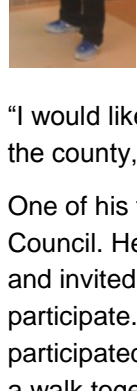


February Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion—a physical education teacher whose ambitions for his school include making it the wellness model for the county and beyond;
- a seminar/webinar from Cigna where you can find out what blood pressure actually is and why it matters so much;
- a challenge to climb the number of flights of stairs in seven of the world's tallest buildings;
- why so many are wearing red on Friday, February 6;
- ways to stress less this winter; and
- more!

Wellness Champion Has Healthy Ambitions for His School's Students, Staff, and Community



Thomas M. Benco,
physical education teacher,
Wilson Wims Elementary School

When hired as the physical education teacher at the new Wilson Wims Elementary School in Clarksburg, Thomas M. Benco expressed his ambition for the school students, staff, and community.

"I would like for Wims to be the school wellness model in the county, state, and beyond!" Tom said.

One of his first moves was to create a Wims Wellness Council. He then established Fit is Fun Day at the school and invited students, staff, and Clarksburg residents to participate. On a Saturday morning last fall, attendees participated in a host of sports and activities before taking a walk together around the school fields. The turnout was great, and the community clearly enjoyed the event.

"The activities brought our school community together while focusing on physical, social, and emotional wellness," Sean P. McGee, principal of Wilson Wims, said. "Tom Benco led the charge by creating healthy and fun activities for staff and students."

Wims Elementary School staff has made wellness an important part of their lives, largely due to Tom's continuing efforts to come up with new and enjoyable monthly wellness activities. He works tirelessly to make sure the school's staff gets and stays healthy. He created an after-school workout club for staff and challenges other schools to kickball and volleyball games.

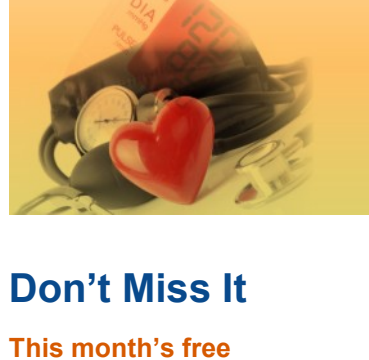
"He is clearly our wellness champion!" McGee said.

Tom's coworkers deserve some credit too. Their collective efforts during last fall's Small Changes, Big Results physical activity challenge earned Wims Elementary School a grant to promote staff wellness at the school. Tom and the Wellness Council have big plans for this grant!

To help kick off National Healthy Heart Month, Wilson Wims Elementary School will hold a 'Minute to Win It' fitness challenge at the school on Friday, February 5, 2015. Participants will self-select the types of fitness activities they want to perform for one minute to win points for their team. The winning team will receive a health-related prize.

"Tom has provided multiple opportunities for the staff to come together and bond," Irene C. Allaire, Wims Elementary School's media specialist, said. "He makes it convenient to attend an after school exercise session and creates a fun, judgment-free environment where we can get to know each other outside of the professional world."

Opportunities to take part in health and wellness activities bring the school's staff together with a common purpose: to establish and maintain healthy lifestyles. Add to that Tom Benco's goal of making his school's program *the* school wellness model, and you have a healthy dose of competition to beat!



Don't Miss It

**This month's free seminar/webinar—
Under Pressure**

Join Well Aware and Cigna for this informative interactive class to learn what blood pressure is, why it matters so much, and how to keep it within a healthy range.

Wednesday, February 11, 2015
10:00–11:00 a.m.
Bethesda Bus Depot
10901 Westlake Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20852

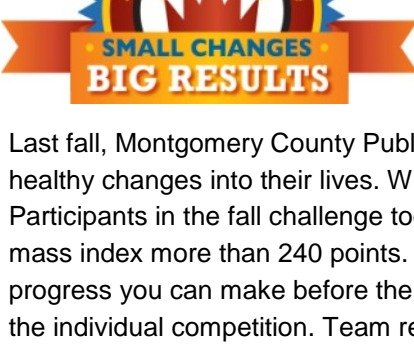
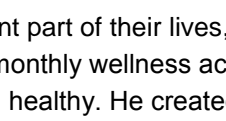
Thursday, February 19, 2015
4:00–5:00 p.m.
Webinar

Tuesday, February 24, 2015
4:30–5:30 p.m.
Maple Room
45 West Gude Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Please register for the seminar or 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 to it 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:



Small Changes, Big Results Team Registration Begins Soon

Last fall, Montgomery County Public Schools employees took the challenge to incorporate small healthy changes into their lives. With those small changes, we saw some huge results! Participants in the fall challenge together lost more than 1,600 pounds and lowered their body mass index more than 240 points. With another challenge just around the corner, think of the progress you can make before the end of the year! Gather your team, or get yourself ready for the individual competition. Team registration begins on February 23, 2015. [Learn more](#).

