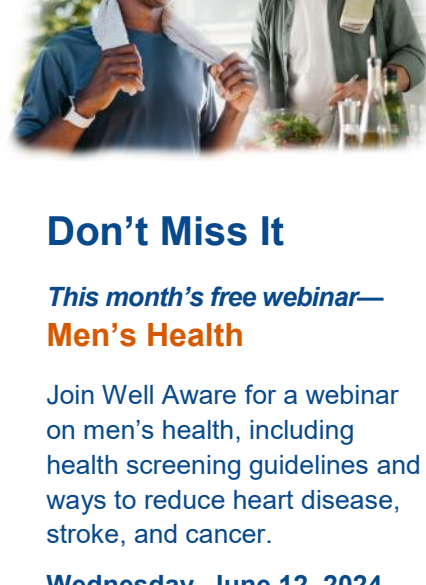


June Well Aware eNews

Welcome to the June 2024 issue of *Well Aware eNews!* Read on to learn about—

- this month's wellness champion, a bus operator who has benefitted greatly from his active participation in his depot's wellness program;
- a webinar on men's health, including health screening guidelines and ways to reduce heart disease, stroke, and cancer;
- the importance of reclaiming rest;
- how to stay safe in the sun;
- free access to Montgomery County Recreation Facilities and Pools;
- how you can save money on your health insurance; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar— Men's Health

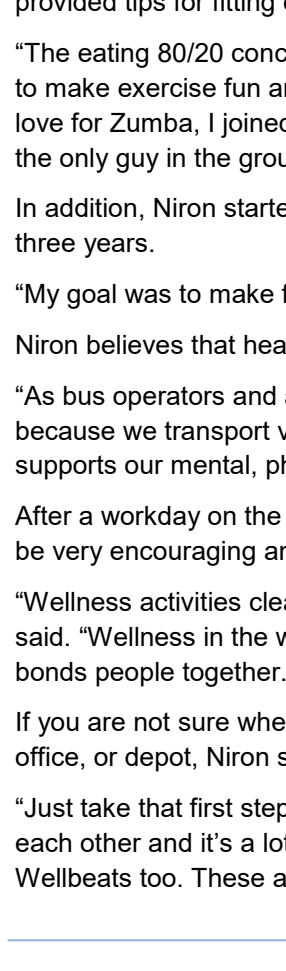
Join Well Aware for a webinar on men's health, including health screening guidelines and ways to reduce heart disease, stroke, and cancer.

Wednesday, June 12, 2024
Webinar
4:30–6:00 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 Champion's 13-year Involvement in MCPS Wellness Activities Continues to Be Fun, Encouraging, and Energizing



Mr. Niron R. White

Niron enjoys the wellness program and activities to this day after being an active participant for 13 years.

"I come to work every day knowing that I can look forward to the wellness coach's fun class. After class, I walk away feeling energized, which makes it all worthwhile."

Niron especially likes the Zumba class, but he enjoys all that the depot's wellness program offers.

"I look forward to Wednesday's Zumba class at Westover Elementary school," Niron said. "I also enjoy activities like the Annual Wellness Spring Break Hike, monthly health seminars, healthy snack demos, and smoothie making."

A number of wellness classes have helped Niron make healthier eating choices and provided tips for fitting exercise into his schedule and making it even more enjoyable.

"The eating 80/20 concept is something that I still practice," Niron said. "I also learned how to make exercise fun and practical and different ways to get it in every day. Because of my love for Zumba, I joined the dance presentation at our COMAR meetings, even when I was the only guy in the group."

In addition, Niron started a soccer team at the Randolph depot, which continued for about three years.

"My goal was to make fitness fun and many people enjoyed it," Niron said.

Niron believes that health and wellness is very important for transportation staff.

"As bus operators and attendants, we start our day very early and have to be very alert because we transport very special cargo," Niron said. "Having a wellness program that supports our mental, physical, and nutritional health plays a big part of our day."

After a workday on the road, returning to the depot to participate in a wellness activity can be very encouraging and rewarding.

"Wellness activities clear the mind, help reduce stress, and energize you," Niron said. "Wellness in the workplace is a support system that makes coming to work fun. It also bonds people together."

