

December Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champion, an ESOL teacher whose high energy and creativity have prompted her coworkers to eat right and move more;
- a seminar/webinar on sources of holiday stress and how to minimize them;
- another chance to *Quit for Good*;
- how to step into the Sweet-free Zone;
- how to stay well during the holidays;
- a way to share your wellness success stories and receive encouragement from your coworkers; and
- more!

Wellness Champion's Energy, Motivation, and Creativity Help Her Persuade Coworkers to Embrace Their Wellness

Michelle Cohen, ESOL teacher, Rosemont Elementary School

If you are looking for ways to boost health and wellness among the staff at your school, depot, or office, look no further than the dynamic Michelle I. Cohen for inspiration. This ESOL teacher at Rosemont Elementary School is not only extremely energetic, motivated, *and* motivational; her creativity has galvanized her Rosemont coworkers into eating right and moving more.

"Participating in the MCPS wellness program is important to the teachers and staff at Rosemont Elementary because we all work so hard with, and on behalf of, the kids in our building," Michelle said.

Michelle and her coworkers know that taking time to pay attention to their physical and emotional well-being is key to their success as educators. Exercising and eating right helps them to maintain their energy and enthusiasm for working with students.

"Supporting each other in the process strengthens our ability to maintain our healthy lifestyles," Michelle said. "Best of all, by making staying healthy *fun*, we can keep those day-to-day stressors under control and ensure balance in our professional and personal lives."

Michelle's coworkers speak very highly of her efforts, which they say have been instrumental in keeping them motivated. Referring to her as their "wellness leader," one colleague shared a number of activities that Michelle has planned and implemented.

"Michelle sends out reminders and makes fun in-house challenges to keep us on our toes and invested in our health and wellness," Ariel S. Paul, speech pathologist, said. *Tomato Thursday* is the Rosemont way of putting that ever-popular *Taco Tuesday* to bed. Michelle encourages us to pack a salad for lunch."

Tomato Thursday photos are taken and shared with the team members, and prizes are awarded for the best shots.

Over time, Michelle has increased the difficulty-level of the in-house challenges. It began with email reminders to log in to the Well Aware Fitness Log to record their activity. Then she introduced *Fit Friday*.

This part of the in-house program rounds out the work week, and staff agree it is the best part. Team members gather for a quick group exercise geared toward either physical or mental health. The first was a *30-Second Plank Challenge*, followed by a *Guided Meditation*.

"We enjoy the surprise activities and are glad to support each other in getting and staying healthy," Ariel said. "We always look forward to *Fit Friday*."

Staff Wellness Programs always need a champion like Michelle, but they also need buy in from school administration. Both Rosemont's principal and assistant principal are members of the wellness team at their school.

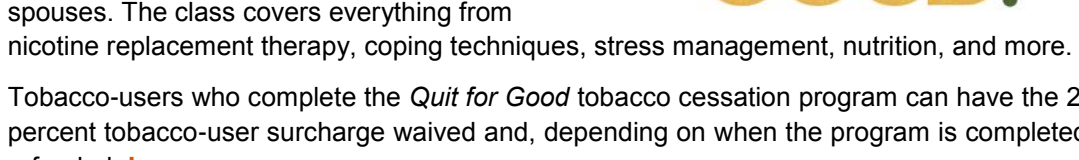
"Our administration is 100 percent behind the wellness program at Rosemont," Michelle said. "They are very busy people who don't always have time to log their activities. But, by demonstrating that "even they can do it," they help us remember how important it is to pay attention to our health and wellness."

What is Michelle's advice for starting a successful staff wellness program? She believes the most important ingredient is a desire to be healthy and the openness to pursue their health with others.

"Our wellness program brings us *together*," Michelle said. "The team includes new and returning staff members, teachers from all grade levels, and non-teaching staff. It has athletes and exercise-avoiders, vegetarians, and junk food fans."

What they have in common is the need for an *accountability buddy* to make sure they all show up.

