

SWELL LETTER
February 2024 Volume 4, Issue 2

Enrique Santamaria

Our daughter Maya's family. They live in Minnesota



My name is Enrique Santamaria. I've been in the SWELL program for about six months. I was born and raised in Mexico City, Mexico, where I spent the first 20 years of my life. I met my wife Lana while she was studying in Mexico. I came to the United States some months later to begin my college education. Lana and I married a year later in Hawaii and completed our bachelor's degrees at the University of Hawaii. We pursued our graduate studies at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, where we finished our Masters and Doctorate degrees in Latin American Studies. During those years, we also welcomed our home two daughters Maya and Mara. While we were working on our degrees, we traveled extensively throughout Latin America

Daughter Mara and her husband Andrea near their southern California and Spain. Upon graduation, we taught in New Mexico, Michigan, and Oklahoma. We came to the University of Dubuque in 1981. At the



University of Dubuque, I was the head of the Foreign Language and International Studies Department. In that capacity, I traveled extensively throughout Asia, Europe, and Latin America. For the past 35 years, we have lived south of Dubuque on a hobby farm where we have raised llamas, horses, Shetland sheep, and, of course, plenty of dogs. Lana and I made extended, overseas horse-riding treks in Europe, North Africa, Canada, and Northern California for some years, in addition to many other overseas pleasure trips with our daughters and two grandchildren. Travel has always been a passion of our family. At this time my main hobbies are playing racket ball, tennis, and I belong to a softball group that plays weekly during the summer.

Dear SWELL Class,

Many of you have known my mom, Doris Wittman, through her decades of dedication to health and wellness at Wittman's Nutrition Center. While she's no longer with us, sister-in-law Sherri now runs the store. her passion for living well continues to inspire me and, hopefully, all of you.

Mom wasn't just a health expert; she was an embodiment of her philosophies. Two of her guiding principles, inherited from her immigrant father, resonated deeply: using your talents to help others, and cherishing the unwavering bond of family. Witnessing her live these principles every day profoundly shaped me.

When her mental health began to decline with dementia, my family struggled to find ways to support her continued growth and contribution. Despite her physical strength and vibrant spirit, her mind was slipping away at age 86. It was heartbreaking to see her mental health decline when she was capable of reaching age 100, physically, a milestone associated with the legendary "Blue Zone" of exceptional longevity.

This experience spurred my own journey into the world of brain health. Research from leading institutions pointed towards a powerful trio: exercise, healthy eating, and a dedicated focus on mental well-being. This is where meditation stepped in, alongside practices like Tai Chi and mental imagery.

I began teaching these techniques at the University, and the results were astounding. Students experiencing stress and anxiety found significant improvements through practices that nurtured their mental health through Tension Zen meditation and Tai Chi.

This is why I continue to mention the importance of meditation and Tai Chi in SWELL. We're already doing great with exercise, but brain health deserves equal attention. Don't wait for memory lapses to kick in before acting. Remember, prevention is powerful, and the benefits of mental training are immense.

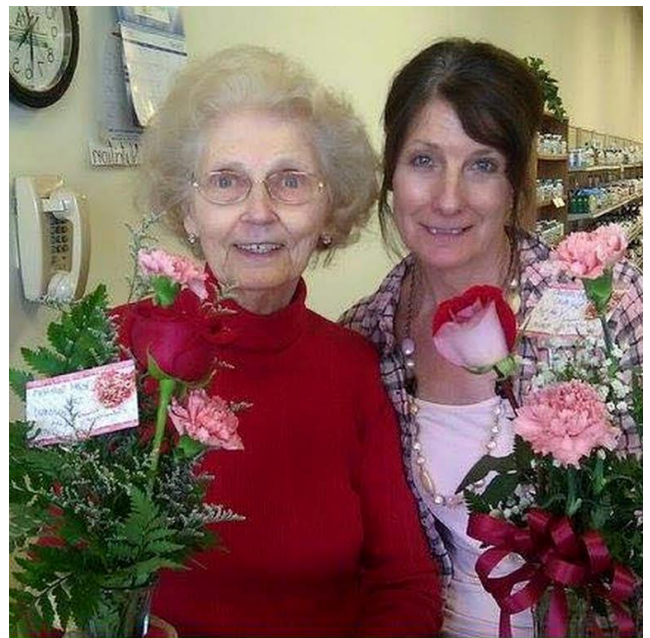
Imagine living to 100, not just in body, but with a sharp mind and a heart full of purpose. Imagine continuing to connect with loved ones, contribute to your community, and experience life to the fullest. This is the "Blue Zone" promise, and it's within reach – but it requires investment in our mental well-being.

