

# For Your Benefit



CERTIFICATED RETIREE BENEFITS • SUMMER 2021

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[MNPSBenefits.org](http://MNPSBenefits.org)

## QUESTIONS?

Contact:  
Employee Benefit Services  
615-259-8464  
[benefits@mnps.org](mailto:benefits@mnps.org)

The benefits and programs described in this newsletter are for retirees and their dependents who are covered by the Certificated Retiree Health Plan, under age 65 and not yet eligible for Medicare.

## The virtual counseling solution

The COVID-19 pandemic tested our mental health in profound ways. To cope, many people turned to counseling, only to find face-to-face visits unavailable or counselors making the shift to virtual visits.

### Virtual therapy – can that actually work?

Three MNPS employees found themselves asking that very question. What they each discovered was: Yes! Not only did virtual therapy work, it also came with some unexpected benefits. Here are their stories:



Remote counseling helps new principal cope

1

Ashley Croft

A series of family losses prompted Harvard-schooled educator Ashley Croft to return to the Volunteer State, where she landed at Inglewood Elementary.

"It was my first year as a principal," Ashley says. "And I got engaged within six months of moving back."

My appointments were on Sunday afternoon so I could do them in my pajamas from my house.

Just a few months after that joyous event, tornados struck Nashville, impacting many kids at her school.

Two weeks later, COVID-19 shut down schools. Then Ashley received troubling news about her mom's health.

"We thought she might need a heart transplant," she explains. "She was going to all these doctor's appointments, and no one could go with her. I was stressed and anxious all the time."

While visiting the MNPS Health Care Centers, Ashley had heard about a new benefit MNPS offered: virtual therapy, offered through Synchronous Health's Connect with Karla® program. In need of some serious stress busting, Ashley signed up, but she had reservations.

*Continued on page 4*

The knee bone's  
connected to...  
*everything?*



## Save a bundle on hip and knee surgery

If you live with chronic hip or knee pain, it can sure seem like your pain connects to every part of your life. Both are all-consuming conditions to live with. And finding the right kind of care can be challenging.

That's why MNPS and Vanderbilt Health partnered to offer an innovative new service for eligible retirees and their dependents\* who require hip or knee replacement surgery: **Vanderbilt's MyOrthoHealth – Hip & Knee Surgery Bundle.**

MyOrthoHealth includes coordinated, proactive care – from the initial pre-surgical visit through surgery and rehabilitation. With the help of a personal patient navigator

and comprehensive patient education, the experience is streamlined to help you make a faster return to active life and work. The enhanced program is even easy on the wallet: If you're eligible for the bundle, you receive all services at zero out-of-pocket cost.

Learn more about the MyOrthoHealth – Hip & Knee Surgery Bundle at **[MyOrthoHealthBundle.org](http://MyOrthoHealthBundle.org)**.

Learn about other bundles your MNPS medical plan covers at **[MNPSBenefits.org/my-health-bundles](http://MNPSBenefits.org/my-health-bundles)**.

\* Retirees and dependents enrolled in the Certificated Retiree Health Plan who are under age 65 and not yet eligible for Medicare

## Kiwi starfruit refresher



Cool off after your workout with this refreshing summer favorite! We also feature an assortment of fresh grab-and-go items, including sandwiches, wraps, salads, pastries, healthy snacks, breakfast sandwiches and beverages.

**Summer hours: Monday-Friday, 6 a.m.-1:30 p.m.**  
**Employee Wellness Center, 2nd floor**



Stop by to see what's available. It's different every week.

## Our summer webinar series is underway

For many, summer is a much-needed time to unplug and unwind. For others, it's a time to get your ducks in a row before fall arrives. If you're already lining up your ducks, wait!

Our Eat>Sleep>Reset series can help you cultivate a few healthy habits before life gets busy again.

If you missed the first webinar in the series, you can watch a recording and still get in on the information and insight Chef Lisa Lavery shared. Visit [MNPSBenefits.org/events](https://MNPSBenefits.org/events) to watch the video or register for an upcoming live webinar.



### How to cook in bulk

**Watch at [MNPSBenefits.org/events](https://MNPSBenefits.org/events)**  
**Hosted by Foodsmart**, which offers one-on-one nutrition counseling with a registered dietitian via video or phone visits

Want to prepare creative, healthy meals without stress? Chef Lavery shares her number-one trick for lightening the load in the kitchen: cooking in bulk.

