

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Health & Wellness Newsletter



One Community, One Family

A community is the place where we plant our roots, build our families and self upon a strong foundation, and always look out for one another. The connection to this provides a sense of belonging, safety, and support. In these times of uncertainty and hardship, a strong community is more important than ever.

One of the greatest assets of our community has always been the passion, commitment, and drive of our residents and organizations. In this new monthly newsletter you will find the collaborative efforts of the Spotswood Recreation Department, Spotswood Public Schools District, and the Spotswood Office on Aging.

Our goal is to provide the greater community with information, inspiration, and resources to help yourself and your families navigate these often stressful times. It is our hope that these tools and strategies will help you build a sense of resiliency, support your mental health and well-being, and remind you of the vital role that our community plays in all our lives.

**"Now more
than ever,
we're in it
together."**

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The Chair View



"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."

--Winston Churchill

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Community Connections Health & Wellness Newsletter!

We are excited to bring you this new offering from Spotswood REC. Envisioned and edited by our own Melissa Hallerman, we hope this newsletter offers positive affirmation, helpful information, and above all a moment or two of exhilaration!

These are challenging times for all of us. But I'm thrilled to be part of a team that thinks outside the box and makes the best of our current situation. Whether it's our Virtual Rec Center, our recent Zeppole and Italian Ice Fests, or this newsletter, we are committed to adapting our offerings to bring you, and your family, opportunities for recreation in every sense of the word!

Please come along with REC, as together, we have the courage to continue to stay Spotswood Strong.

Rich O'Brien
Chairperson
Spotswood REC
Reaching Every Citizen



Stay Connected To Us...

Website:

www.spotswoodboro.com/recreation

Virtual REC At Home Center:

www.spotswoodboro.com/virtual-rec-home

Facebook:

Spotswood Recreation

E-mail: spotswoodrec@spotswoodboro.com





Get Moving!

Incorporating movement into our lives is a key factor when it comes to physical and mental health. Spotswood REC is proud to host its first Virtual 5K and Fun Run! COVID-19 will not keep us from running or walking "together" for a good cause. And while our race usually supports the school district's athletic programs, we have made an exception this year because of the community's inability to hold food drives these past few months. All proceeds from this year's race will go to Alice's CUP Food Pantry.

To participate in the virtual run, any time starting today until September 19th, run or walk a 5K or run/walk a one-mile Fun Run. Instructions for uploading your time will be given to you when you register.

QR Code for Spotswood
REC Virtual 5K and
Fun Run Registration



To register, visit spotswoodboro.com/virtual-5k. Get your family and friends to join you and raise money for this very worthy cause. Thank you for your continued support of our greater community!

Take Care of You

September is National Self-Care Awareness Month. It is a time to remind ourselves that taking care of our own selves, first and foremost, is essential. Self-care is often neglected in our everyday lives, especially during these uncertain and difficult times. Always remember, you cannot fill another's cup from your own empty vessel.

Self-care rituals can include proper nutrition, consistent sleep patterns, exercise, hobbies, scheduling "me-time," practicing relaxation techniques, making time for family and friends, and of course pampering ourselves.

Make it a priority to show up and take care of yourself every day. You deserve it.





A September to Remember

It's officially "Back to School" season! While it is clear that this September will look quite different than it has in years past, let this not take away from the excitement, novelty, and ambition that a new school year brings. And while we may need to redefine and adjust some of our traditions, the "Back to School" spirit will shine bright this year throughout Spotswood, Helmetta, and Milltown.

As families prepare for the new school year, many are faced with questions about our new norm and fears of the unknown. How will my child do in virtual learning? How will my child adapt to the new restrictions during in person instruction? When will we go back to the traditional model learning? Even with so many unknowns, there are many ways to prepare you and your child for the year ahead.

Here are five universal tips for a successful school year both in the virtual and hybrid environments:

ESTABLISH A ROUTINE

Even if your child is scheduled to learn virtually for the day, stick to a specific schedule and routine. Have your child wake up early enough to eat breakfast, brush his/her teeth, get dressed and begin the day at a set time. It may be also helpful for your child to see his/her schedule (also called a visual schedule) to know what to expect of the day ahead of him/her. Schedule movement breaks throughout the day to keep your child feeling motivated, focused, and energized. Schedules and routines are so important for children because they help them to feel secure, understand expectations, and increase their productivity and success.

