

SWELL LETTER

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Natalee Berg Travels to Romania



My friend, that I met through volunteering with English as a Second Language 25 years ago, invited me to go with her to Romania and Istanbul for 5 weeks. The climate is similar to ours, so harvest and fall festivals were happening. Most of the time we stayed at three different homes of her two sisters and niece.

The Bucharest condo was in the large concrete buildings, built during the communist era to house workers near their work. The metro area has over 2.3 million people. We could quickly be on the subway, trolley or bus lines. Amazing organic markets were close by and less expensive than the grocery stores. There were beautiful parks and tree covered sidewalks to walk on with no smell of pollution due to all the trees!

The farm we were at was near the border with Moldova. We were there when the Eastern European storms hit. So much flooding with homes, roads, train tracks, and bridges destroyed. When the rain let up, we enjoyed walking around the area of Stanilesti and Husi. The couple there survived on 3 acres, raising their food, food for the animals and selling cheese, eggs and honey. The average dairy farmer

has 2 to 5 milk cows. They had 2 cows, 2 bulls, 2 calves, 1 sow, 4 piglets, chickens and bees. There was a greenhouse, vineyard, a huge vegetable garden, fruit trees, hay and corn. All work was by hand. I enjoyed helping milk the cows by hand and helping with vegetable preservation. They had a modern bathroom that had a water heater heated by wood or a solar system when sunny. They had a stove heated by wood to heat the home and cook with. There was electricity too. This was a very interesting experience for me and was like stepping back in time. Everything was used in some way, nothing wasted. We enjoyed traditional music and dancing on the farm at night!

I enjoyed a side trip to the Black Sea, and it was a strange feeling putting my feet in the water that also goes to the shores of Ukraine and Russia. I attended the National Folk festival where the music and dancing were wonderful. We met up with four others from Dubuque and two Romanians in Istanbul, Turkey, for a couple days to explore there. That was so interesting. I also went with them to the mountains and stayed in a Romanian Orthodox Monastery there where we had adventures and hikes.



I learned a lot of geography, history and some Romanian, as well as experienced so much generosity and new culture on this trip. The food was delicious. The hardest thing was that most of the time no one spoke English except my friend. I'm thankful for Google translate and my dictionary/phrasebook!



Chuck and Dawn Andracchio Western Vacation 2024



We arrived at East Glacier Lodge, Thursday/August 29th, and met my cousin and his wife for lunch. The previous day it had snowed 12” but by the time we were done with lunch the roads were open. Glacier Park has the most dramatic mountains and with the snow still visible, you could clearly see the rocks and



how they had been moved 10 to 40 degrees from the horizon. We followed them through a portion of Glacier Park and the next day we took a Red Bus tour through the park and got a thorough history from our driver. The roads through Glacier can be extremely narrow and winding as you traverse the mountains so the bus driver took his time, and we took lots of photos as shown. From Glacier we drove to Yellowstone Park, entering from the north gate at Gardiner, Montana. As we waited our turn to enter, a herd of about 25-30 elk greeted us from about 50-75 yards away. In fact, Dawn had a conversation with a young elk as it bellowed at her and she back to him. (see photo below).

We drove to Mammoth Hots Springs for a hike and look around the vast array of hot springs. As many may know, Yellowstone has more geysers and hot springs than the rest of the world combined. We

drove near lots of bison, antelope and moose as we meandered our way around the park. We spent time at Old Faithful and witnessed three bison simply laying around that area. From there we drove north to my favorite site, the Prismatic Pool. This blazing hot pool, about the size of a football field, was absolutely the most colorful body of water imaginable. It was a clear day with no wind so we could see orange, blue, green and other blended colors at various depths within the pool of extremely hot liquid.

From there we drove south in the Tetons and stayed at Teton Village, which is basically the sleeping quarters for Jackson Hole Ski resort. The entire trip was planned around this location as our nephew was married at Jackson Hole on Saturday, September 7. We had to take a gondola ride to get to the outside wedding and reception and the resort has some beautiful buildings awaiting our arrival. (see pictures below).