In this idea-packed webinar, she will:

- Demonstrate her tips and tricks for portioning and storing larger make-ahead meals
- Share a list of items to have on hand to simply reheat and serve on busy days
- Teach you how to incorporate the chef tip, "cook it once, serve it twice" into your culinary routine



### Better rest is within reach

**July 8, 1 p.m.**  
**Hosted by Synchronous Health**, provider of Connect with Karla®, a program that offers one-on-one counseling via telehealth plus between-session support

Do you struggle to get enough sleep? Many educators do. Better sleep is possible. In this webinar, you'll hear from lifestyle and well-being expert Dr. Dexter Shurney and Sleep Specialist Rosalind Spinks-Seay on:

- The vital role sleep plays in your overall well-being
- The connection between mental health and sleep
- Evidence-based recommendations for improving your sleep

You'll also have a chance to ask questions of these sleep experts.



### Explore your EAP

**July 21, 1 p.m.**  
**Hosted by GuidanceResources**, EAP counseling and referral services provider

Are you up to speed on all your Employee Assistance Program offers? Let us take you on a guided tour!

During this webinar, you will:

- Learn everything you need to know to take advantage of this valuable MNPS benefit
- Discover some free services that might just surprise you
- Learn how you can use the EAP to reset and refocus after a different and challenging school year

Still have questions? We'll wrap up with a Q&A session.

Can't wait for the webinar? Learn more or start using:

**Foodsmart**  
[MNPSBenefits.org/foodsmart](https://MNPSBenefits.org/foodsmart)

**Connect with Karla**  
[sync.health/mnps](https://sync.health/mnps)

**EAP**  
[guidanceresources.com](https://guidanceresources.com)  
(Username: MNPS; Password: EAP)

## Remote counseling helps new principal cope

... continued from page 1

"I had tried therapy before," she says. "It was always super inconvenient to get there. And I just never was able to find somebody I liked."

This time was different — Ashley found a therapist she connected with. And her visits couldn't have been easier.

"The fact that it was virtual was huge for me," she says. "And that it could be on the weekend, in a spot where I could be focused and engaged."

"My appointments were on Sunday afternoon so I could do them in my pajamas from my house," she adds. "And it was totally free therapy weekly — normally that's crazy expensive."

When Covid-19 hit, Ashley had to navigate the unknowns of leading a school during a pandemic. But now she was equipped to handle those stressors. She liked that her therapist didn't seem intent on trying to "fix" her but listened carefully and helped her arrive at her own revelations.

"I would say something and not realize it was an epiphany," Ashley says. "She would repeat it back saying, 'Listen to what you just said.' And I'm like, yeah, that's really powerful."

Ashley recently graduated from the program and now only checks in with her therapist as needed. She was so impressed with Connect with Karla that she keeps pamphlets at her desk in case another employee might benefit.

She believes her work with the therapist not only helped her be a better principal but also a better wife.

"I didn't necessarily believe that it was going to help me, but I knew that I had to try," she says. "And here we are almost two years later, and I can't believe how far I've come."

# 2

Mandi Wansley

## School social worker learns self-care is critical to the job



Armed with a fresh master's degree, Mandi Wansley was excited to dig in when she landed a job as a social worker for MNPS. Through no fault of her own, however, it was a less-than-ideal start.

Mandi began in December 2019 — the middle of the school year — and had to pick up the previous social worker's caseload mid-stride. Still, she was eager to make a difference in students' lives.

When tornadoes ripped through Nashville a few months later, destroying homes, churches and workplaces, and upending many lives, her job grew more complicated. Then COVID-19 erupted and quickly swelled into pandemic proportions. Mandi and her colleagues were faced with challenges none of them were prepared for.

My therapist is incredible. She really made me feel comfortable from the beginning.

As Mandi worked against the odds to provide counseling for students and meet their other needs, something became clear. If she wanted to be effective: "I need to be in a good place."

"It was a new job, and it was a challenge," she says. "I was like, okay, I really need to get some help."

As a social worker herself, the idea of counseling was already on her radar. She'd gotten emails about the

Connect with Karla® virtual therapy program at work and heard more from colleagues. She thought it was something she'd pursue "someday."

