

SWELL NEWSLETTER

June 2022 Volume 2, Issue 6

Patricia Coakley



How long have you belonged to the SWELL program? January 2022

I have 11 nieces and nephews and 19 great nieces and nephews and 3 dogs.

Tell us about your career or work experience. I am an RN. I worked as an Emergency RN for 32 years in San Diego with the last 15 years as the manager of a busy ER that saw between 300-400 patients per day. I returned to Dubuque upon "retiring" from that career. I spent the next five years after returning home as an educator for Unity Point Health travelling all over the state training ER nurses on use of the EPIC electronic record. That experience made me realize that Dubuque really is one of the loveliest cities in Iowa. After that job ended, I took about a year off but realized I missed working so currently I am working at Medical Associates providing telephone advice. What activities do you enjoy? I enjoy needlework, reading, Soduku walking my dogs and spending time with my many nieces and nephews. Also have enjoyed reconnecting

with family and friends since moving back home. Always fun to get together for lunch, dinner, or a fun night of cards. One thing you enjoy about the SWELL exercise program. I enjoy the opportunity to connect with others on this journey to stay healthy.

John Donovan



I joined SWELL after Gary came and spoke at Rotary. I think it was last February.

I live with Natalee Berg as we bought a house together in 2016. No children, no pets. I have three sisters and nine nieces and nephews with many grand nephews and a grandniece.

I had a career with the YMCA of 16 years as a Youth and Camp Director. I moved from Newark, Ohio to Newton, Massachusetts to Tacoma, Washington to Columbus, Ohio to San Jose, CA. I then had a 23-year career consulting with non-profits for capital campaigns. One of those campaigns was for Mercy in Dubuque. In 2008 I moved here to serve as the inaugural executive for the Mercy Health Foundation. I retired in 2017. I enjoy most of what I do. I live to read, run, cook, bake bread, walk, and exercise, volunteering. I write the wine column for Julien's Journal and have danced in the Nutcracker for seven years and the spring ballet the last two years. I enjoy the social interaction with the members. It's wonderful to be among others interested in

taking care of themselves. I helped raise and I swam with two walrus from when they were pups at 150 lbs. until they were two years old weighing 700 lbs. I have a collection of over 500 walrus things and a walrus tattoo.

Pat Herbst



I joined the " SWELL " group about a month ago with my sister Mikki Lueken. We were walking 5 days a week, now we still walk on the two days that we don't have Swell class. Friends Kathy Sullivan and Wendy Woodhouse are the ones who introduced us to this group. Tai Chi is still new to me, I'm trying, and each session is better than the last. Everyone in this group has been friendly and are just a great group of people.

I retired after 32 years from Fisher Scientific (the old Thermolyne) to watch my grandson who is now 13. My husband retired from John Deere after 38 years. We live near Peosta in the Thunder Ridge subdivision. We have one awesome daughter Gayle, a wonderful son-in-law George III and a terrific grandson George IV. The things that I enjoy would be sewing, quilting, reading, and working with my flowers.

Tai Chi

Someone said that they were not that smooth doing tai chi. Another person said that they felt clumsy. After 35 years of teaching tai chi, I have seen hundreds of people look somewhat different when doing the moves. That is ok, just call it your tai chi personality. The most important component of tai chi is doing the movement the best you can and move in slow motion. Your focus should be to release stress, not to worry about perfect tai chi form.

Michael Larkin



I have been attending SWELL classes since sometime in March of this year. I am not sure of the date. I got the encouragement from Mel and Theresa Harvey, good friends. My wife Ronnie and I have 2 children. Our son lives in Dubuque and our daughter in St. Paul, Minnesota. Our daughter and her husband have 3 teenagers who make life interesting and fun. Until Covid arrived we usually visited them about once a month. Since then and especially since they are very busy teenagers, our visits have been less frequent. We do not have any pets at the present time. We had a pure-bred Cocker Spaniel for about 15 years and a cat for 10 years. The cat was a more pleasant experience. Our dog was not very social with strangers, especially mail carriers, gas men, or anyone in uniform. We think that her life and treatment on a “puppy farm” was not a good one. It was hard to change her behavior after that. I have been involved in teaching my enter professional work life. I graduated from Loras College in 1965, taught History at St.