Hint: If your child cannot read or tell time, a simple "checklist" with picture icons (i.e. a picture of breakfast followed by a picture of a toothbrush) can help provide structure and guidance.

CREATE A "SMART" WORKSPACE



Prior to beginning the school year, talk to your child about where he/she would like to establish a workspace for virtual learning. Allowing your child to select the location that he/she will work will provide your child with a greater sense of ownership and control. Remind your child that they must select an area which is free from distractions, comfortable, and in an area where they can be actively supervised. Each day, a part of your child's morning routine should be for him/her to prepare the workspace (i.e. sharpening pencils, cleaning off tabletop, ensuring devices are charged, etc).

Hint: To increase motivation and build momentum for Back to School, spend some time with your child decorating his/her workspace. Together with your child, you can draw pictures, hang photographs, etc. You can even ask relatives to send letters of encouragement to display in the workspace.

PREPARE



Schools across the world are planning for a very unprecedented and unconventional school year. Our two models of instruction, virtual and hybrid learning, are vastly different from the educational experience they left behind in March. When students re-enter schools, masks, social distancing, and modified schedules will be some of the many changes they will see. While at home, students will be making history as they become pioneers of virtual learning. It is very important to talk to your child about the changes and new norm that September will bring. Spend time discussing mask etiquette, personal hygiene, and the expectations to stay socially distant. Allow them to ask questions and brainstorm solutions for potential issues they may face.

It is equally as important to establish expectations for virtual learning. Explain what digital citizenship is and how they must use technology responsibly. Explain to your child how they can get help online and practice accessing the different learning platforms prior to the first day of school.

Hint: For younger kids, role playing can help prepare them for the transition into these new environments.

UNPLUG



While technology has widened our horizons, it is important to take the time to unplug as a family. Whether walking, bike riding, or even sitting in the backyard, time away from the devices is essential for all of us. After a long day of Zoom meetings and screen time, collect all devices in a central location to disconnect and unplug. Then? Get outside! Fresh air and physical activity are so important for our physical and mental health.

Hint: While enjoying the outdoors, spend some time with your child reflecting and/or meditating. Take deep "belly" breaths. Notice the world around you: name the birds you see, listen to the leaves crunch under your feet, study the clouds to determine their shapes - whatever it takes to immerse yourself in the world around you.

CONNECT



Now, more than ever, we are reminded of the importance of human connection and the power of a community. There are many communities surrounding to support and sustain you - your neighborhood, various social circles, local organizations and, of course, our Spotswood Public Schools.

Due to the restrictions which we face due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us have found ourselves feeling lonely and isolated. Our children are not immune to these feelings either. The social outlets they are accustomed to, from playdates to sports leagues, have quickly vanished from their lives. Many highly anticipated events and activities have been cancelled. It is important to recognize and validate your child's feelings of loss and sadness as it relates to the restrictions we must now face.

However, there are many safe and socially distant opportunities out there for all of the ages. From virtual Bingo games to socially distant walking clubs, ensure that your child has the opportunity to establish and maintain peer relationships even from afar. Six feet apart cannot - and will not - separate our hearts.

Hint: There are many resources available for you if you'd like to get your child involved in virtual clubs, special interest lessons, and more. Our Spotswood PTA was integral in keeping our community connected and smiling during quarantine. Besides, who doesn't love a virtual dance party?



In conclusion, much like on December 31 of every calendar year, I am filled with anticipation, curiosity, excitement, and hope for the year to come. While we cannot predict what the future will hold, I am comforted by the power of our community and the resiliency of our human spirit. As we begin this September to remember, I wish you and your families a very successful, happy, and healthy new school year.

Jennifer Asprocolas
Principal
G. Austin Schoenly School

Schoenly School



The Little School With a Big Heart



School News



By Heather DeLollis

Spotswood School District Partners with Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care

Mental health and the focus on students' social and emotional development has become an important focus for schools across the nation in recent years. In our district elementary schools, social and emotional learning (SEL) has been phased into the curriculum with much success. Teaching students skills which help them to self regulate and develop positive relationships assists in making the classroom a place where learning can be at its best.