But as her challenges mounted, she quit putting it off and signed up. Initially, she was concerned about her sessions being virtual. She needn't have worried.

It's probably one of the best decisions I've made.

"Actually, it started out great," Mandi continues. "My therapist is incredible. She really made me feel comfortable from the beginning. And she talked me through what we were about to embark upon."

Along with navigating anxiety, stress and other issues, Mandi's therapist helped her deal with unresolved grief involving the sudden death of a person she deeply cared for.

"I had gotten overwhelmed with emotion," she says.

Mandi is still early in her work with the therapist but plans to continue. She already feels better about her own contributions to the school system and its students.

"It's probably one of the best decisions I've made," she says. "I'm here today, and I feel like I've made really good progress learning to navigate."

3

## Stressed-out teacher finds relief on her terms

Stacey Morgan



Veteran teachers can tell pretty quickly if it's going to be one of *those* years. Such was the case with Stacey Morgan, third-grade teacher at Amqui Elementary.

Stacey recalled a brochure left in her school mailbox a couple of years ago. It offered MNPS employees free telehealth counseling through the Connect with Karla® program.

"I'd had experience with counseling before, so I knew what it could do," she says. "And I was having a particularly difficult year."

The counselor really put me at ease.

Stacey signed up at [sync.health/mnps](https://sync.health/mnps) and scheduled a virtual appointment.

With one-on-one sessions conducted through a computer screen, and sometimes a smartphone, she admits the first few visits were a bit awkward.

But she quickly got used to this new way of interacting with a therapist.

"The counselor really put me at ease," she says. "Over time it got a lot more comfortable."

The flexible scheduling was a plus for Stacey, since she commutes an hour each way to and from school. She even pulled over occasionally for a session on the side of the road.

She also made use of the Karla app. In addition to scheduling appointments through the app, she used it to communicate with her therapist between sessions. She accessed resources the app provides, like relaxation techniques. And her therapist could send information she thought would help Stacey.

"There were a couple of times I texted her through the Karla app, and she responded," Stacey says. "It was like having your own private connection."

She used some of what she learned to help her students, walking them through deep breathing exercises when tensions ran high.

"One of the things my therapist helped me with was improving my self-esteem," she says. "I learned some things about myself, and I can honestly say my self-esteem improved through that homework. You have to do the work, sure. But do the work...then it's worth it."

There were times I texted her through the Karla app...it was like having your own private connection.

By the time the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Stacey felt more grounded and able to cope. Her counselor even commented that it seemed the pandemic wasn't affecting her.

"It was only because I had learned skills beforehand," she says, adding, "I'm very grateful for the program. I think people should take advantage of it, even if they're nervous about it. It won't hurt to try. It can only help."

CONNECT  
with  
**Karla**®

Online counseling  
+ support between  
sessions



Synchronous  
HEALTH

[sync.health/mnps](https://sync.health/mnps)  
615-748-0625

# READY TO GET FIT?



## Fitness associates provide personalized help

*What are your fitness and wellness goals? Do you want to tone your body? Improve your balance? Just get more active and be healthier overall?*

If you could use some help getting where you want to be, look no further than our fitness associates at the MNPS Employee Wellness Center at Berry Hill.

### How to get started

Our associates can show you around the fitness center and teach you how to safely operate the strength and cardio equipment. To schedule an equipment orientation, simply ask an associate at the fitness center desk.

If you want more personalized help, stop by the fitness desk and fill out a fitness assessment.

"This helps us understand your current fitness level and history, such as whether you've had past injuries," says fitness associate Sara Wade. "We use your answers to match you with a fitness associate and customize an exercise plan for you. Then we'll work with you one-on-one to help you achieve your goals."

### What fitness associates do

In addition to providing one-on-one support, our fitness associates:

- Teach group exercise classes, both in-person and online
- Track physical therapy and chiropractic patients' progress and provide follow-up fitness consultations
- Answer general health- and fitness-related questions
- Ensure fitness center equipment is clean, properly functioning and used correctly

Fitness associates and classes are available to all MNPS employees, retirees and spouses at no charge. Visit **[MNPSHealth.org/fitness](https://mnpshealth.org/fitness)** to learn more and see our class schedule.