If you are not sure whether to participate in the staff wellness program at your school, office, or depot, Niron suggests that you, "Just do it!"

"Just take that first step," he said. "It's a no-judgment zone. We support and encourage each other and it's a lot of fun. You can use Montgomery County's Total Rec Pass and join Wellbeats too. These are offered free to help us stay on our health journey."

Health and wellness have always been important to Niron White, bus operator at the Randolph Transportation Depot. He joined the Department of Transportation's wellness program in 2011 to encourage himself to move more and reduce stress at work. He has benefitted greatly from his efforts and is fully committed to the program.

"I heard about an onsite Zumba class via an announcement on the two-way radio," Niron said. "I thought Zumba would be a fun thing to do during my break time. It was so much fun that I kept going back every week and up to the present."

Resiliency has been a hot topic in recent years. With the efforts required to stay strong and healthy, we sometimes forget to rest, relax, and recover. The Reclaim Rest series is an eight-session series that walks you through a series of thoughts and techniques to use each day to achieve peace and harmony. Each session contains an educational component and an interactive component and builds on the prior week. For dates and times, [email Well Aware](#).

Fresh air and exercise can help you to manage stress. In addition, being in the outdoors and in nature can improve mental well-being. Spring is a wonderful time to get outside and enjoy nature. [Check out this video](#) to learn more information on how nature helps mental health.

In addition to spending more time in nature, Well Aware is continuing its online live and recorded classes for your 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](#) for more information.

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.

The Wellness Initiatives 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 following these steps:

1. **Complete a biometric health screening**—See your doctor for an annual physical or, if you are a Cigna member, have your physical at a Quest Diagnostics Patient Center by October 4, 2024; or attend a Well Aware on-site biometric health screening by October 4, 2024.
2. **Complete a health risk assessment**—Visit your medical plan's website by October 4, 2024, to complete either the *My Health Assessment* for Cigna members, or the *Total Health Assessment* for Kaiser Permanente members.

Kaiser Permanente members will need to sign the HIPAA Waiver on the Kaiser Permanente wellness website. You will find Kaiser Permanente links and additional details on the [Wellness Initiatives for Employees web page](#). Be sure to log in to consent to your participation in the incentive program. Without your consent, your information will not be reported.

If you are a subscriber of an MCPS-provided medical plan (Kaiser Permanente or Cigna), you have access to a wealth of free health and wellness resources. Kaiser Permanente and Cigna have stress management tools including guided meditations, podcasts, and more. [Learn more about their stress management tools](#).

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.

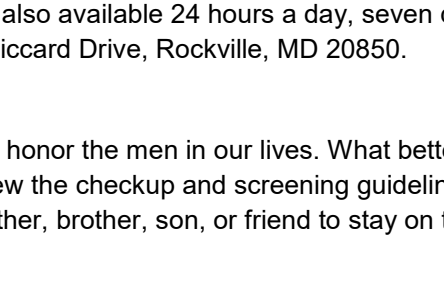
Interested? [Learn more](#) by visiting the [MC Recreation website](#) for general information. You may [apply online](#) for the individual Total Rec Pass. The [Employee Family Pool Pass application](#) also is available online. Both passes are valid for one year; you need to reapply each year to continue your access to the facilities.

Well Aware, the MCPS employee wellness program, offers the Well Aware Wellness Toolbox, a web page with free resources for you to manage your health and wellness. 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. [Check out the Well Aware Toolbox](#) to see what self-care resources will work best for you!

Well Aware is proud of MCPS employees for all of the hard work they are doing to lead healthy lives. Share your stories and your spirit on X (formerly Twitter). 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 [@mcpswellaware](#) for incredible stories, wellness ideas, encouragement from your MCPS coworkers, tips on living a healthy life, or for updates on MCPS staff wellness programs. Be sure to also follow [#mcpsstaffwellness!](#)

Well Aware and the Employee Assistance Program

Monthly Connection: Men's Health Month



Did you know that mental and physical health are linked? Recent research has shown that an improvement or decline in one can lead to an improvement or decline in the other. The great news is that the body and brain are both very responsive to positive change!