Given the growing mental health and social and emotional needs of our student population and the increased awareness to address these concerns during COVID-19, the Spotswood School District is partnering with Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care (UBHC). UBHC will be providing two full-time mental health counselors to the district. These counselors will provide individual and family counseling to identified students, professional development to staff, and workshops for parents throughout the district.

Information on events throughout the year will be provided through the various school messaging platforms. Please keep an eye out for this information and we look forward to your participation.

Senior Strength

By Donna Faulkenberry

FALLS PREVENTION AWARENESS WEEK IS
SEPTEMBER 21-25!

Did you know that one in four Americans over the age of 65 fall each year? Falls are the leading cause of both fatal and non-fatal injuries for older Americans. But they are not inevitable!

See the graphic to the right for ways to help you, your family, and friends prevent falling. For an exercise option during this time of social distancing, please visit <https://www.spotswoodboro.com/ooa-virtual-yoga-videos> for seated yoga workouts you can do at home to help improve your strength and balance.

The Spotswood Office on Aging can be reached via e-mail at seniors@spotswoodboro.com, or visit our website for more information www.spotswoodboro.com/office-on-aging.

Mindfulness Motivation

Studies have shown that practicing mindfulness can have a positive impact on our thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and can improve our ability to cope with stress.



Try these
Mindfulness Activities:



~SPOT THE RAINBOW~

Begin by bringing your full and complete attention to your surroundings. Try to spot 2-3 objects that are each color of the rainbow. If your thoughts start to drift, bring your attention back to the activity.

~5 SENSES~

Look around you and name:

5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.

~MINDFUL WALK~

This can be done anywhere! As you walk, notice the pressure of your feet touching the ground. Notice the sounds and objects. Breathe in the moment.



Spotswood Office on Aging
& Senior Resource Center

Take Control of Your Health: 6 Steps to Prevent a Fall

Every **11 seconds**, an older adult is seen in an emergency department for a fall-related injury.

Many falls are preventable.

Stay safe with these tips!

1

Find a good balance and exercise program.

Look to build balance, strength, and flexibility. Contact your local Area Agency on Aging for referrals. Find a program you like and take a friend.



2

Talk to your health care provider

Ask for an assessment of your risk of falling. Share your history of recent falls.



3

Regularly review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist

Make sure side effects aren't increasing your risk of falling. Take medications only as prescribed.



4

Get your vision and hearing checked annually and update your eyeglasses

Your eyes and ears are key to keeping you on your feet.



5

Keep your home safe

Remove tripping hazards, increase lighting, make stairs safe, and install grab bars in key areas.



6

Talk to your family members

Enlist their support in taking simple steps to stay safe. Falls are not just a seniors' issue.



ncoa
National Council on Aging

To learn more, visit ncoa.org/FallsPrevention.

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON AGING



Healthy Bytes

Eating nutritious, hearty, and filling meals helps keep your body, heart, and mind healthy. New research suggests that your food choices may also effect your mood and mental health. This is called the "food-mood connection." Incorporating good-for-your-mood food may take some extra effort in a virtual world, but your body and mind will thank you later. Some foods to boost your mood may include bananas, berries, nuts and seeds, beans, sweet potatoes, eggs, bell peppers, dark chocolate, and avocados.

No-Bake Energy Balls

- 1/2 cup natural drippy peanut butter (you can substitute sunflower butter or WOW butter to make nut-free)
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/3 cup flaxseed meal
- 1/3 cup shredded coconut flakes
- 1/2 cup quick oats
- 1 TBSP mini chocolate chips

In a large bowl, mix peanut butter and honey together. Add coconut, flaxseed meal, oats, and chocolate chips. Mix until well combined. You may need to add a little more peanut butter or honey to help bind mixture, but as you roll into small balls the mixture will come together.

(Note: You can refrigerate dough for about 20 minutes to make it easier to roll into balls.)

Roll into small balls and place on wax paper or parchment lined sheet pan and place in refrigerator about 30 minutes.

Store in air tight container in refrigerator for up to a week or freeze up to a month.

Makes about 16 balls.

Enjoy!



Thank you to Spotswood resident Jennifer Korneski for the recipe and healthy lifestyle inspiration.