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### We're open 6 days a week

Monday-Friday | 5:30 a.m. - 7 p.m.  
Saturday | 8:00 a.m. - 2 p.m.

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## Meet our fitness associates



Greg Kinnaman



Kurtis Lewis



Sara Wade



Jillian Walker

# 4 reasons to schedule those screenings

*Did the pandemic prompt you to put preventive care and screenings – like your annual physical, mammogram or colonoscopy – on the back burner? Here are four reasons those visits should go right to the top of your to-do list.*

## 1 It's safe.

Yes, the pandemic continues. You might think it's better to avoid medical offices, unless it's an emergency. Not true! In fact, it's actually riskier to *not* see your doctor. The MNPS Health Care Centers continue to follow many extra safety protocols, such as sanitizing the waiting room, requiring masks and limiting the number of people in the office.

## 2 Time matters.

There was a substantial decline in cancer diagnoses over the past year. That's because people put off getting screened. Unfortunately, cancer doesn't wait. Just because it's not diagnosed doesn't mean it's not there. And the odds of beating cancer are much higher if you catch it early. That's why timely screenings are essential.

## 3 Regular wellness visits are a healthy habit.

When you see your provider every year, it's an excellent opportunity to:

- Go over your and your family's health history to make sure you're aware of any potential risk factors
- Identify problems (or potential problems) early, increasing the odds of a good outcome
- Monitor any existing health issues
- Get your latest numbers, like blood pressure, blood sugar and weight
- Ensure you're up to date on your vaccinations (no, they're not just for kids!)
- Ask any health-related questions you have and learn about ways to improve your health

## 4 They cost you \$0.

Most age-appropriate preventive services are 100% covered by the Certificated Retiree Health Plan, with no out-of-pocket costs to you. If the MNPS Health Care Centers don't provide the service you need, like a mammogram or colonoscopy, we can provide a referral.

To make an appointment at the MNPS Health Care Centers, call **615-259-8755**.

# Omada expands – *again!*

## Healthy is possible

The Omada® program has been so popular — more than 1,100 MNPS employees and retirees have been accepted into it — we're expanding eligibility again!

### You can join Omada if you:

- Are at risk for diabetes or heart disease and want to avoid developing it
- Live with type 1 diabetes (new as of June 1!) or type 2 diabetes and want a new way to get and stay healthy
- Have high blood pressure and want help managing it

It only takes a few minutes to get started:

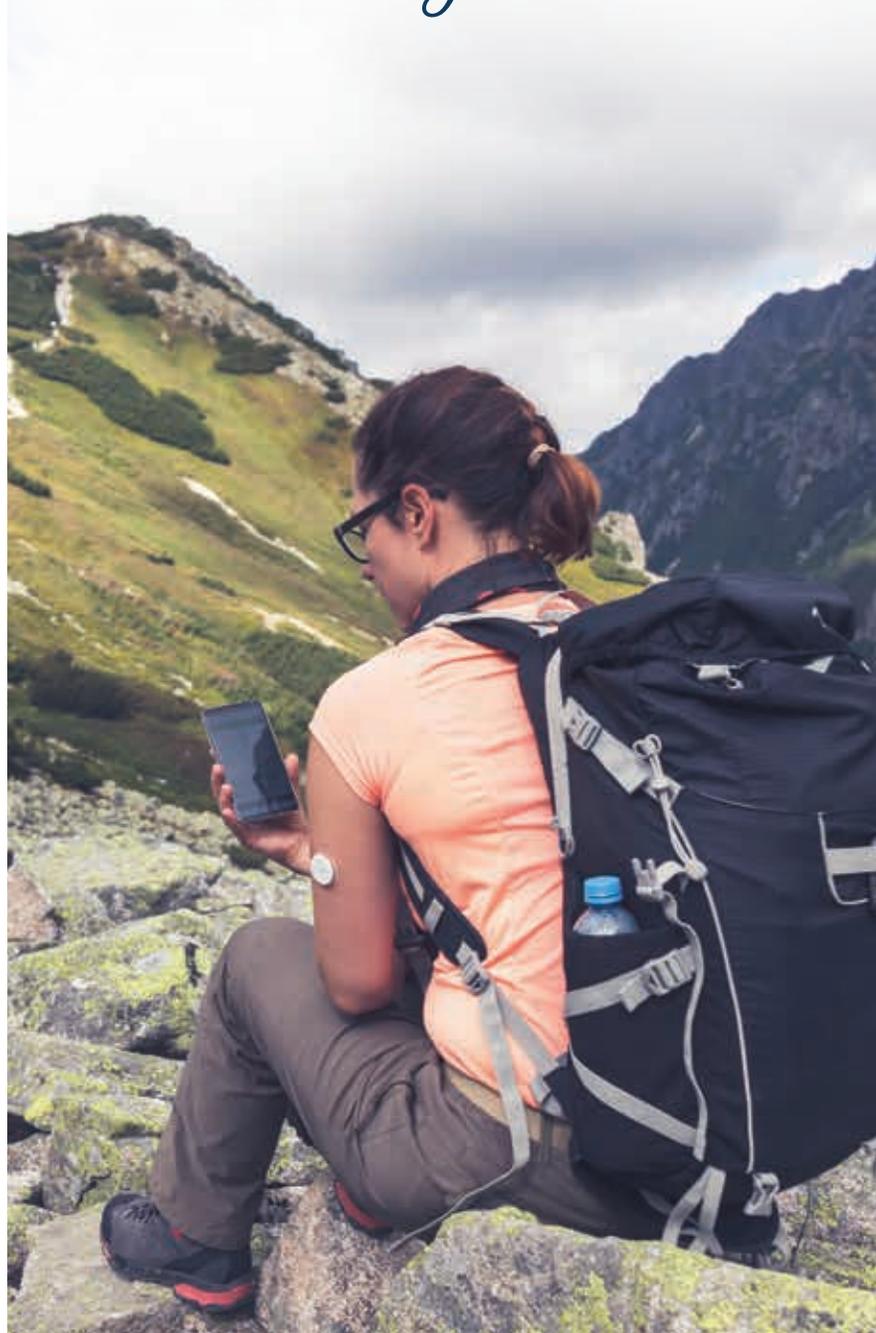
Join at [omadahealth.com/mnps](https://omadahealth.com/mnps).

Omada's science-based approach helps shift your mindset and change your health, with all the motivation you need along the way. You'll get a plan built around you that includes:

- Dedicated health coach and care team
- Wifi-connected devices, like a smart scale, to track your progress (and keep for good)
- Interactive lessons and online community

Whatever healthy means to you, Omada helps you get there — at no cost to you.\*

\* Omada is offered to retirees and their adult dependents enrolled in the Certificated Retiree Health Plan who are under age 65 and not yet eligible for Medicare.



**Reminder:** The MNPS Health Care Centers can help you and your family members manage diabetes. Office visits are no cost to those covered by the Certificated Retiree Health Plan. Medications and supplies required to manage diabetes are also covered at no cost through your prescription drug benefits. But that's not all. This flier, available at [MNPSBenefits.org/diabetes](https://MNPSBenefits.org/diabetes), provides a round-up of all the diabetes resources MNPS offers. Call **615-259-8755** to make an appointment at one of our five MNPS Health Care Centers.

# Open Saturdays at Berry Hill!

## FITNESS CENTER

Monday-Friday | 5:30 a.m. - 7 p.m.  
Saturday | 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.



IN THE MNPS  
**EMPLOYEE  
WELLNESS  
CENTER**  
AT BERRY HILL  
2694 FESSEY CT.

## HEALTH CARE CENTER

Monday-Friday | 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.  
Saturday | 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Same day appointments often available. Call 615-259-8755.



## KROGER PHARMACY

Monday-Friday | 7:30 a.m. - 7 p.m.  
Saturday | 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.



# Convenient care at all locations

The Vanderbilt Health at MNPS Employee & Family Health Care Centers provide a wide range of primary and acute care services for you and your family members:

- Minor illnesses and injuries
- Lab tests and blood work
- Immunizations, including flu shots
- Annual and sports physicals
- Women's and men's health
- Child/adolescent health
- Health coaching
- Chronic condition management
- Behavioral health screenings

Retirees and their family members enrolled in the Certificated Retiree Health Plan may use all MNPS Health Care Centers at no cost/copy. Exception: Cigna Medicare Advantage enrollees must pay their regular copays.