Joseph the Worker for 2 years and then at Dubuque Senior High for 34 years. Since “retiring” in 2001 I have continued to substitute teach about 125 days per year. I found I needed to do some with purpose in my life. I sub at both Senior and Hempstead. I really enjoy the students and staff at both schools. I have also done a lot of odd jobs like painting, helped a contractor with household repairs, and done a lot of lawn work for several neighbors. My wife and I have always enjoyed travel. That has been a top priority throughout our married life (53 years). We have visited almost every state in the Union (47) and Europe about 10 times in our marriage. It is very rewarding. We did cancel a lot of trips over the last few years because of Covid. I also enjoy reading newspapers, magazines, and mostly non-fiction books. Having been a history teacher gives me a strong interest in the world around us. I am also a very active gardener from April through October. I battle pests, frost, heat, and excessive rain, but some years are wonderful. I pass the extra produce on to my neighbors and the Dubuque Food Pantry (I am a Board member). I have belonged to a movie group for about 20 years. We attend a movie once per week depending on the online votes of the group. Since Covid and streaming to home viewing the number and quality of films in the theater has declined. We often go more for the social aspects of a night out “with the guys”. I was a serious long-distance runner and biker most of my life and enjoy being fit. The Swell class helps me do that as I age in a less intensive manner and to enjoy the social aspects of meeting old friends again and making new ones. It is also about 1/4 mile from my home. Interesting thing about me. I started running when I was 30 and continued for 35 years. I usually ran 6 days per week on Asbury and Grandview. I eventually ran 14 marathons and about 40 one half marathons, plus a lot of shorter ones. It was a major part of my life many years. I miss it.



The importance of Social Connection

Connecting with people on a consistent basis is not only important but can be dangerous if you don't. We are social creatures and being socially isolated can lead to many types of health problems. Lisbeth Nielson, Ph.D., Division Director of Behavioral and Social Research at the National Institute of Aging, said, “The NIA researchers are studying social isolation and loneliness”. Research has shown social isolation and loneliness can be related to health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, and Alzheimer's disease.” Just being around family does not always ensure a healthy mind, what we need is a social

connection like SWELL class. 200 SWELL people can be the answer to help us with health problems related to social isolation and loneliness.

An article in Pub Med September 15, 2018 (Interventions to address social connectedness and loneliness for older adults: a scope review). A comprehensive scope review used six electronic databases resulting in 5530 records and 39 studies. Results showed interventions that can help with social disconnect and loneliness. The most frequent intervention in the prevention of social disconnect and loneliness were One-to-One personal contact and Group Activity. Sounds a lot like SWELL.

When featuring members in our newsletter the most common comment of what they like about SWELL is, meeting new people and getting to know them. SWELL has social connection built in with 30 minutes of walking before and after exercises. We also have a photo album of all 200 members with their names. Since putting a cap on the class we are becoming more comfortable and familiar with everyone. Personally, since the class cap, I have been getting better with instant recognition of each person and their name. It was difficult learning 10 to 25 new people each week during our growth period.



You may find yourself looking forward to coming to SWELL. Sure, you think about how relaxed you feel at the completion of class from doing weights, stretching, tai chi, and floor exercises. But when preparing to come to class you may find yourself thinking about people that you will see, as you walk and talk. SWELL members are interesting people. Some fly south during the winter and return home in the late spring along with the orange breasted robins. They brag about their grandkids and their golf games in the same sentence. The City of Dubuque is in a better place because of the many volunteer hours these seniors give to various organizations, functions, and clubs. Who are these SWELL people? They are, a bunch of caring, loving, stand-up citizens. So, keep coming to SWELL and get that social connection that we all need to stay physically and mentally healthy.

BE WELL BE SWELL

--Gary Wittman

Lin Recker



I grew up on a farm near Worthington Iowa and lived in Dyersville a short while before moving to Dubuque and finally Asbury. I've been married to my husband Glenn for 51 years. We have three children. Jody in Dubuque, Jill in Jacksonville Florida, and Jason in Newberg Oregon. I am the proud Nana of seven grandchildren who love to eat my monster cookies. I worked in dentistry for 41 years as a chair side assistant and later business assistant before retiring three years ago. My hobbies are reading, gardening, yoga, and volunteering at Resurrection church. I love watching and caring for my hummingbirds. Swells total body workout has made me feel stronger and more flexible since joining three months ago. A big thank you to Gary for making this class available.

Stone Engle Intern



Meet Stone our 1st intern at the University of Dubuque. Stone is a recent graduated with an Exercise Science Major from the University of Dubuque this past month in May. You may notice he has strong social skills, which he probably developed as a bartender at the Diamond Jo Casino. If you need your roof fixed, he participated in all phases of roofing with Doherty Brothers Roofing in Aledo, IL. All kidding aside Stone is a highly motivated person who wants to find ways to motivated clients in the areas of sports, fitness, and wellness. And boy did he come to the right place. SWELL is the type of program that should meet all of Stone's learning aspirations. Welcome Stone as you learn how to teach SWELL. All you have to do is memorize the 100 plus lifts, stretches, and tai chi moves along with the administrative responsibilities that Gary comes up with. We are glad to have a person of your quality working with us.