Annalee and Mark Ward



Mark and Annalee Ward joined SWELL in September of 2024, following their retirement from UD. Mark was born and raised in Newton, Iowa, and Annalee in Denver, Colorado. They met in an elevator in Denver, after their paths had almost crossed three times before - in Iowa, California, and Michigan. They spent the first 30 years of their married life in the Southwest Suburbs of Chicago, teaching at Trinity Christian College. In 2021, they moved to Dubuque to join the University of Dubuque: Mark as Vice President for Academic Affairs and Annalee as Director of the Wendt Center for Character Education.

The Wards have two children: their son is married and lives in Dubuque with his wife and three boys and their daughter lives in Park Ridge, Illinois with her husband and their boy and girl. Mark and Annalee's second retirement goal (after first joining SWELL) is to travel. They recently visited the Netherlands to trace their ancestors visited Chile in November to see where a friend started his priesthood among the poor in Santiago.

Ellec Armstead Spring 2025 SWELL intern



Ellec Armstead (C'25), recipient of the Sergeant Jeffrey B. Dodge Scholarship, is an exceptional cadet in the Iowa Army National Guard. Throughout her military and academic career, she has demonstrated outstanding leadership and resilience. Despite facing challenges during training, Ellec has excelled in both ROTC and athletics, embodying the true spirit of service.

Upon graduating in 2025 with a degree in Wellness and Exercise Science, Ellec will be commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

We are thrilled to announce that Ellec will also be our 2025 Spring SWELL intern. We are fortunate to have such a strong, structured, and disciplined individual joining our team. Her experience as a future U.S. Army officer will undoubtedly bring a unique perspective to her role as a wellness and exercise science instructor and to the SWELL program.

Jim & Charlotte Halverson



Jim & Charlotte Halverson became enthused SWELL members beginning in October 2024.

Jim - retired from John Deere's and then worked for Green Industrial for several years. He is a busy St Vincent de Paul volunteer.

Charlotte a retired (mostly) from a career in nursing - still teaching agricultural health for community health care providers (that farm background comes in handy).

Family: five adult children and spouses and nine grandchildren. Two families live in Dubuque, two in the northern California Bay area, and one family in Toronto, Ontario. We try to spend time with them as often as possible. We don't have pets but have several grand dogs that we "babysit" from time to time!

Our favorite things about SWELL are the social connection with new faces and also reacquainting with folks we have known for a long time ... and a great way to start the day!

Be Well Be SWELL

As I walk around the CRWC before we start class, surrounded by the energy of the SWELL community, I am struck by the profound truth that our most precious gifts in life are the bonds of friendship and family. Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday we eagerly anticipate the chance to reconnect with dear friends, sharing stories and laughter as we stroll the indoor track. We are fortunate to have escaped the possible boredom of sitting at home, instead, revel in the simple joy of human connection.

The Cleveland Clinic's research underscores the significant impact of work on mental health. While employment can provide structure, purpose, and social interaction, it also comes with its share of stress. By retiring and pursuing our passions, we've chosen a path that prioritizes our well-being and allows us to nurture deeper connections.

Many of us dedicate our time to volunteer work and actively participate in the SWELL community, fostering friendships. We gather for picnics, concerts, and plays, creating lasting memories and strengthening our bonds.

Inspired by Dean Koontz's heartwarming memoir, "A Big Little Life," we witness the pure joy and unconditional love of a dog named Trixie. Her simple pleasures remind us that true happiness lies not in material possessions but in the warmth of human connection.

It fills my heart with gratitude to see the countless ways in which we support one another. We are truly fortunate to have found such a wonderful community. Without these cherished friendships, we might find ourselves isolated and alone. As the holiday season approaches, let us express our thanks not only for the blessings we possess but also for the invaluable friendships that enrich our lives.

Ultimately, it is the intangible connections we forge with others that truly matter. As we continue to embrace each day,

let us count our blessings and cherish the friendships that fuel our spirits and inspire us to live life to the fullest.



A Remarkable SWELL Nurse Phyllis Hoerner

Phyllis Rose Hoerner, 90, passed away on November 23, 2024, with her family by her side, at Stonehill Health Center in Dubuque.

