

## February Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion, a middle school science teacher who overcame her reservations and ran her first 5k;
- a webinar on heart disease risks and simple lifestyle changes to help you maintain a healthy heart for life;
- how you can *Quit for Good*;
- other healthy habits to prevent heart disease;
- ways to stress less this winter;
- the MCPS-staff healthy eating online cookbook;
- the Be Well 365 web page; and
- more!



### Don't Miss It

#### This month's free webinar—**Healthy Hearts**

Join us for a webinar to learn about heart disease risks and simple lifestyle changes to help you maintain a healthy heart for life.

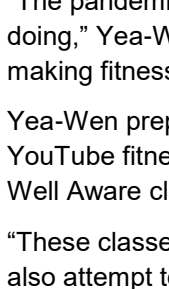
**Thursday, February 18, 2021**  
4:00–5:00 p.m.

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: CareFirst*

## Wellness Champion Makes Her Health a Priority During Pandemic



**Yea-Wen Chou, paraeducator, Hoover Middle School**

These days, most of us are at home most of the time due to the pandemic. Many things are on hold; we work, eat, and shop from home and are doing our best to enjoy life from our living rooms.

During this challenging time, Yea-Wen Chou, paraeducator special education at Herbert Hoover Middle School, has opted to focus on her health and wellness. She decided to participate in the *Going the (Physical) Distance Relay* challenge last fall and even won a weekly prize by logging her information into the online fitness log.

"The pandemic forced me to change my daily routine and the type of exercise I was used to doing," Yea-Wen said. "I chose to participate in the challenge to hold myself accountable for making fitness part of my daily routine."

Yea-Wen prepares and eats home-cooked healthy meals every day and routinely follows YouTube fitness videos that are focused on building muscle. She also participates in online Well Aware classes.

"These classes bring variety to my home fitness routine," Yea-Wen said. "On a daily basis, I also attempt to drink 5-8 cups of water and go to sleep early."

Yea-Wen knows that getting and staying healthy also involves taking care of one's mental, as well as physical, health.

"I have been focusing on mindfulness," Yea-Wen said. "Despite the ongoing challenging news in the world, I am able to keep calm and stay positive during self-quarantine."

Why is prioritizing health and wellness important to Yea-Wen?

"I want to be and stay healthy so that my children will not need to worry about me as I grow older," Yea-Wen said. "I want to live life to the fullest and not let the small issues bother me."

Yea-Wen believes that age should not stop you from adopting a healthy lifestyle.

"It's never too late to start your own health and wellness journey and incorporate it into your daily routine," she said.

## Today Is National Wear Red Day!

Are you seeing red?

The American Heart Association (AHA) is holding its yearly National Wear Red Day today, Friday, February 5, 2021, to call attention to heart disease. According to AHA, "Heart disease and stroke cause 1 in 3 deaths among women each year, killing approximately one woman every 80 seconds." It doesn't have to be that way, however. AHA tells us that "80 percent of cardiac and stroke events may be prevented with education and action."

Well Aware encourages all Montgomery County Public Schools employees to make their heart health a priority. Schedule your annual preventive check-up to review your overall health, measure your blood pressure, and check your cholesterol. Be alert for signs of heart disease and your risk for stroke and other illnesses.

Do your part to educate yourself, your friends, and your family this year. Join the movement to end heart disease and strokes in women because it's not just a man's disease. Even if you didn't wear red today, we can *all* Go Red! Here's how:

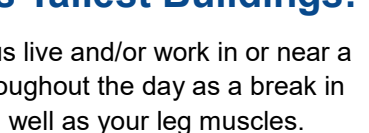
G: Get Your Numbers  
O: Own Your Lifestyle

R: Realize Your Risk  
E: Educate Your Family  
D: Don't Be Silent

Share pictures of your coworkers participating in National Wear Red Day by **emailing them to Well Aware**.

**Watch this video** to learn more about National Wear Red Day.

## The Best Time to Quit ... Is Now!



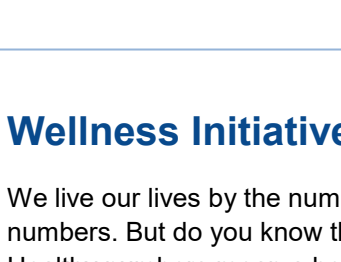
Most smokers know that smoking is bad for their health and harmful to the people around them. They know they should quit, but they also know it is going to be difficult to do.

To make it easier, Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente are teaming up again to bring you the *Quit for Good* tobacco cessation program. The free program is available to employees and their spouses, regardless of whether or not you participate in MCPS employee benefits or with Kaiser Permanente.