Wyatt, Carol



Hi, I'm Carol Wyatt. I have been attending SWELL classes for four months now. My sister, Judy Kalb, encouraged me to join, and I am so happy I did! My favorite part of going to class each week is meeting new people and participating in the various stretches, weights, and Tai Chi. My father always said, "Use it or lose it," which helps me stay motivated each class. I have been married to my husband, Clifford, for 32 years. We have two children, Shavonne, and Jalessa. I retired from Prairie Farms Dairy three years ago. I now volunteer my time at my parish, Sisters of the Presentation, and Seton Catholic School. I also spend a lot of time with my two grandchildren, Bennett and Brecklyn. I'm excited to continue attending classes and getting to know each of you!

What happens when you add music during our walking time?

Roger Maiers had a suggestion a few months back. His suggestion was to add some music to our class. So, with suggestions, my philosophy is not to compromise our class but find a solution. If I played music, many of you SWELL people would not hear the commands during the exercises. Some of us have trouble hearing as it is. The light bulb came on Friday morning and a solution was formed. Play music during our 30-minute walk before class. My only concern was, would I be opening a can of worms? Would you SWELL people like music while walking? Well after talking to many of you it seems that it was well liked. The birthday girl Lynn Hawks even wanted people to sign a petition to dance during the first 30 minutes to the music instead of walking.



Lynn is the most fun 91-year-old that I know. Not that I know that many 91-year-olds, LOL. I chose to play Steely Dan Radio which included bands like Climax Blues Band, The Doobie Brothers, Ambrosia, of course Steely, and others.

What music will we play next? Well, I'm pretty good at selecting music. I know from being an art teacher, while playing music in class, people like different genres of music. In fact, Dan Norman the band instructor at Roosevelt Middle School, called me the Music Man because of the different genres of music being heard coming out of my classroom as students and teachers walked by.

The top 10 genres of music are Electronic Dance, Rock and Roll, Jazz, Dubstep a spin off Electronic, Rhythm and Blues, Techno, Country, Electro a blend of hip hop and electronic funk, Indie Rock, and Pop. Funny how in the top 10, Rap isn't included. Not that Rap isn't liked by some, but the University may not approve of language used along with some Rap songs.

Be careful with your walking pace, many of you seemed to be walking faster to the music.

Lynn Hawks, the birthday girl, had a petition to dance instead of walking. I signed it.

Fr. Mark Ressler



I joined SWELL this past January. I grew up in Cascade. My twin sister (Mary Ellen) and I were adopted by Art and Florence Ressler and their son Wayne. We recently discovered that we have a half brother and sister. I retired two years ago after serving as an active priest in the Archdiocese of Dubuque as a teacher and pastor. I knew Gary back in the days when he had SWELL at Loras College where I was a member of the faculty for 18 years. I have a doctorate degree in moral theology. I taught a course there called "Christian Sexual Morality." One kid told me that he took the course because he knew all about sex but nothing about morality. It was a fun course to teach. I had the opportunity of studying theology in Rome, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. I have an electric bike that can go up any hill in Dubuque! I also walk and

like to travel. I am a decent cook. SWELL forces me to exercise in ways that I probably won't otherwise. I live with 12 other retired priests at the Villa Raphael on Mt. Loretta Avenue. Seven of us get together on a weekly basis to discuss

current issues... mostly Church related stuff. I am presently chaplain for the Visitation Sisters located on Carter Road. I am also a driver for DURIDE.

Janet Veach



My mother's first husband was Janitor at the Univ. of Dubuque. They lived right across the street from the Univ. of Dubuque in the big brick house. I had my Intro. To Theatre class there when I was a student at Univ. of Dubuque. A big dog roamed freely in that building and one day he grabbed my half a ham cheese sandwich from my purse and gulped it down in one bite. I was a student at Univ. of Dubuque for two years and I also worked there as Secretary to the Academic Dean. I worked in a big, beautiful building that is no longer there called Steffen Hall. I had a big, beautiful orange tiger striped cat who would always give me a big warm welcome every time I walked in the door. He was the love of my life. Always full to overflowing with unconditional love and affection, as well as making me laugh every day. I am a member of the Mississippi Trails Hiking Club. We meet every Saturday and hike together. This Saturday we will be going to Backbone State Park.

I am so glad I found out about your SWELL exercise class. I love all of it, especially the Tai Chi. It was also very special to get to have a couple classes at Chalmers Field. It feels great to be on the University of Dubuque campus again. The campus is beautiful, and I really appreciate being in the SWELL class.

Sue Olson



Hello everyone, here is the quick story about me - Sue Olson.

Steve and I have been married 34 years in June. Oakley is our sweet 5-year-old black lab rescue. We have 3 adult kiddos: a daughter, a son and daughter-in-law expecting their first baby in September, and a son and his fiancé planning a 2024 wedding 🍷 All live elsewhere which keeps us enjoying travels and visits.