Let's make SWELL a space where we prioritize brain health alongside physical fitness. Let's explore meditation, Tai Chi, and other practices together, ensuring we not only reach 100, but thrive every step of the way.

Remember, it's never too early to start building a resilient mind. Let's honor Doris Wittman's legacy by taking care of ourselves, both inside and out, and embracing the full potential of life.

With hope and encouragement,

Gary



Tension Release and Meditation for Dementia Prevention and Improved Sleep: Evidence from Mayo and Cleveland Clinics

Both tension release techniques and meditation have been linked to potential benefits for preventing dementia and improving sleep quality. Here's a look at the evidence from Mayo Clinic and Cleveland Clinic:

- **Tension Release for Dementia Prevention:**

Stress Reduction and Dementia: Mayo Clinic acknowledges the link between chronic stress and increased risk of dementia, suggesting that tension release techniques like yoga, deep breathing, and progressive muscle relaxation may offer some protective benefits [1]. However, more research is needed to establish a definitive causal relationship.

Cleveland Clinic on Stress and Brain Health: Similarly, Cleveland Clinic emphasizes the negative impact of chronic stress on brain health and cognitive function and stresses relaxing the body can prevent dementia through deep sleep.

- **Meditation for Dementia Prevention:**

Mayo Clinic on Meditation and Brain Health: Mayo Clinic highlights research suggesting that meditation may help preserve cognitive function and potentially reduce the risk of dementia, particularly mindfulness meditation [3]. The potential mechanisms include stress reduction, improved focus, and increased brain plasticity.

Cleveland Clinic on Meditation for Brain Health: Cleveland Clinic also acknowledges the potential benefits of meditation for brain health, citing studies that show it may improve memory, attention, and cognitive flexibility [4]. They recommend mindfulness meditation as a starting point.

- **Tension Release for Improved Sleep:**

Mayo Clinic on Relaxation Techniques for Sleep: Mayo Clinic recommends relaxation techniques like deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and guided imagery for improving sleep quality [5]. These techniques can help quiet the mind, reduce muscle tension, and promote feelings of calmness.

Cleveland Clinic on Sleep Hygiene and Relaxation: Cleveland Clinic emphasizes the importance of good sleep hygiene practices and includes relaxation techniques like meditation and yoga as part of their recommendations [6]. They suggest incorporating these practices into a regular bedtime routine to promote better sleep.

- **Meditation for Improved Sleep:**

Mayo Clinic on Meditation for Sleep: Mayo Clinic recognizes the effectiveness of meditation, particularly mindfulness meditation, for improving sleep quality [7]. Meditation can help quiet racing thoughts, reduce anxiety, and promote relaxation, leading to better sleep.

Cleveland Clinic on Meditation for Sleep: Cleveland Clinic also recommends meditation as a tool for improving sleep, highlighting its ability to reduce stress and anxiety, which can interfere with sleep [8]. They suggest practicing meditation for 10-20 minutes before bed for optimal benefit.