"There's no need for special equipment," Michelle said. "All we need is little bit of energy, a friend who doesn't let the team give up on itself, and the willingness to let go of the expected. Getting fit, having fun, and feeling fabulous are our goals. These can be your goals, too!"



Don't Miss It

This month's free seminar/webinar— 'Tis the Season to De-stress

This seminar/webinar will help participants recognize their sources of holiday stress and tension and provide suggestions for minimizing them.

Wednesday, December 11, 2019
10:00–11:00 a.m.
West Farm Bus Depot
11920 Bournefield Way
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

Thursday, December 12, 2019
4:00–5:00 p.m.
Webinar

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 in your Outlook email as well as an Outlook calendar reminder.

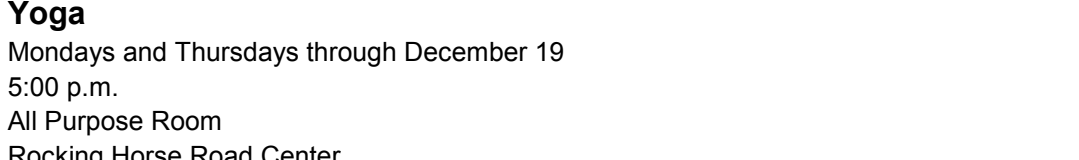
Spread the word with our **printable flyer**. Visit the **Wellness Webinar Library**.

Presented by: Kaiser Permanente

Enter the Sweet-free Zone!

Again this year, Well Aware is challenging you to designate your school or office as a Sweet-free Zone. What does this mean? It means that you pledge to do your best to celebrate the holidays in a healthy way. Post **this flyer** to designate your school as a Sweet-free Zone and share suggestions on how to change the culture in your school or office.

Are you doing something special to stop the influx of sweet and treats in your work location? Be sure to let us know, and **email your photos to Well Aware!**



Minutes in Motion Challenge Wraps Up; Prizes to Be Announced Next Week

Since September 23, 2019, MCPS employees have been working to achieve the goals they set during the *Minutes in Motion* physical activity challenge. Across MCPS, employees are experiencing better health and morale because of their involvement, whether they are participating as individuals or as members of a team.

Be sure to look for *Minutes in Motion* grand prize winners in the December 11th issue of *The Bulletin*.

Although the challenge ended on December 1, 2019, our winter *Flights to Fitness* challenge will begin in January. You also may continue to use the online **Well Aware Fitness Log** to enter your daily activity, weight loss, sleep, and more.

It Is Always a Good Time to Quit!

Are you ready to quit? *Quit for Good*, Well Aware's free tobacco cessation program for MCPS employees and their spouses, can help. *Quit for Good* is a free, eight-week tobacco cessation class for MCPS staff and their spouses. The class covers everything from nicotine replacement therapy, coping techniques, stress management, nutrition, and more.

Tobacco-users who complete the *Quit for Good* tobacco cessation program can have the 25 percent tobacco-user surcharge waived and, depending on when the program is completed, refunded. **Learn more.**

The next class will begin in January. 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 class.



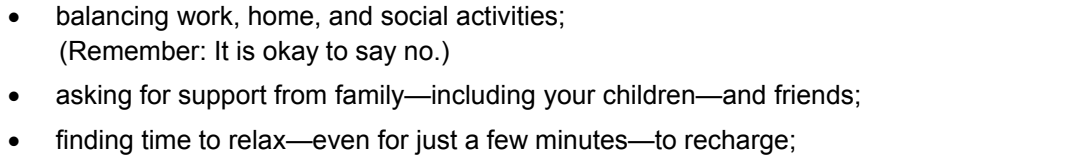
Save on Your Health Insurance in 2021: Take the [Wellness] Initiative

If you are covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan, you can learn more about your health and reduce your contributions to your health insurance with the Wellness Initiatives program. To take full advantage of these rate reductions, complete a biometric health screening and a health risk assessment yearly, and, if you use tobacco, consider quitting.

The Wellness Initiatives are easy to complete. To earn the maximum two percent incentive toward your health insurance premiums, you need to complete a yearly—

- online health risk assessment, and
- biometric health screening.