Growing up with a large family in Wisconsin prepared me for lots of careers ranging from Recreation Therapist to Camp Director to Preschool teacher and to Chiropractic Assistant, plus a variety of part time jobs. Being a life long learner and teacher is part of who I am. Currently I am a small business owner which allows me to enjoy God's great outdoors with organic gardening, and walking/hiking. I love baking and cooking with healthier twists to them. So maybe future newsletters If interested I am willing to write tips and recipes.

Thanks to my neighbor Ellen who introduced me to Swell mid-January! Going at my pace and the 3 different elements of this exercise class continues to strength me after an illness last fall. In person participation with meeting new people is my preference for sure so walk with me before class to chat 🗨️. AND thanks to Gary for providing the videos I take SWELL with me on my travels!! Looking forward to meeting more of you as I keep SWELL part of my routine. What a blessing ❤️

From the September 1991 LAFF newsletter

I have been blessed to have so many wonderful people join LAFF class of the past, that I knew growing up. Mary Avery was one of those kind, caring, loving people that help guide young boys through cub scouts once a week. She also made the best chocolate chip cookies, fresh out of the oven served with milk during every den meeting.

We Meet Again

In February when I joined this class,
seeing the instructor brought memories of days past.

A den of cub scouts would come to my house,

One, a dark headed little boy, quiet as a mouse.

He put much effort into all that he did,

He was a very enjoyable little kid.

He's much taller now, with a lot less hair,

And not as shy as he was back there.

Now all of us listen to him,

As we stretch out each muscle and limb.

I'm really very happy to say,

Following his lead really makes my day.

Here's thanks to you, Gary—

From your den mother, Mary.



The sister Act, Ann L, Kathy L, and Jan T. Enjoy talking in the parking lot after class with their sisters.

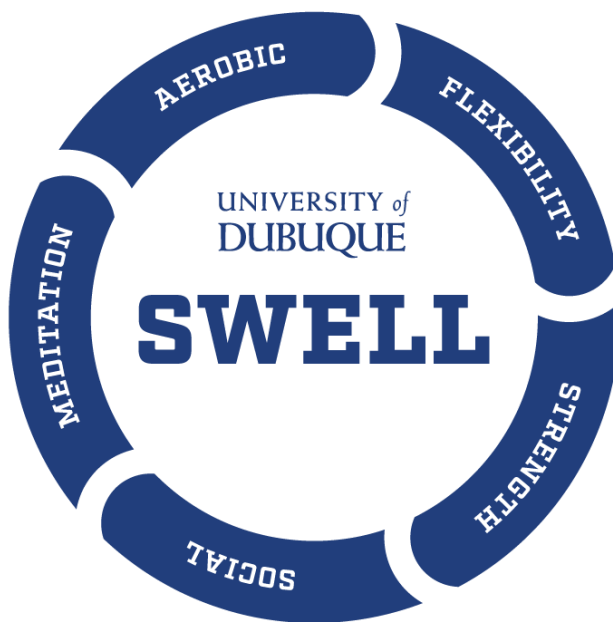
Hiram Melendez



News from the National Track and Field Senior Olympics.

Hiram Melendez competed in the 65-69 division of the Men's Discus: 40 qualified; 28 registered & participated from 21 states. Hiram finished 16th of 28 and accomplished his goal of having a measurable throw using a "power position" stance while not embarrassing himself with back pain, while recovering from an injury. He was the only participant not to use full spin. Hiram threw the discus from the front of the ring not using a full spin to prevent from reinjuring his back. He will not stop there he is going to the Iowa Senior Games in West Des Moines, 65 to 69 men's discus on Saturday June 11. Hiram is working on utilize the full spin to throw beyond the next year's minimum qualifying standard of 114 feet 7 inches. Let's wish him luck as he prepares for next weeks competition.

Barbara Callahan a long-time member of the SWELL has gotten younger throughout the years and has improved her fitness and preserved her life. This is her explanation with a little help from Gary, of what SWELL means.



What SWELL Means

I was asked by new members in class what SWELL means. Well besides being an acronym for Spartan Wellness, Senior Wellness and Student Wellness. Exercise can be a life preserver represented in 5 parts: **1. Aerobic**, walking to strengthen your heart **2. Flexibility**, stretching to tone and loosen tight muscles, helps joint and ligament strength and flexibility **3. Strength**, use of weights to build muscle to supporting your skeletal system **4. Social**, your social connection with 200 SWELL people when you come to class, prevents social isolation and loneliness **5. Meditation**, tai chi, and audio tracks on YouTube produced by SWELL helps relieve stress and improve your brain health.

-- Barbara Callahan

THE STAFF

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We are looking for feature writers each month, try your hand at it.
Email articles to garydonaldwittman@gmail.com