Citations and References:

1. Mayo Clinic. (2023, November 17). Dementia. <https://mcpress.mayoclinic.org/product/mayo-clinic-on-alzheimers-and-other-dementias/>
2. Cleveland Clinic. (2022, May 19). Chronic Stress Can Damage Your Brain +- Health. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/protect-your-brain-from-stress>
3. Mayo Clinic. (2023, June 23). Meditation. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/meditation/about/pac-20385120>
4. Cleveland Clinic. (2023, October 26). Meditation. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/podcasts/health-essentials/the-power-of-body-scan-meditation>
5. Mayo Clinic. (2023, November 10). Can't sleep? Relaxation techniques for better sleep. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene/relaxation-exercises-to-help-fall-asleep>
6. Cleveland Clinic. (2023, November 17). Sleep hygiene tips: 7 steps to a better night's sleep. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/sleep-hygiene>
7. Mayo Clinic. (2023, June 23). Meditation. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/meditation/about/pac-20385120>
8. Cleveland Clinic. (2023, October 26). Meditation. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/podcasts/health-essentials/the-power-of-body-scan-meditation>

Additional Notes:

Both Mayo and Cleveland Clinic offer a wealth of resources on stress management, sleep hygiene, and meditation techniques. Click on some of the references and learn more about how we are advancing in the treatment of brain health at the two top hospital and research clinics in the world. –Gary

Cathy Roddick



I am Cathy Roddick, and I joined this past October and really enjoy the sessions. I live with my husband of 24 years on a farm north of Balltown. We have 2 very spoiled dogs, 10 Scottish Highland cattle, and a small flock of Guinea fowl. I am a Loras College alumni and the pleasure of being among the first few women to attend classes there. I have worked at a few places in my life, including Dubuque Pack and John Deere. I was in the U.S. Naval Reserve for 8 years and got the travel bug from my duties there. I am now semi-retired and work part time at my retirement job of being a massage therapist. I love to take pictures of nature, especially sunrise and sunsets. I am looking forward to spring and warmer weather.



Article submitted by Michael Larkin

At 93, he's as fit as a 40-year-old. His body offers lessons on aging.

The human body maintains the ability to adapt to exercise at any age, showing that it's never too late to start a fitness program.



This article offers evidence of the transformative power of SWELL. Many of us have embraced exercise later in life and are experiencing a remarkable rejuvenation. Richard Morgan is a shining example of this. As members of SWELL, you've shared how your doctors are astounded by your annual checkups, prompting the question, "What are you doing?" And our answer is a resounding, "I'm doing SWELL!" Be well, be SWELL!

At 93, this Irish gentleman is a four-time world champion in indoor rowing, boasting the cardiovascular system of a healthy 30- or 40-year-old and the body fat percentage of a whippet. He's even the subject of a recent case study published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology*, examining his training, diet, and physiology.

Richard Morgan is on his way towards the "Blue Zone" – a region with exceptional longevity. He embodies the youthful vitality of someone half his age. Yet, he remains relatable: a former baker and battery maker with creaky knees who only embraced regular exercise in his 70s and still trains primarily in his backyard shed.

It's truly unfortunate that individuals like Richard Morgan leave us in awe. As Americans, we've undermined our health with inadequate exercise, poor dietary choices, and social isolation. At SWELL, reaching 90 is becoming increasingly commonplace, and our 80s are not synonymous with frailty. Let's shift our perspective on age, like Richard Morgan, and find ourselves hitting our stride even at 93! **Reviewed by Gary Wittman**