Wonder Why So Many of Your Coworkers Are Wearing Red Today?

As announced earlier this week in *The Bulletin*, today, February 6, 2015, is National Wear Red Day! The American Heart Association (AHA) designates the first Friday each February to bring attention to heart disease, the silent killer of women. Well Aware joins AHA in encouraging everyone to wear red, know their cardiovascular risk, and take action to live longer, healthier lives.

Since the first National Wear Red Day in 2003, tremendous strides have been made in the fight against heart disease in women. Through its research and education, including suggestions for healthy lifestyle changes, the American Heart Association is proud that—

- 34 percent fewer women now die from heart disease, saving 330 lives every day;
- Awareness is up (e.g., 23 percent more Americans now realize heart disease is the number one killer of women);
- Awareness among minorities is up, doubling among Hispanic/Latino women and tripling among Black or African American women.
- 15 percent of smokers have quit, and high cholesterol has declined by 18 percent;
- More gender-specific guidelines have been developed, because women's symptoms and responses to medication differ from men's;
- Gender-specific medical research is up and the FDA now requires clinical trial results be reported by gender; and
- Gender-specific inequalities have been identified, ensuring women receive the same level of heart treatment as men.

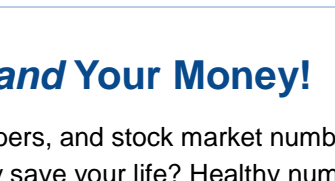
Yet, with all these successes, heart disease is still the number one killer of women, killing almost 1,100 a day.

Do your part to educate yourself, your friends, and family this year. Choose your own Go Red Day to wear red and educate women on the important factors that contribute to heart disease: blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, stress.

[Find out more](#) about the Go Red for Women campaign.

Ready To Climb the World's Tallest Buildings?

Stair climbing can be a wonderful way to keep fit. Most of us work and/or live in or near a building with stairs. Stair climbing can be done in your routine 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 seven of the tallest buildings in the world. By the end of this challenge, you will have climbed 821 flights of stairs! What an achievement! And what a way to stay in shape in the cold winter months!

To help you accomplish your stair-climbing feat, Well Aware has provided descriptions and charts for each of the buildings, which you can use to keep track of your progress. To find and printout the charts, visit the [Flights to Fitness web page](#).

Know Your Numbers: Save Your Life and Your Money!

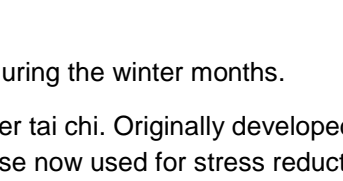
We live our lives by the numbers: phone numbers, PIN numbers, and stock market numbers. But do you know the heart health numbers that could literally save your life? Healthy numbers mean a healthy heart. If you follow a healthy lifestyle—eat a balanced diet, get regular exercise, and avoid smoking—you can even turn bad numbers into good ones.

Now, as part of the Montgomery County Public Schools Wellness Initiatives program, you can reduce your contributions to your medical insurance by learning about these vital numbers. To take full advantage of these rate reductions, complete biometric health screenings and a health risk assessment yearly, and, if you smoke, consider quitting.

[Learn more](#) about the wellness initiatives program.

It Is Time to Quit for Good

Quit for Good is a free eight-week tobacco cessation program offered to all Montgomery County Public Schools employees and their spouses regardless of medical plan membership. The program is nurse-based and consists of once-a-week classes led by a nurse practitioner with assistance from Kaiser Permanente clinicians and health experts. Discussions focus on the skills necessary to successfully live tobacco-free.



The new session of *Quit for Good* begins Tuesday, March 17, 2015, at 4:30 p.m. in the Maple Room at 45 West Gude Drive, Rockville. For more information visit the [Well Aware website](#). To register for the class, [e-mail Well Aware](#).

Stress Less This Winter

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

Tai Chi—If you are looking for a way to reduce stress, consider tai chi. Originally developed for self-defense, tai chi has evolved into a graceful form of exercise now used for stress reduction and a variety of other health conditions. Often described as meditation in motion, tai chi promotes serenity through gentle, flowing movements. Join Well Aware on Thursdays at 4:30 p.m. and again at 5:00 p.m. in Café 45 at 45 West Gude Drive, Rockville.

Mind Your Wellness—Join us for a fun and interactive seminar that will help you reexamine your lifestyle habits and either remove or improve those habits with healthier approaches to work, home, family, relationships, and oneself. Learn personal development techniques to increase inner peace, life balance, and well-being. This *Mind Your Wellness* seminar will take place Tuesday, February 17, 2015, at 4:30 p.m. in the Maple Room at 45 West Gude Drive, Rockville.

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 wellness@mcpsmd.org.