

July Well Aware eNews

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

- this month's wellness champions, an elementary school principal and assistant principal who are prioritizing health and wellness, not only for themselves, but for their staff and students;
- a webinar to help those with arthritis thrive;
- ways to stay active this summer;
- an alternative to receive credit for completing your biometric health screening;
- the MCPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP);
- other MCPS and community mental (and physical) health resources;
- free access to Montgomery County Recreation facilities and pools; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar—Thriving with Arthritis

Join us for this webinar to learn about arthritis, treatment options, and resources to help people with the condition better manage their symptoms.

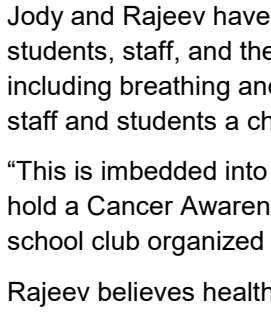
Wednesday, July 21, 2021
4:00–5:00 p.m.

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 Champions Engage Students, Staff, and the School Community in Wellness Activities



Jody L. Smith, principal and Rajeev K. Gupta, assistant principal, Chevy Chase Elementary School

Jody L. Smith, principal and Rajeev K. Gupta, assistant principal at Chevy Chase Elementary School have made health and wellness a priority in both their personal and professional lives. Take one look at the school's Twitter feed and you will see plenty of reminders of mindfulness, physical activity, and social connection. Their commitment to health and wellness sets a great example for members of the school community.

Through collaboration with the school's physical education teacher, Jennifer B. Rushin, Jody and Rajeev have developed creative and innovative activities and events to engage students, staff, and the Chevy Chase community. For example, they hold brain breaks, including breathing and mindfulness activities, throughout the instructional day to give staff and students a chance to recharge and refocus.

"This is imbedded into our vision," Rajeev said. "We also partner with organizations to hold a Cancer Awareness Run in the fall, and we host *Cheetahs on the Run*, a before-school club organized by our parent activities coordinator."

Rajeev believes health and wellness must be a priority for school administrators.

"If we do not take care of ourselves, we cannot fully be there for others," Rajeev said. "With health and wellness come less fatigue and burnout, higher energy levels, and greater production. Our jobs are very involved—both from a professional and personal standpoint. My wife and I have three daughters, all of whom are seven years or younger. To fully give my best means that self-care needs to be a priority."

With that in mind, Rajeev has made some positive changes in his own life during the pandemic.

"With all the social distancing measures, I have spent considerable time outdoors with my family," Rajeev said. "I have also explored the local parks and trails and committed myself to running or hopping on my spin bike for at least 30 minutes. I try to do this at least 5 days a week. Further, I've increased my water intake to between 64–90 ounces daily."

This fall, Jody and Rajeev will keep their wellness efforts at Chevy Chase Elementary School going!

"We plan to continue our focus on **BeWell365**," Rajeev said. "We know we all lead very involved lives outside of work. Health and wellness require commitment, discipline, consistency, and positive life choices."

Rajeev has some advice for other administrators looking to add staff- and student-focused wellness activities to their school.

"Lead by example," Rajeev said. "A better and healthier adult is a better and healthier child. Get buy-in from your staff members. To promote health and wellness means that all stakeholders are considered in this important work."

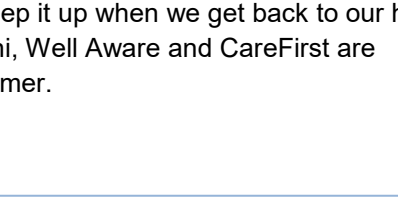
Whether focusing on diet, exercise, emotional wellness, or mental health, Rajeev believes in the importance of understanding where everyone is coming from and making the experiences fun and meaningful.

"Make sure you promote health and wellness with the kids and community in mind," Rajeev said. "With all of us coming out of a major, global pandemic, we all need to adjust to the new normal. Everyone was affected. To come together, to unite all of our communities, staff, and students require a plan of action, collaboration, and open-mindedness."

Rajeev also gave a nod to the many health and wellness resources MCPS and its healthcare providers make available to staff and students.