Read full article <https://wapo.st/47KAZyU>

Paul Uzel



Born in upstate New Jersey, with my adolescence in central Florida, nearly decade in western Michigan and a few years in Miami, Iowa became home in 1981. It was only after moving here that I realized I have many relatives IN Iowa, literally. They are buried in Cedar Rapids, Tama, Swisher, northern Linn County and other places! Actually, alive in Iowa are my three children, Jon (Angela, in DBQ), Joe (Chandelle in WDSM) and Ora (DBQ), and four grandchildren, two grandsons living in DBQ and a granddaughter a freshman at ISU and her sister at Stilwell Jr High School in West Des Moines. I also have one younger brother who is a retired Fire Captain/Paramedic and lives with his family in Florida. Joyce and I have been in SWELL now since this past September, but on Wednesdays we are co-leaders of Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS) in the mornings at St. Paul's Lutheran. We have had a variety of pets including our first child, a cat, chinchilla, gerbils, lots of fish and since moving to Iowa a variety of dogs. After changing my career aim from the ministry to medical following one of my younger brother's fatal illness during my adolescence, I discovered that calculus

created a block to that pursuit and returned to pursuing the ministry, moving to Calvin College after two years at the University of Florida. After several years there I was invited to explore other directions and after being a technical writer for a year for a scouting type curriculum, a three plus year stint as a US Immigration Officer in Miami FL, I re-explored the ministry in a lay pastoral post in Marshalltown, supplemented by working as a probation officer. Unable to find a way back to west Michigan, we became Presbyterians, and I settled down into a state social worker position. I was next invited to explore the call to Presbyterian ministry at the Univ. of DBQ Theo. Seminary and attended full and part-time while also working for social services and Hillcrest as a family therapist. While studying and working in Dubuque, I also became heavily involved in local Scouting programs. Upon ordination, I was called to serve an inner-city congregation in Cedar Rapids, a county seat congregation in Carroll, a rural town congregation in Greene, and a suburban congregation in Waterloo. Music has always been a part of my life, from the High School & University band to Barbershop (in Carroll, IA), and many other choirs and singing groups. Upon retiring, we moved to DBQ, settling only a block from where we lived for the first time in DBQ. I am active in politics, am eager to see passenger railroading return between Chicago and Dubuque and beyond, enjoy astronomy and environmentalism. I've enjoyed Tai Chi at SWELL, despite it being a somewhat different form. But having the availability to walk the track is an important part to my wellness and weight reduction. In 2005 I topped out at 340 pounds, and now am down to 259 on my way to 230 pounds, using both Weight Watchers and TOPS (in which my mother was very involved in FL.) I also serve Christ United Presbyterian Church in Oelwein, discovering significant challenges to this urban diverse experienced older pastor!

Joyce Uzel



I was born in East Cleveland, Ohio, and spent the first 5 years of my life on the farm about 10 miles east of Cleveland, where my dad was caretaker. My mother's family lived in and around Cleveland, and there were many relatives to visit often. In 1955, after moving briefly to Kirkwood, PA, my family moved to Zeeland, MI, where I grew up. Both my mother and father have passed and are buried in Zeeland. I have one sister who has spent most of her adult life in Kalamazoo, MI, and we talk at least twice a week on the phone. Paul & I met while I was on a Mission Trip with 5 other girls to his church in Florida, but we did not start dating until we met again at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI in 1970. I went to Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, IL for my freshman year of college, took a year off to