Phyllis Hoerner, a woman of exceptional strength and independence, continued to lead a rich and fulfilling life long after the passing of her husband, John, nearly 25 years ago. A former member of SWELL, she was the mother of Lisa Wittman and my mother-in-law.

Phyllis, a lifelong nurse and mother, recently received the Hospice of Dubuque Certificate of Excellence and was featured in the Fall 2024 Hospice of Dubuque publication, "A Nurse's Story." Phyllis dedicated her career to patient care, working at Xavier and Mercy hospitals, and Hospice of Dubuque before retiring in 2009.

As the article aptly states, "Once a nurse, always a nurse." Even after retirement, Phyllis continued to serve as a volunteer at Hospice. In her final months, she found joy in mentoring young interns and nurses at Stone Hill, offering guidance and support.



Whenever Lisa and I faced concerns about a sick or injured child, Phyllis calmly provided reassurance and practical advice. Her unwavering commitment to the nursing profession truly embodied the spirit of the Florence Nightingale Pledge.

Phyllis lived a life of purity, faithfulness, and determined dedication for the welfare of others. She was a remarkable sister, wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and friend, always holding herself to the highest standards of confidence and loyalty.

Lisa and Bill followed Phyllis's example of enduring loyalty, visiting her daily during her final challenging years.

A quote from Venessa Woodworth Director of Nursing at Stone Hill 3rd floor.

"Oh Philly, my heart wasn't quite ready for God to call you home, but I'd be selfish to wish you lived forever. I am forever thankful for the laughter and smiles you shared with us. I've been thinking about some of my favorite things the last couple of days. I could go on and on, but I think my favorite thing of all was the day you told me Phyllis "There will be a lot of bad days, but there will be good days too, and being a nurse is always worth it. In your final days I asked you if you were ready to go home and you said, "I think so" and then went on to tell me, your nurse brain has "finally retired."

"I hope you've met all of the patients you saved in heaven, and that you're watching over all of us down here with your rosy cheeks. Until we meet again, Philly girl. Fly high."

A deeply spiritual woman, Phyllis never missed Sunday Mass and lived her life as an exemplary Christian. In her final weeks, she received Communion at Stone Hill chapel.

The Gospel reading shared during Phyllis's last week, John 18:33-37, speaks to her commitment to truth and faith. "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth, listens to my voice."

Rejoice, Phyllis! Today, you meet Jesus, your King.

--Gary

2024 Fall SWELL Intern Hunter Snyder



I have learned so much from these last few months of being an intern for the SWELL program. First of all, I have learned a lot about my body and how it works with simple body weight exercises that I can incorporate into my daily life as I age. I have also learned a lot about meditation and how it relaxes you and your body. Meditation can improve sleep and stress as well. Tai Chi is a form of meditation we use in SWELL too, and I learned that Tai Chi can actually lower your blood pressure. When it comes to Tai Chi, I have learned 2 of the forms that Gary has taught in our classes.

I was nervous at first coming in and said that I only needed an internship as a requirement to graduate, but as I have progressed through the fall semester, I have really enjoyed being an intern and learning how to make my life easier as I age.

I have gotten to know so many people over the semester, and it's amazing because I'm not really an outgoing person, and this internship has gotten me out of my shell a little bit. But my favorite thing about the SWELL internship is hearing all the feedback from the wonderful people who believed in me when I didn't believe in myself when it came to teaching the portions of the class for the first time. This is something I will remember for the rest of my life, and I will always cherish the moments I was able to get with everyone.

Thank you, Gary, for allowing me to be an intern and telling me I was doing great and giving me a reason to continue studying the class, such as Tai Chi, and pushing me to become better.

Social Connection

Wednesday December 11, 2024, 9:00 AM after SWELL class "Hat Contest, prizes to the top 3.
We need to beat last year's Record Attendance of 148.

Last year's winners.

<p>1st Mary Hoelscher Peace on Earth</p> 	<p>2nd John Richey I fell into a Christmas tree</p> 	<p>3rd Claudette Bees Christmas Bees by Claudette</p> 
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Saturday, March 22nd, 7:30 PM Heritage Center Spring Musical Theatre Production of "Assassins"



Healthy Pumpkins Bars by Karen Knepper



Ingredients

4 eggs (beat with a fork or the mixer)
1/2 cup oil AND 1/2 cup applesauce
1/2 cup pure maple syrup
1 can of Libby's pumpkin (15 oz)
Pinch of salt
2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice OR cinnamon
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder
1 1/2 cups flour
1/2 cup whole wheat flour

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees.