For this reason, the MCPS EAP (Employee Assistance Program) and Well Aware (the MCPS Employee Wellness Program), are excited to work together to bring you monthly topics focusing on mental and physical health. These resources will help you align your wellness journey to ensure that you are focusing on both physical and mental health. Look for these resources each month in the Well Aware eNews, The Bulletin, the Well Aware Toolbox, and on the EAP web pages.

EAP Resources

In recognition of Men's Health Month, let's talk about the importance of men's mental health.

Although women are more likely to experience certain mental health disorders, men who experience symptoms of mental illness are often less likely to seek help. Why? The stigma that talking about mental health and seeking treatment is viewed as a weakness disproportionately affects those who have been socialized into traditional masculine gender roles. Other factors include lower mental health literacy and higher use of substances among men, as well as culture, fatherhood, race, and socioeconomic status. Approximately 1 in 10 men experience depression or anxiety, but less than half seek treatment. Men are also more likely to die by suicide. It's important to address the stigma by increasing awareness of mental health symptoms in men and acceptance for seeking treatment.

- [Facts about Men's Mental Health and Why it is Important](#)
- [Men's Mental Health](#)
- [Brother, You're on My Mind: Changing the Dialogue Regarding Mental Health Among African American Men](#)
- [How to prepare yourself for a tough conversation](#)

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis or emergency, call 988, the [Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#), call 911, or go to your closest emergency room. The [Montgomery County Crisis Center](#) is also available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 240-777-4000 or in person at 1301 Piccard Drive, Rockville, MD 20850.

Well Aware Resources

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? Review the checkup and screening guidelines for men below and encourage your husband, father, brother, son, or friend to stay on top of his health.

- [Men's Health Screenings](#)
- [Omada Health for Men](#)

MCPS Well Aware and Cigna have partnered to provide all MCPS staff with access to *HFP Live*, a wellness livestream and video library built specifically for employees who are hard at work.

HFP Live broadcasts webinars, workshops, demos, and fitness classes in real time and with recordings for employees to view. Each week, we will send a schedule highlighting some of the upcoming events that you can check out. You can access the livestream portal and also view the schedule of upcoming events from any computer, laptop, tablet, or cell phone by using a password-protected link. Can't make a live session? Not to worry. Each livestreamed event is recorded and posted in a video library for you to access for at least 30 days. [Learn more](#). [Log in to participate](#) using password: mcpsmd.

Omada is a personalized program that helps members lose weight and create healthier habits by offering one-on-one personal coaching and the tools needed to make long-lasting health changes.

Qualifying participants receive the following:

- One-on-one support from a personal health coach
- Easy monitoring with a smart scale, which is yours to keep
- Tools for managing stress and creating a healthy mindset
- Actionable tips in weekly lessons
- Encouragement from an online community

For more information about the Omada program and to apply, visit the [Omada website](#) for MCPS participants. Do you have 10 minutes? [See how Omada can help you](#).

Registration is underway for a summer session of *Head Heart Hands*, a fun and inspiring program that gives participants the knowledge, tools, and support to lose weight permanently and reach their health goals.

This 12-week wellness program is a comprehensive program of learning with weekly group coaching, designed to help participants prevent/reverse disease, improve their physical and mental health, and lose weight. This holistic program targets the root causes of common chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, arthritis, and more, while addressing all aspects of health, including nutrition, sleep, stress, mental health, and mindset.

[Email Well Aware](#) for more information and to register.

Wellbeats provides MCPS staff with free access to thousands of high quality, expert-led fitness, nutrition, and mindfulness classes for free! Participation is simple: Log in to your Wellbeats account on your personal device, and choose from a variety of classes to support your wellbeing at work. Here are some examples—

- energy-boosting workouts with minimal equipment needed;
- quick stretch breaks to recharge between meetings;
- healthy, easy-to-prepare lunch recipes and snacks;
- seated yoga classes you can play right at your desk; and
- so much more!

If you prefer to follow a step-by-step plan, we invite you to join the four-week *Give Me a Work Break Program*. This plan includes short stretch breaks, meditations, and mobility exercises to manage stress and boost productivity—no equipment needed! [Learn more](#).

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 240-740-8100 or [email Well Aware](#).