

June Well Aware eNews

Welcome to the June 2025 issue of *Well Aware eNews*! Read on to learn about—

- this month's wellness champion, a call center assistant who joined the spring *Head Heart Hands* class and made many positive health and wellness changes as a result;
- a webinar to help you sustain a stable energy level throughout the day without depending on stimulants or engaging in "energy vampire" practices that drain your energy;
- an online Fitness Challenge for the summer;
- tips for staying safe in the sun;
- mental health and well-being resources for the LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, plus (LGBTQIA+) community in recognition of Pride Month; and
- more!



Don't Miss It

This month's free webinar—

Avoiding Energy Vampires

Is there a noticeable decline in your energy levels as the day advances? It is important to recognize that you should not experience significant energy fluctuations or a continuous decrease over time. Instead, sustaining a stable energy level throughout the day is crucial for optimal performance. Explore methods to develop a dependable source of energy that does not depend on regular consumption of stimulants and will help you avoid energy draining practices known as "energy vampires."

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Webinar
4:30–5:30 p.m.

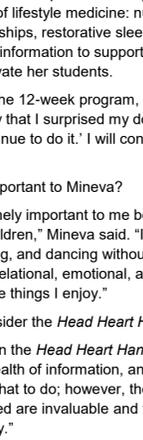
Please register for the webinar by emailing [Well Aware](#). You will receive a link in your Outlook email as well as an Outlook calendar reminder.

Spread the word with our [printable flyer](#). Visit the [Wellness Webinar Library](#).

Wellness Champion Significantly Improves Her Health and Wellness, Surprising Her Doctor

Mineva Strong, call center assistant, Employee and Retiree Service Center (ERSC)

Mineva Strong, call center assistant with ERSC, joined the spring 2025 *Head Heart Hands* class. According to class instructor Dr. Ritu Sharma, she made many positive health and wellness changes as a result.



"I decided to join *Head Heart Hands* after reading what it would incorporate, and because it fell in line with my health and wellness goals," Mineva said. "I already had committed to a 40-day fast with my church, which limited social media and included eating a specific diet. I had met with a nutritionist recommended by my primary care doctor, had committed to cutting out processed foods and sugar, and felt the timing was perfect. I was not disappointed."

Mineva found many benefits from taking the class.

"As a plant-based eater already, the class served as a lightbulb moment for me," Mineva said. "I needed to lower my A1C, cholesterol, and weight. The weekly Zoom meetings with Dr. Ritu and the other ladies served as a sense of support and accountability."

The *Head Heart Hands* modules incorporate not only whole foods and mostly plant-based eating, but also the six pillars of lifestyle medicine: nutrition, physical activity, stress management, positive relationships, restorative sleep, and avoiding risky substances. Dr. Ritu provided science-backed information to support and encourage lifestyle change, as well as fun challenges to motivate her students.

"As a result, after completing the 12-week program, I lost 11 pounds and lowered my A1C and cholesterol so significantly that I surprised my doctor," Mineva said. "My doctor said, 'Whatever you are doing, continue to do it.' I will continue to review the handouts and the modules."

Why is health and wellness important to Mineva?

"Health and wellness is extremely important to me because I want to be my best self, age well, and be active with my children," Mineva said. "I want to be able to do the things that bring me joy like walking, hiking, and dancing without difficulty. Health and wellness incorporate mental, physical, relational, emotional, and spiritual wellness. Without great health, I am limited in doing the things I enjoy."

Mineva thinks you should consider the *Head Heart Hands* class.

"I encourage MCPS staff to join the *Head Heart Hands* program," Mineva said. "It is comprehensive, provides a wealth of information, and is free to MCPS employees. You may think you already know what to do; however, there's nothing to lose. The information and tangible resources provided are invaluable and will positively impact you as you pursue your personal wellness journey."

Stay Active (and Stress Less) This Summer

Summer is a great time to get back into walking, biking, yoga, or swimming. Getting active now will make it easier to keep it up when we get back to more hectic schedules in the fall. From Zumba and yoga to tai chi, Well Aware is offering you options to help you get and stay fit this summer.

For a class list and schedule, visit the [Well Aware Toolbox](#).

Join Us Online for a Summer Fitness Challenge

Join the online four-week DreamFIT Summer Fitness Challenge, designed exclusively for MCPS staff. This comprehensive program will kickstart your wellness journey with an engaging and supportive environment.

Program highlights—

- Six Workouts a Week: Enjoy a variety of workouts tailored to all fitness levels, including strength training, cardio, and flexibility sessions. All are accessible online.
- Weekly Meal Plans: Fuel your body with balanced meal plans that promote healthy eating and cooking tips to keep you on track.
- Daily Accountability Check-ins: Stay motivated with daily check-ins to help you track your progress and maintain commitment to your fitness goals.
- Weekly Wellness Chats: Participate in informative sessions focusing on nutrition, mental health, and overall well-being, led by Coach Stephanie.
- Group Coaching: Connect with fellow MCPS staff members for motivation and support throughout the challenge, fostering a sense of community.