### CENTRAL

Employee Wellness Center at Berry Hill  
2694 Fessey Court,  
Nashville

M-F 7 a.m.-7 p.m.  
Sat. 8 a.m.-2 p.m.

### NORTHEAST

Two Rivers Middle  
2995 McGavock Pike,  
Nashville

M-F 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

### NORTH

Taylor Stratton  
Elementary  
306 West Old Hickory  
Blvd., Madison

M-F 7 a.m.-6 p.m.

### SOUTHEAST

Mt. View Elementary  
3812 Murfreesboro  
Road, Antioch

M-F 7 a.m.-5 p.m.

### WEST

Bellevue Middle  
651 Colice Jeanne  
Road, Nashville

M-F 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

Learn more at [MNPSHealth.org](http://MNPSHealth.org)  
For an appointment, call **615-259-8755**



**Vanderbilt Health**  
at Metro Nashville Public Schools  
Employee & Family Health Care Centers



# That Uncomfortable Conversation

STIs are hard to talk about, easy to treat



By Kim Gill and Bethany Malone, MNPS Health Care Centers

Here's a topic that's likely at the top of your "uncomfortable things to discuss" list: sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

The reluctance to discuss them is certainly understandable. But because STIs are a significant health problem, it's vital to understand the issues they cause and how to prevent them in the first place.

## STIs defined

There are eight common STIs: chlamydia, trichomoniasis, herpes simplex virus type 2, human papillomavirus (HPV), syphilis, gonorrhea, HIV and hepatitis B virus (HBV). Of those, the first four combined accounted for 93% of all new STIs in 2018.

Chlamydia and gonorrhea are two of the most common STIs, and rates for both continue to increase. The good news: Both infections are treatable with antibiotics prescribed by your healthcare provider.

## STI symptoms

STIs may not have any symptoms. As a result, they can go undetected, which increases the risk of infecting others. If undetected, they also go untreated, which can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, chronic pelvic pain, cervical cancer, chronic infection and liver disease.

If you do have chlamydia or gonorrhea symptoms, they might not appear until several weeks after you were exposed to the infection. They include abnormal discharge and burning when urinating.

## STI prevention

If you're sexually active, proper condom use is the only way to prevent STIs.

## Get screened

It's crucial to know your status and have a conversation with your partner before becoming sexually active.

The MNPS Health Care Centers can screen for and treat all STIs. We also provide Pap smears for cervical cancer screening. Call **615-259-8755** today to make an appointment.

## STI STATS IN THE U.S.

- 1 in 5 Americans have an STI.
- 55% of all new STI cases in 2019 were in 15- to 24-year-olds.
- Chlamydia cases jumped by 1.8 million in 2019.
- Gonorrhea cases increased 92% nationwide since 2009.
- Tennessee ranked 10th highest in gonorrhea and 12th highest in chlamydia cases in 2019.

Sources: uptodate.com; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

# MNRTA: Worth your dues and more!

MNRTA — the Metropolitan Nashville Retired Teachers Association — does so much!

We:

- Promote fellowship among retirees of the Metro school system
- Lobby to maintain and improve the benefits reflected in our pension checks and medical insurance
- Promote activities of community service by:
  - » Awarding broad-based services to students and their families
  - » Generating funds to offer scholarships to MNPS graduates who are committed to what most of us spend our life's work doing: teaching school

Throughout the pandemic, we worked — carefully and cautiously — to monitor the work of the Tennessee General Assembly and the work of our own Administrative Retirement Committee and Insurance Trust. We're emerging with no major setbacks in either area.

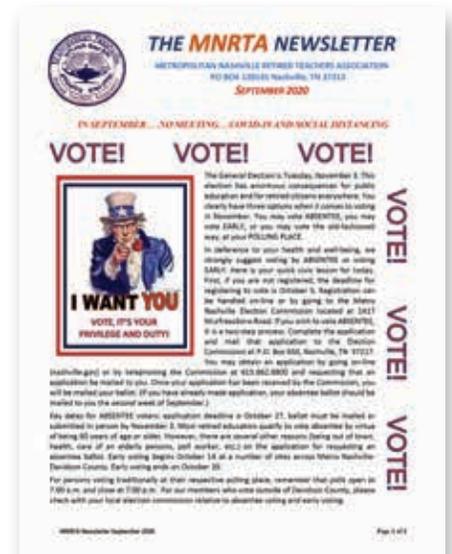
And we just awarded four scholarships to graduates of White's Creek,

Glenclyff, Hume Fogg and McGavock high schools.