Due to the COVID pandemic, the course has been revamped and is now offered as three, one-hour webinars. The webinars cover the skills necessary to successfully live tobacco-free, a risk assessment, stress management techniques, healthy weight management strategies, and more. In addition to the webinars, participants will receive support through a help line, peer sponsors who understand what it takes to quit, and other resources.

In conjunction with Kaiser Permanente, we have recorded the most recent class to give you an idea of what they are like. Check the classes out from the **Wellness Webinar Library**.

For more information on the *Quit for Good* tobacco cessation program, visit the **Quit for Good web page**. **Email Well Aware** to reserve your spot in the next class.



## Flights to Fitness: Climb Maryland's Tallest Buildings!

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

Well Aware is challenging you to climb the tallest buildings in Maryland, or climb the equivalent of these buildings in flights of stairs. Form a team and complete the buildings together to share your sense of achievement! It is a great way to stay in shape during the cold winter months.

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

## Stress Less This Winter

Shorter days with less sunlight and a more sedentary lifestyle due to the cooler weather can have a big impact on mood and stress levels. Add to that the ongoing challenges brought on by the pandemic and you have a recipe for significant stress in your 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—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, you are sure to find something that will meet your individual needs. **Email Well Aware** to request a monthly schedule of classes.

## Wellness Initiatives: Get to Know Your Numbers

We live our lives by the numbers: phone numbers, PIN numbers, and our social security 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 turn any bad numbers around.

You can learn about these vital health numbers and reduce your financial contribution to your health insurance in 2022 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.

To find out how to complete your biometric health screening and health risk assessments and how your results will be reported to MCPS, please visit the **Wellness Initiatives web page**.

## Online Physical Activity Classes for Winter

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 your heart, your mind, and your overall wellness.

Consider trying Well Aware's online classes to see what kind of physical activity is best for you. We offer many classes to meet your needs, including Zumba, HIIT Camp, Stretch and Mobility, Core workouts, Yoga, and toning.

**Email Well Aware** for a monthly calendar of classes.

## Healthy Habits to Prevent Heart Disease

February is Heart Disease Awareness Month. Did you know that every 40 seconds, someone in the United States has a heart attack? One of the most important lifestyle modifications that can significantly reduce the risk of developing heart disease, is regular exercise—which can be hard to fit in to our busy lives!

Click on each link below for important tips on fighting heart disease, as well as simple exercises you can do at your desk, in your classroom, or on your bus.

- **Heart-Healthy Living**
- **American Heart Month History**
- **Heart Attack and Stroke Symptoms**

## BurnAlong Classes Available to Help You and Your Family Stay Well and Fit

MCPS and CareFirst have partnered to give you access to BurnAlong, a health and wellness platform that comes with four free accounts for you and interested family and friends. The 1000+ classes available range from meditation, boxing, yoga, bootcamp, and spin. There are even classes on nutrition and financial literacy and specialized senior classes for you or older members of your family who may need physical activity but need to remain in the house. Classes can also be taken as a group, so you can work out with a friend or family member while seeing and talking to each other during the class. **Register and log in**.

## Share Your Healthy Recipe in the Online MCPS Healthy Cookbook

Have you resolved to eat a healthier diet this year? If so, now is the time to focus on healthy meal planning.

To help keep each other motivated, be sure to share your favorite healthy recipes with Well Aware. We will create a PDF collection to share daily on our Twitter account @mcpowellaware.

**Email your healthy recipe to Well Aware**.

## 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.

For more information, contact MC Government at 240-777-6840 or **email MC Recreation**.

## Be Well 365

MCPS has launched a well-being web page for its employees. This online resource is a one-stop shop where employees can find information to help them navigate and balance their work, home, personal, and community lives. The emphasis is on staff well-being and self-care. Last year was a challenging one for all of us, and MCPS is committed to ensuring that its staff members stay safe and feel supported. **Browse Be Well 365**.

## Share Your Wellness Stories and Encourage Your Coworkers Through Twitter!

Well Aware is proud of MCPS employee for all of the hard work they are doing to lead healthy lives. It is time to share your stories and your spirit! Or, perhaps you need some extra motivation to begin a staff wellness program at your school, depot, or office, or to turn life-long unhealthy habits into healthy ones. Follow @mcpowellaware for incredible wellness stories, ideas, and encouragement from your MCPS coworkers. You also will read tips on living a healthy life and receive updates on MCPS staff wellness programs.

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**.