To find out how and when to complete your assessment and screening, more about the benefits of participating, and if any Wellness Initiatives information is reported to MCPS, please visit the **Wellness Initiatives for Employees web page**. Well Aware will offer health screenings onsite again this year to help you fulfil the 1 percent incentive. For dates and times, please visit the **Wellness Initiatives web page**.



Stress Less This Fall

Are the holidays stressing you out? Join Well Aware for one or more of the following classes and learn better to manage your stress:

Mindfulness and Meditation

Mondays through December 16 (except holidays)
5:00–5:45 p.m.

Conference Room 223
Carver Educational Services Center
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Register **here**

Seated Yoga

Wednesdays through December 18
4:45 p.m.

Café 45
45 West Gude Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Register **here**

Yoga

Fridays through December 20
3:30 p.m.

Main Gym
Redland Middle School
6505 Muncaster Mill Road
Rockville, Maryland 20855

Register **here**

Yoga

Fridays through December 13
2:50 p.m.

Dance Studio
Springbrook High School
201 Valley Brook Drive
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

Register **here**

Yoga

Wednesday, December 11
3:30 p.m.

Weight Room
William H. Farquhar Middle School
17017 Batchellors Forest Road
Olney, Maryland 20832

Register **here**

Yoga

Mondays and Thursdays through December 19
5:00 p.m.

All Purpose Room
Rocking Horse Road Center
4910 Macon Road
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Register **here**

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 your heart, your mind, and your overall wellness. Consider trying one of the classes below to see what kind of physical activity is best for you!

Zumba

Fridays
4:30–5:30 p.m.

Washington Grove Elementary School
8712 Oakmont Street
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877

Register **here**

Zumba

Mondays
4:00 p.m.

Cafeteria
Carver Educational Services Center
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Register **here**

Zumba

Tuesdays and Thursdays
3:00–4:00 p.m.

Dance Studio
John F. Kennedy High School
1901 Randolph Road
Silver Spring, Maryland 20902

Register **here**

Zumba

Tuesdays
4:30–5:30 p.m.

Gymnasium
Wheaton Woods Elementary School
4510 Faroe Place
Rockville, Maryland 20853

Register **here**

Zumba

Mondays
4:30–5:30 p.m.

Gymnasium
Flora Singer Elementary School
2600 Hayden Drive
Silver Spring, Maryland 20902

Register **here**

Zumba

Fridays
5:00 p.m.

All Purpose Room
Rocking Horse Road Center
4910 Macon Road
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Register **here**

Holiday Wellness

Make the most wonderful time of year a safe and healthy time of year. With just a little preparation and caution, your holidays can be remembered for all the good reasons. Here are some tips on staying healthy, safe and stress free.

Don't skimp on sleep while getting ready for the holidays. Lack of sleep leads to—

- overeating and weight gain;
- safety hazards at home, work, and on the road; and
- a negative mood.

Holidays mean lots of time spent with others, mostly indoors. Whether it's shopping or social events, indoor activity is prime time to spread common colds and the flu. Some ways to avoid getting or giving viruses include—

- washing your hands with soap and water for at least for 20 seconds;
- covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze; (If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow.)
- getting the flu vaccine; and
- keeping your immune system strong by staying physically active, eating healthy, and limiting alcohol.

(You don't have to say no to all of the holiday treats, just don't overindulge.)

Often, on our own or with the media's help, we create unrealistic expectations. If not kept in check, holiday commitments and spending can lead to stress. Ways to manage holiday stress include—

- balancing work, home, and social activities; (Remember: It is okay to say no.)
- asking for support from family—including your children—and friends;
- finding time to relax—even for just a few minutes—to recharge;
- getting plenty of sleep; and
- creating a budget for purchasing gifts, food, and decorations.

Flights to Fitness to Return in January

Flights to Fitness (F2F) is a program designed to encourage physical activity MCPS employees through stair climbing. Stay tuned for more information on the latest *Flights to Fitness* challenge starting in January!

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 **@mcpswellaware** 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**.