you are a subscriber of an MCPS medical plan (Kaiser Permanente or CareFirst), you have access to a wealth of free health and wellness resources. Did you know that Kaiser Permanente and CareFirst have stress management tools including guided meditations, podcasts, and more?

To learn more, Kaiser Permanente members can visit [Kaiser Permanente's Mental health and wellness tools web page](#). CareFirst members can check out [Inspirations and Relax 360](#).

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!