

November Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion, a high school Spanish teacher who completed the last segment of a 15-year section hike of the 2,190-mile Appalachian Trail this summer;
- a webinar to learn about the basics of herbs, their health effects, and how to incorporate them and other natural foods into your daily life;
- American Diabetes Month;
- another chance to get InStep with Diabetes;
- Eat Smart Month;
- the Great American Smokeout®, and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar—Herbs and Other Natural Foods

Join us to learn the basics of herbs and their health effects. Find out how to incorporate herbs and natural foods into your daily life.

Thursday, November 18, 2021
4:00–5:00 p.m.

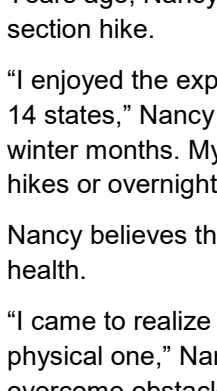
Please **email Well Aware** to register for the webinar. After registering, you will receive a link to the webinar in your Outlook email as well as an Outlook calendar reminder.

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

Presented by:
Kaiser Permanente

Wellness Champion Hikes 267 Miles to Complete Final Section of the Appalachian Trail

Ms. Nancy A. Hinchliffe, Spanish teacher, Albert Einstein High School



This past summer, Nancy Hinchliffe, Spanish teacher at Albert Einstein high school, successfully completed the last segment of a 15-year section hike of the 2,190-mile Appalachian Trail. She hiked 267 miles in Maine, the last of the 14 states that make up the Appalachian Trail (AT).

Nancy grew up with a love of the outdoors.

"I grew up in upstate New York in the Adirondack Mountain region, and my love for the mountains sprouted at an early age," Nancy said. "I am forever grateful to my parents for introducing me to the mountains and the great outdoors. As a family, we regularly hiked and camped in the Adirondacks."

Years ago, Nancy read about the AT and helped a friend complete a small portion of her section hike.

"I enjoyed the experience so much, that I began piecing together a plan to hike the AT's 14 states," Nancy said. "I backpacked and hiked for multiple summers and during some winter months. My parents, oldest sister, and a friend were able to join me on some day hikes or overnight adventures."

Nancy believes that physical activity, including hiking, is very beneficial for one's mental health.

"I came to realize that hiking the trail is just as much a mental challenge as it is a physical one," Nancy said. "True to life, having a positive overall view may help you overcome obstacles and allow you to keep moving forward. Finishing the trail this year, after nearly 15 years of section-hiking it, has given me inner peace and a feeling of immense accomplishment."

Nancy believes that school staff can benefit from hiking as well!

"I think that hiking is an excellent way for school staff and others to recharge, decompress, spend time with family and friends, and make new ones," Nancy said. "It has been an excellent way for me to take time to contemplate life and take a break from our fast-paced world."

In addition, Nancy believes that long distance hikers often experience weight loss, which improves their overall health.

"I joyfully lost about 20 pounds after completing the 267 miles in Maine this past summer."

Interested in hiking the Appalachian Trail? Nancy has a couple of ideas to get you started.

"Visit the **Appalachian Trail Conservancy website**," Nancy said. "It has a hiker resource library as well as other helpful resources. In addition, there are local meet-up groups that organize hikes in Maryland and Virginia."

November Is American Diabetes Month

Observed every November, American Diabetes Month is an important part of the American Diabetes Association's efforts to focus our nation's attention on the disease and the tens of millions of people affected by it.

Because there is no cure for diabetes, the focus is on prevention. If you have risk factors or **symptoms**, or are pre-diabetic, the following are ways to prevent or delay onset of diabetes:

Get physically active. Just 30 minutes of aerobic exercise, five times a week, reduces your risk of diabetes. If you haven't been active, start with 5–10 minutes a day and gradually work your way up to 30 minutes.

Eat healthy. It may seem hard to eat healthy if you are on a budget or always crunched for time. You are more likely to adopt healthy eating habits if you start with small changes. Look for ways to make your meals healthy by choosing—

- Non-starchy vegetables—carrots, broccoli, green beans, kale, and cauliflower
- Lean meats—skinless chicken and turkey and lean cuts of pork and beef
- Low-fat dairy products—skim milk and fat-free yogurts
- Whole grains—brown rice, barley, farro, and quinoa
- Healthy fats in small amounts—olive, canola, sunflower, and peanut oil

If you smoke or use tobacco—quit.

Join the ADA in November by Taking #TheBigStepUp!