Combine the first 4 ingredients and set aside.

In another bowl, combine all the dry ingredients and stir with a fork or whisk to evenly distribute the ingredients.

Add the dry ingredients to the eggs/oil/applesauce/maple syrup/pumpkin mixture and mix together until all the dry ingredients are moistened. I usually use the mixer and when most of the ingredients are moistened, I finish mixing by hand. (do not overmix).

Place batter in a greased and floured jelly roll or cookie sheet pan. (I use Pam baking spray with flour.)

Bake in a 350-degree oven for 25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center of the pan comes out clean. Cool pumpkin bars before icing.

Cream Cheese Icing for Pumpkin Bars

I use Pillsbury cream cheese frosting. I usually buy the 1/2 size container of frosting because some people prefer to enjoy their pumpkin bars without frosting or with whip cream as a topping instead.

Serving tip: To cleanly cut the pumpkin bars (and other bars like brownies), use a plastic knife.

NOTE:

1. The original recipe called for 1 cup of oil, and I found that substituting a 1/2 cup of unsweetened applesauce did not affect the flavor or look of the pumpkin bars.

2. The original recipe also called for 2 cups of sugar. Recently I substituted 1/2 cup of pure maple syrup for 2 cups of sugar. I discovered the bars taste fine with this substitution, but they are thinner, and the batter can be a little on the thick side. Adding a tablespoon of applesauce helps if the batter is too thick. I also would suggest using a cookie sheet which is a little smaller than a jelly roll pan to help keep the bars from being too thin.



Healthy Recipe By Leo and Emma

Twice Baked Mashed Potatoes

The Wittman family said that the twice baked mashed potatoes were the best yet.

Prep Time 15 minutes mins

Cook Time 50 minutes mins

Total Time 1 hour 5 minutes mins

Servings 20

Calories 200 per serving

Ingredients X 2

6 pounds Yukon gold potatoes

8 cloves garlic

3 cup shredded cheddar cheese, divided use

8 ounces light cream cheese, softened

1 cup light sour cream

0.5 cup chopped cooked bacon

0.5 cup diced green onion

1 teaspoon Mrs. Dash

0.5 teaspoon ground black pepper

Instructions

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly coat a 9-by-13-inch casserole pan with nonstick spray and set aside.

Peel and dice potatoes. Place potatoes and garlic into a large pot and cover with water by 2-3 inches. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and cook until easily pierced with a fork, 15-20 minutes.

Drain potatoes and garlic and place back in the pot or a large bowl. Mash with a potato masher or pass through a potato ricer. Add 1 cup cheddar cheese and the sour cream, cream cheese, salt, and pepper. Stir until evenly incorporated and cream cheese has melted. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed.

Spoon potatoes into prepared pan and smooth the top. Sprinkle on remaining cheese, bacon, and green onion. Bake for 30 minutes, until warmed through and cheese has melted.





A Season of Renewal: Cultivate Wellness, Even in Winter

As many of you prepare to embark on your winter journeys southward, we invite you to consider a proactive approach to maintaining your well-being. By subscribing to our Patreon page, you can seamlessly transition into the winter months, preserving your fitness and vitality.

For a modest monthly fee of just \$2, you will unlock a treasure trove of resources designed to enhance your physical and mental health:

- **Dynamic Workouts:** Continue your fitness journey with invigorating routines inspired by our University of Dubuque live classes.
- **Serene Tai Chi:** Experience the profound benefits of Tai Chi through our step-by-step video tutorials.
- **Deep Relaxation:** Immerse yourself in guided meditations and healing imagery to promote tranquility and rejuvenation.

By harnessing the power of mind-body harmony, you can return to our community in the spring, refreshed and ready to embark on a new chapter of personal growth.

<https://www.patreon.com/TensionZen>

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Thanks to those who submitted wonderful articles to our SWELL newsletter.