work at a factory, then went back to school at Calvin in Michigan. We were married in June 1971 after Paul graduated college. It took me 2 more years to graduate with a degree in Elementary Education in 1973. During college and beyond, I worked as a Nurse Aide for the Sisters of St Dominic at their motherhouse. I also taught Gym classes one day a week for one term at St Isidore Catholic School. In 1974 while Paul was on an internship in Big Rapids, MI, I taught preschool at our church's daycare center. In 1975, our first child (Jon) was born, followed by Joe in 1977. Then in 1978 we moved to Miami, FL, where Paul worked for the U.S. Immigration Service. In Miami, I briefly worked as a substitute teacher in a private kindergarten for the last six weeks of the school year. Our third child (Ora) was born just before we moved to Iowa. In May of 1981 we moved to Marshalltown, IA. While in Marshalltown I worked for the Dept of Human Services as a Volunteer Coordinator, for the newly organized Churches United group, and also as a cook for Head Start for one year. Then we moved to Dubuque for the first time in 1987. Our kids attended Dubuque Community Schools and became active in local Boy Scout groups. I worked in the office of the Trausch (later Metz, now Bimbo) Bakery. While in Dubuque, our kids and I became involved with Westminster Presbyterian Church & its programs. We stayed until Paul graduated University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in 1992, and we moved to Cedar Rapids, IA., then to Carroll, IA, Greene, IA (Butler Co), and Waterloo, IA before retiring "back" to Dubuque in 2015. In Cedar Rapids, I worked at the Sunbeam Bakery Outlet Stores on 6th St and Mt Vernon Rd. In Carroll, I worked at American Home Shield, a call center for a home warranty company. In Greene, I worked for 2 years as the manager of one of the local convenience stores. Then in 2005 I became a teacher associate for 2 special needs children at Head Start in nearby Charles City. That experience prompted me to go back to school at UNI for Early Childhood Special Education. From 2006 to 2008 I worked as a substitute associate/teacher for the AEA in Cedar Falls. Then from 2008-2014, I taught Head Start preschool at Tri-County Child and Family Development of Waterloo, retiring in December 2014. Since returning to Dubuque, Paul & I also became involved at Westminster Presbyterian Church. Before COVID I taught Sunday School, sang in the choir, & played handbells. I also served as a deacon for six years. At present I attend church at Christ United Presbyterian Church in Oelwein, where Paul is their stated supply pastor. I have been interested in genealogy for all of my adult life and enjoy keeping track of ancestors on Ancestry.com. I also like keeping in touch with many of my cousins and extended family on Facebook. Together Paul & I enjoy tending a small garden each summer and walking on trails in the area. We enjoy having some family members close by and occasionally get to West Des Moines to see others. We have been attending SWELL since this past September – Mondays and Fridays. I especially like the opportunity to exercise and get in better shape. On Wednesdays, Paul & I am co-leaders of a T.O.P.S. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly) group. We also enjoyed going to the Christmas Concert at U.D. with the SWELL group.

Healthy Recipe by Sue Olson



ZUCCHINI BROWNIES

1/2 cup Avocado Oil
2 tsp. Vanilla extract
1 cup Coconut sugar
1/2 cup cocoa
1 1/2 tsp Baking Soda
2 eggs
1 1/2 cups Organic all-purpose Flour
2 scoops Vanilla Protein Powder = 1/2 cup
(Young Living Balance Complete Meal Replacement)
2 cups Zucchini, grated
Optional: 1/2 cup Walnuts, chopped and 1/2 cup Chocolate Chips
(Lilly or Enjoy Life brands are good choices)

Mix wet ingredients together to blend.
Add dry ingredients and mix to combine.
Add Zucchini and mix to combine.
Place in 2 8 inch pans OR a 13 x 9 inch pan.
If desired sprinkle walnuts and chocolate chips on top.
For a 13 X 9 pan bake 30 - 35 minutes at 325.
For 8-inch pans bake 23 - 25. Minutes at 325.
Cool on a wire rack before cutting and treating yourself!



*Baking in the 2 8-inch pans lets me freeze one pan in a freezer bag, so always ready for drop in guests.

Healthy Recipe by Gary

Skip After-dinner Snack And Drink Hot Tea

How to make a great tea drink and stop snacking after dinner.

You can use any size container you feel comfortable with.
I use a YETI 20 oz tumbler: stainless.

1. Boil water after dinner
2. Add 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
3. Add 1 Bigelow Sweet Dreams herbal tea bag.
4. Fill the tumbler with boiling water and let sit for at least 20 minutes.
5. Squeeze all liquid from tea bag and enjoy this warm drink.