Although the fellowship many of us treasure has been missing for the last 14 months, we're set to resume face-to-face meetings in July. We typically gather six times a year, and members receive our award-winning MNRTA newsletter six times a year.

Take pride in your retired status. Join your colleagues today in MNRTA!

Sincerely,  
The MNRTA Board



## Join MNRTA today

If you're not an MNRTA member, you should be. Our dues are minimal (about \$6 a month). The return on your investment for your retirement is worth it.

Go to [MNPSBenefits.org/retiree-mnrta](https://MNPSBenefits.org/retiree-mnrta). Click on the form to download it. Then complete and return it to the address on the form.

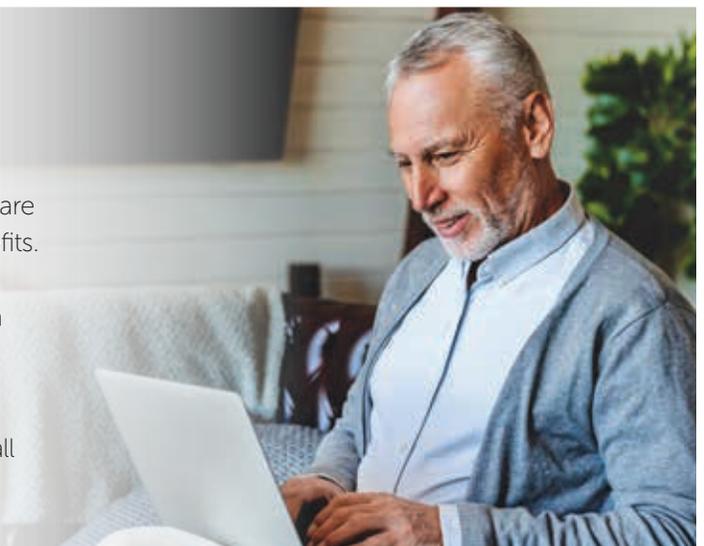
No need to send a personal check; you can have your dues deducted from your monthly pension check.

## Got Medicare?

# Take action!

When you become eligible for Medicare, you must enroll for Medicare parts A and B — even if you're not yet receiving Social Security benefits. You do not need to enroll in a Part D plan outside of your MNPS benefits package because prescription drug benefits are included in your MNPS retiree medical plan.

Send Employee Benefit Services a copy of your Medicare card as soon as you receive it. If you have questions about your benefits, call Employee Benefit Services at **615-259-8464** or **615-259-8648**.





METROPOLITAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF  
NASHVILLE DAVIDSON COUNTY  
2601 BRANSFORD AVENUE  
NASHVILLE, TN 37204-2811

**EMPLOYEE BENEFIT SERVICES**

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EAT > SLEEP > RESET  
summer webinar series

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EMPLOYEE BENEFIT SERVICES

**MNPSBenefits.org** | Email: [benefits@mnp.org](mailto:benefits@mnp.org) | **615-259-8464** or **615-259-8648**

Office hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

## Health plan premiums for 2021-2022

The following premium deductions are effective with your July pension check.

Plan*	With or without Medicare A and B	Monthly premium (per member)
Cigna Medicare Surround with Cigna-HealthSpring Rx (PDP)	Retiree and/or spouse with Medicare A and B	\$136.01/member
Cigna-HealthSpring Medicare Advantage with Part D drug coverage	Retiree and/or spouse with Medicare A and B	\$51.00/member
Cigna Medical Plan	Retiree or spouse without Medicare	\$216.43/member
	Dependent child without Medicare	\$92.10/dependent child

\* All plans include dental coverage through Delta Dental, vision coverage through EyeMed and hearing coverage through Cigna/Amplifon.

### Have questions about your premiums?

Contact Employee Benefit Services at **615-259-8464** or **615-259-8648**.

## COLA increase for 2021

If you have been retired for at least 12 months, you will receive a 1.4% cost-of-living (COLA) increase in your retirement pension payments. This increase will be reflected in your July 31, 2021 pension check.