Embark on this transformative journey and prioritize your health while enjoying the camaraderie of your colleagues. Let's achieve our fitness goals together this summer! The challenge will run from July 7–August 3.

Interested? [Sign up here](#).

Sun Safety

Spending time outside is a great way to be physically active, reduce stress, and gain vitamin D. You can work and play outside without raising your skin cancer risk by protecting your skin from the sun. [See tips about sun safety](#). Share your [#sunsafeselfie](#) to show others how to practice sun safety.

[Learn how to identify the characteristics of unusual moles](#) that should be checked by a doctor.

Wellness Initiatives

Don't Miss Your Opportunity to Attend Free Health Screenings This Summer

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 3, 2025; or attend a Well Aware on-site biometric health screening by October 3, 2025.
2. **Complete a health risk assessment**—Visit your medical plan's website by October 3, 2025, 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 web page. 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.

Medical Plan Online Resources

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](#).

Montgomery County Offers MCPS Employees Free Access to Its Recreation Facilities and Pools

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 Toolbox

Are you looking for health and wellness resources for your personal wellness journey? Visit the Well Aware Wellness Toolbox! The tools in the Wellness Toolbox 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. [Check out the Well Aware Toolbox](#) to see what self-care resources will work best for you!

Share Your Wellness Stories and Encourage Your Coworkers!

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: Pride Month

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Well Aware (the MCPS Employee Wellness Program) continue to bring you monthly topics focusing on mental and physical health.



In recognition of Pride Month, let's talk about mental health and well-being resources specifically for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Plus (LGBTQIA+) community. Being LGBTQIA+ is not a mental illness. Yet, those who identify as LGBTQIA+ have a higher risk of facing mental health challenges due to experiencing stigma and discrimination. Many LGBTQIA+ people are also part of other communities that have historically been marginalized or oppressed. It's important to recognize the intersectionality of a person's many identities that shape their level of privilege and respect.

EAP Resources

- Need support this Pride Month? Contact the EAP to schedule a no-cost and confidential counseling session with an LGBTQIA+ affirming mental health professional or for help finding an affirming mental health professional or for help finding a LGBTQIA+ affirming mental health professional or for help finding a LGBTQIA+ affirming mental health professional or for help finding a LGBTQIA+ affirming mental health professional (available Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. year round).
- Join an upcoming Pride event in Montgomery County and check out other local resources from [Montgomery County Pride](#).
- Learn more about mental health risk factors for the LGBTQIA+ community and how to find a mental health professional from the [National Alliance for Mental Illness](#).
- The [LGBT National Hotline](#) provides free and confidential peer support, information, and local resources. Call 888-843-4564 (available Monday–Friday from 2:00–11:00 p.m. ET and Saturdays from 12:00 noon–5:00 p.m. ET).
- The [Trans Lifeline's Hotline](#) provides confidential, peer support phone services run by trans people for trans and questioning peers. Call 877-565-8860 (available 24/7).
- Want to be an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community? Everyone has a gender identity and sexual orientation. Learn more about the spectrums of identity from [The Gender Unicorn](#), pronouns and gender-neutral language from the [Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network](#), and being an ally from the [Human Rights Campaign](#).

Well Aware Resources

- [Kaiser Permanente inclusive and culturally responsible care](#)
- [Getting your best care with Cigna](#)
- [Cigna LGBTQ+ Provider Directory](#)

Have You Accessed HFP Live?

MCPS Well Aware and Cigna have partnered to provide all MCPS staff 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 upcoming events you can check out. You can access the livestream portal and view the upcoming events schedule from any computer, laptop, tablet, or cell phone 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. [Show me more](#). All MCPS staff can participate. [Log in](#) using password: mcpsmd.

Omada for Cigna and Kaiser Permanente Members

Living with a long-term health condition can change how you see yourself, your experiences, and your future. This is known as the cognitive triad – the way your thoughts shape how you feel and act. Negative self-perceptions can lead to doubt, frustration, or feeling stuck, but with the right support, you can shift your mindset and take control of your health.

Take 10 minutes to [let us show you how Omada can help](#). To apply, visit [Omada Health](#).

Group Forming Now for Summer Session of Head Heart Hands

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 Wellness: Take Charge of Your Well-being

Summer's here with longer, warmer days, a perfect time to elevate your fitness. Beyond the physical benefits, engaging in regular physical activity now can boost your energy, strengthen your body, and reduce your risk of future health issues.

As a part of your benefits, you have access to Wellbeats Wellness, which offers thousands of on-demand programs and classes to support physical wellbeing and preventive health. Wellbeats a variety of programs for every level to help you build a healthier lifestyle.

Here's are couple of things you can do with Wellbeats:

- Start your physical fitness journey with [Get Fit: Begin](#).
- Build resilience with strength training with [Enhanced Strength](#).
- Get a quick workout with [Quick Fitness at Home](#).
- Don't forget, during Pride Month you can [Stride with Pride](#) on Wellbeats.

[Find out how to log in to Wellbeats](#).

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](#).