- **Week 1 (November 1–7): Step Up Awareness**—The first thing to do is to educate yourself, says the ADA. **See information and resources.**
- **Week 2 (November 8–14): Step Up Detection**—Knowing the risk factors for Type 2 diabetes is one of the first steps in preventing the disease. ADA encourages people to **take a risk test.**
- **Week 3 (November 15–21): Step Up Management**—To help people living with diabetes thrive, the ADA **provides healthy recipes.**
- **Week 4 (November 22–28): Step Up and Thrive**—The ADA encourages those inspired by the previous steps and their personal progress to be advocates for more funding, healthcare access, and affordable treatments. **Visit the ADA's advocacy hub.**

InStep with Diabetes is Back!

Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente have teamed together to offer a virtual educational diabetes program called InStep with Diabetes. It is geared towards those diagnosed with diabetes to help control the disease as well as those with pre-diabetes to help prevent a further diagnosis. Are you interested in participating in the next session? **Email Well Aware** and we will send you the dates of upcoming classes.

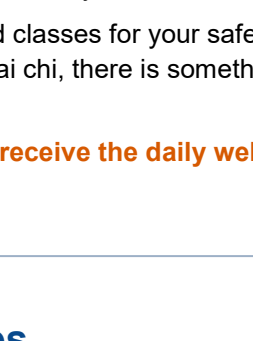
Eat Smart Month

Take simple steps to eat healthier by celebrating Eat Smart Month in November. Throughout the month, the American Heart Association is urging Americans to take the first step to commit to healthier eating. The food we eat is a very important part of living a healthy lifestyle.

- **See some quick healthy eating tips**
- **Give these mealtime conversation starters a try**
- **Check out some easy, delicious, and healthy recipes**

Are You Piling on the Miles?

The fall physical activity challenge, *Pile on the Miles*, is well underway! With 160+ teams registered, there is a lot of school and team competition for the grand prize grants! It is not too late to join! The *Pile on the Miles* challenge is not only getting MCPS employees moving, but also establishing long-term healthy habits! **Learn more.**



The Great American Smokeout Will Be Here Soon!

Quitting smoking is not easy. It takes time and a plan. You don't have to stop smoking in one day; you just start with one day. Let this year's **Great American Smokeout on November 18** be the day you start your journey toward a smoke-free life. You will be joining thousands of smokers across the country in taking an important step toward a healthier life and reducing your cancer risk. Plus, the American Cancer Society has the **resources and support** you need to quit.

Quitting smoking has immediate and long-term benefits at any age. Quitting is hard, but you can increase your chances of success with help. Getting help through counseling or medications can double or triple your chance of quitting successfully.

Quitting starts here. Begin day one with these many resources to help you take the first step to being tobacco free.

Are you ready to quit? Well Aware has a free tobacco cessation program for MCPS employees and their spouses. If you are interested in registering for the next class, **email Well Aware.**

You Can Take the Wellness Initiative for 2023 as Early as ... Now!

Did you miss your opportunity to save money on your 2022 health insurance premiums? Each year, you have an opportunity to pay up to 2 percent less on your MCPS-provided health insurance by participating in the Wellness Initiatives program. By completing a biometric health screening and filling out your medical plan's online health risk assessment, MCPS will pay 2 percent more of your health insurance premiums. For more information, please visit the **Wellness Initiatives for Employees website.**

Avoid the rush next fall. Begin taking the wellness initiative for 2023 now!

Stress Less This Fall

There isn't much in our lives that hasn't been impacted by COVID-19. While ordinary change can be difficult, change brought on by a pandemic is especially stressful. Stress wrecks havoc on your emotional wellness, as well as on 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—with 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 our online virtual live and recorded classes for your safety and convenience. From yoga and seated yoga, to mindfulness and tai chi, there is something for everyone. Give them all a try to see what you like best.

Email Well Aware to request the full schedule of classes. **Opt in to receive the daily wellness email** for class links and updates.

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.

This fall, Well Aware is continuing its online virtual live recorded classes for your convenience. From Zumba and HIITCamp, to yoga and core workout classes, there is something for everyone.

Email Well Aware to request the full schedule of classes. **Opt in to receive the daily wellness email** for class links and updates.

Getting a Flu Shot Could Be More Important Than Ever

Flu season is here.

The typical flu is active each year from October through April. An estimated 5-20 percent of Americans get the flu each year with symptoms lasting up to two weeks. Getting a flu shot is the best way to protect against the flu and stop its spread.

Both CareFirst and Kaiser Permanente have laid out detailed plans to offer this year's flu shot.

- **CareFirst Regional Flu Network**
- **Kaiser Permanente Flu Shots**

See **other ways to protect yourself from colds and flu.**

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 gymsnasiums. 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.

Share Your Wellness Stories and Encourage Your Coworkers Through Twitter!

Well Aware is proud of all of the hard work that MCPS employee 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.

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.**