"There are abundant resources provided by MCPS and our respective healthcare providers that support our wellness," Rajeev said. "Do your research, find the supports, and share them with those in your schools and communities."

It Is Your Turn to Quit ... for Good!



MCPS 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 if you participate with Kaiser.

Fall classes will be held online and registration is open! **Learn more about upcoming classes**. You must register to participate by **emailing Well Aware**.

Remember to Stay Active This Summer

Summer is a great time to get back into walking, biking, jogging, or just playing outside with your kids. Getting active now will make it easier to keep it up when we get back to our hectic schedules in the fall. From Zumba and yoga to Tai chi, Well Aware and CareFirst are offering you some options to help you get fit this summer.

For a class list and schedule, **email Well Aware**.

Have You Taken the [Wellness] Initiative for 2022? Alternative to Biometric Health Screening Available

An alternative way to complete the Wellness Initiatives biometric health screening is available again this year for MCPS employees.

Due to COVID-19, Well Aware has been unable to hold onsite biometric health screenings. For that reason, MCPS employees are able to register for and complete *Biometrics Incentive Alternative 2022 Benefit Year* training on **Professional Development Online (PDO)** (course number 90270), in lieu of a biometric health screening. Employees who complete the training by **October 8, 2021**, will pay 1 percent less of their health insurance costs in 2022.

Employees who are able to complete their yearly physical with their doctor (or at a MinuteClinic for CareFirst members) also have until **Friday, October 8, 2021**, to complete the physical and receive the premium discount.

The Wellness Initiatives program provides employees covered by an MCPS-provided medical insurance plan with incentives to reduce their health insurance costs. By completing steps 1 and 2 below, your contribution to your health insurance will be reduced by 2 percent. Be sure to take advantage of the rate reductions by—

- **Completing a biometric health screening OR its alternative by October 8, 2021.** See your doctor for an annual physical (or, if you are a CareFirst member, have your physical at a CVS Minute Clinic), **OR** register for and complete the *Biometrics Incentive Alternative* training. If you do, you will pay 1 percent less of your health insurance costs in 2022.
- **Completing the health risk assessment on your medical plan's website by October 8, 2021** to pay 1 percent less of your health insurance costs. This is the *Real Age Test* for CareFirst, and the *Total Health Assessment* for Kaiser Permanente.

Kaiser Permanente and CareFirst members: Be sure to log in to your medical plan's web page to consent to your participation in the program. Without your consent, your information will not be reported.

Take the [Wellness] Initiative! **Learn more**.

MCPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

With the ongoing global health crisis, many of us are finding ourselves increasingly stressed and worried—about our health, the economy, or everyday activities that we generally wouldn't think twice about. Please know that in these uncertain times, the MCPS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to support the emotional well-being of you and your family members. With the understanding that we are all working to maintain our personal safety, and the safety of our families and communities, a range of options are being offered including no-cost telephone counseling and teletherapy. Please see contact information below:

In-House EAP: Call 240-314-1040

External EAP: KEPRO—Call 866-496-9599 toll-free to speak with a call center counselor. Or visit EAPhelpink.com, PASSCODE: MCPS

Be Sure to Check Out Our Online Health and Wellness "Toolbox"

Well Aware, the MCPS employee wellness program, has launched 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!

BurnAlong: Our Second Annual Virtual Summer Camp Is Here!

BurnAlong, the health and wellness platform that MCPS and CareFirst made available—for free—to MCPS employees, has launched its second annual Virtual Summer Camp! The camp, which runs through August, offer activities and programming for kids, families, and adults. To support all of its members this summer, BurnAlong has developed inclusive and fun programs to keep families active and healthy all summer long.

BurnAlong comes with four free accounts for you and interested family and friends. The 1000+ available classes 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 at home. 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.

Interested? **Register and log in**.

A Link to Available Mental Health Resources

Taking care of your mind is just as important as taking care of your body. To do both requires living a healthy lifestyle, paying attention to how you feel, and doing simple things to take care of *all* of you.

There are many MCPS and community resources for meeting the needs of your physical and mental health. **See "Taking Care of Mental Health"** from the May 12, 2021 issue of *The Bulletin*.

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.

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**.