Sip this warm tea drink after dinner and quit snacking. Studies suggesting potential for weight gain

Late-night snacking can be detrimental to your waistline for several reasons. Firstly, it contributes to exceeding your daily calorie needs, paving the way for gradual weight gain (Oakes et al., 2003; Chaput et al., 2012). This is largely due to the tendency to make unhealthy food choices during nighttime snacking, opting for calorie-dense options compared to daytime meals (Park et al., 2015). Furthermore, research suggests that late-night eating may disrupt your body's metabolic processes, potentially causing issues with insulin sensitivity and fat storage (Baron et al., 2016). Therefore, curbing late-night snacking habits can be a valuable strategy for weight management and overall health. Drink my hot tea mix, quit snacking after dinner and get a good night's sleep. You will thank me in the morning.

Chaput, J. P., et al. (2012). Relationship between eating patterns and body weight regulation: a population-based, cross-sectional study. *International Journal of Obesity*, 36(8), 1421-1429.

Park et al., (2015). Meal timing and macronutrient intake affect glucose and insulin dynamics in healthy humans. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 93(5), 830-839.

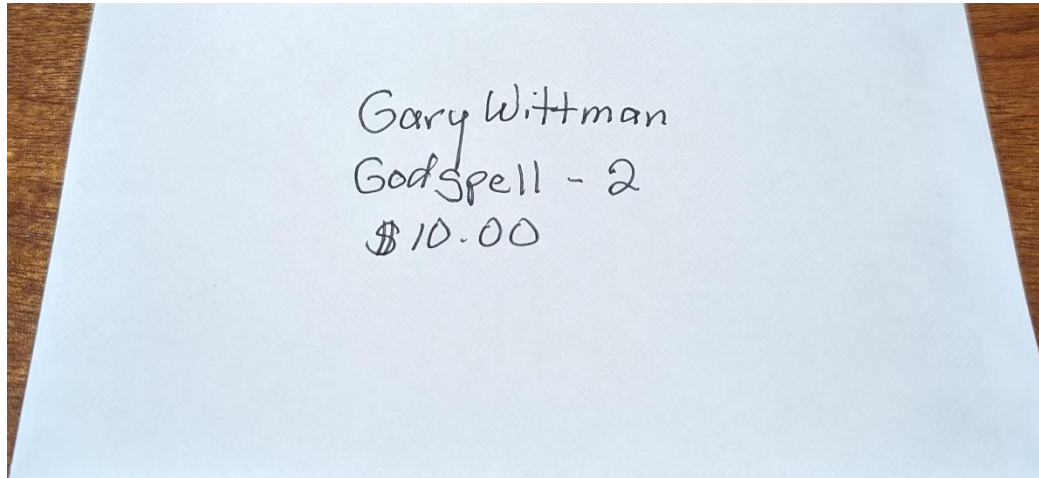
Baron, K. G., et al. (2016). Time-restricted feeding improves indices of insulin sensitivity in metabolically healthy overweight and obese individuals. *Journal of Nutrition*, 146(5), 771-778.



Upcoming performance at the Heritage Center

There will not be a sign-up for performances.

We will submit money in an envelope and hand to Gary.



Saturday March 23, 2024, 7:30 pm

GODSPELL by John-Michael Tebelak and Stephen Schwartz Godspell is the UD Fine Arts Theatre \$5 general admission. **Start collecting Friday February 12th**

2024 Dates

Monday February 19, 2024, No Class

Friday March 29, 2024, Flora Park

Monday May 27, 2024, Flora Park

THE STAFF

- Editor..... Gary Wittman**
- Autobiography..... Enrique Santamaria**
- Autobiography..... Cathy Roddick**
- Autobiography..... Paul Uzel**
- Autobiography..... Joyce Uzel**
- Article Submitted..... Michael Larkin**
- Feature Writer..... Gary Wittman**
- Healthy Recipe..... Sue Olson**
- Healthy Recipe..... Gary Wittman**

We are looking for feature writers each month, try your hand at it.

Suggestions (Vacation or travels, sports, important milestones like anniversaries, and hobbies).

Email articles to: garydonaldwittman@gmail.com