



My overall experience working with the SWELL program has been very rewarding. I've never gotten a chance to work directly with the senior population and after doing so, I am grateful for the opportunity, and I know that it will be beneficial for me in my future career path. SWELL has provided me with the platform to teach a fitness class, network and meet so many nice new people, and to help further develop my leadership skills. SWELL is like a big family, and I am glad that I was able to be part of it. Not often do you meet people who are immediately open and accepting and wish nothing but the best for you! This is a really great community that I hope one day has the ability to expand. I truthfully did not know what to expect walking into SWELL, but I feel as though the leap of faith paid off. I will miss all the chats and laughs. Again, thank you Gary for the opportunity. I won't be a stranger!

-Jasani Williams

Deb Adams



I joined SWELL in September of 2022 after hearing about it from Deb Adams, a current member. I retired from Kendall Hunt Publishing in 2011 where I worked in the Editorial Department. My husband and I moved to Dubuque in 1979 where he taught for 30 years at Northeast Iowa Community College. We have 2 daughters (one in Ankeny and the other in Dyersville) and 3 grandchildren. My husband and I deliver Meals on Wheels and I volunteer with Duride. I also love to read and feel we are fortunate here in Dubuque to have Carnegie Stout Library. I enjoy the diverse activities we have in SWELL. When I started, I found I did know a number of people who were already members, but all of the new members I have met are so friendly and welcoming. It is a great program and I feel fortunate to be a member.

Susan and James (Smokey) McGovern



Smokey and I have been members of SWELL since September of 2022. Gary had told Smokey about the class, and several of our golfing buddies were in the class. It was a great decision on our part! We met in Scheckel and Co. ballroom dance classes. (anyone else take those?) back in the 80's and have been married for 35 years. Smokey has two sons and a daughter from a previous marriage, and we have one son together. We have 10 grandkids, and we are lucky to have the 2 youngest on most Thursdays. Smokey grew up on a farm near the Monastery and has lived in this area his entire life. His career was as an upholsterer at Flexsteel, where he worked on the lines and finished building prototypes in the design and engineering department. After retiring early, he continued to work their Spring Markets in High Point, SC for many years setting up the showrooms. He also continues to work a few hours a week at Jim Runde Upholstery. I grew

up in Southern Illinois (Centralia) and moved to Galena for my first job teaching business at Galena High School. I was hired to teach typing and Accounting, and when I retired in 2016, I was teaching all technology classes, including video editing, and web page design. How times changed! Retirement for both of us has been busy! We both enjoy golf and take our



clubs whenever we vacation. We enjoy traveling, mostly in the States, although we have been to Mexico and Ireland since retiring. I am an avid reader, and Smokey is an avid sports fan, particularly the Hawkeyes. We both volunteer at our church, St. Luke's UMC, and I am a tour guide at our church for the visitors that come to see our Tiffany windows. Being a part of the SWELL program will help us continue to enjoy our grandkids and an active retirement!

Kelly Bergfeld



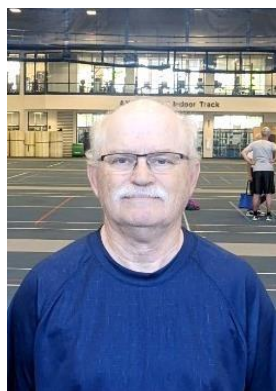
Hello to my SWELL family,

To those I have not had the pleasure to meet, my name is Kelly Bergfeld. My SWELL journey began in October of 2022, and I have certainly enjoyed 'becoming younger' with each and every class. Personally, I have found the socialization aspect of class to be a huge benefit to me because I have always been quite shy and uncomfortable in social situations. I love the kind smiles, the interesting conversations I have shared with many as we round the track, and the camaraderie of all SWELL members, all of which have relieved my fears and given me a sense of belonging.

I worked in healthcare as a surgical technician in both the hospital and clinical settings. My career in the working world began at St. Luke's hospital in Cedar Rapids, relocating to Dubuque when Finley hospital had an opening in the surgery department. After 8 years at Finley, I finally settled at Great River Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery for 27 years. Retirement called my name in 2018. I am married, have 2 children and 1 granddaughter. My husband and I enjoy camping, fishing, kayaking, and exploring on our Harley Davison trike. I also enjoy reading, cross-stitch, adult coloring, and wood carving.

I look forward to many more miles around the track, exercising with everyone and reaping all the health benefits from the SWELL program. Thank you, Gary, for your dedication, inspiring words, and guidance to the program and to all of us.

Sandy and Dan Brenner



My name is Sandy Brenner and my husband is Dan. We have been coming to SWELL since last fall. It is a great program, and we really enjoy it. Dan loves to walk and in the nice weather we like to go on trails.

I am retired from a law firm where I was the receptionist for 43 years. Dan retired after 38 years at Dubuque Stamping & Manufacturing. He served in the Marine Corps for 4 years and is a proud veteran.

We have 3 children, 2 daughters and 1 son. They all are married to wonderful spouses. Our oldest daughter lives in a suburb of Denver and has a girl and boy. They are 13 and 10. Our other daughter lives in Ventura, IA, a small town on Clear Lake. They have two girls and one boy ages 13, 10 and 7. Our son lives in Dubuque and also has two girls and a boy. They are 10, 8 and 5. We enjoy them so much and attend many of their sports, music events, etc.

We go to Colorado and Ventura often. They are great places to visit. We also enjoy going to states that we haven't been to yet.

Tai Chi and Meditation Endorsed by Mayo Clinic

While teaching the University of Dubuque students, I believe it is important to share my philosophy of meditation with them. Practicing meditation is very important for mental and physical health and so is understanding what is going on in the students' minds and bodies in the process. When looking for solid references to endorse topics on health and wellness, the Mayo Clinic is one of my top choices. Mayo has a reputation for being a world-class medical institute. Mayo Clinic experts solve the world's toughest medical problems — one patient at a time. No matter what serious, complex, or rare health challenge you're facing, you can be confident that Mayo Clinic has extensive experience in treating patients with specific conditions. Their staff of doctors, nurses, physical therapists, interns, and all areas of medicine are second to none. They are rated as one of the top graduate schools in the United States that only selects the very best students. I know this because Jenny Richey, John Richey's daughter who was accepted into graduate school there, and was one of best student athletes at that I ever coached.

One of our SWELL members asked me why we do Tai Chi. Mayo has started to use meditation and Tai Chi to help patients with the following health problems and moving away from drug treatment.

Mayo Clinic Experts research shows that Tai Chi does the following.



- **Decreased stress, anxiety, and depression.**
- **Improved mood**
- **Improved aerobic capacity.**
- **Increased energy and stamina**
- **Improved flexibility, balance, and agility**
- **Improved muscle strength and definition**
- **Enhance quality of sleep**
- **Enhance the immune system.**
- **Help lower blood pressure.**
- **Improve joint pain.**
- **Improve symptoms of congestive heart failure**
- **Improve overall well-being.**
- **Reduce risk of falls in older adults**

Mayo Tai Chi instruction

And what does Mayo say about meditation?



Meditation helps patients with

- **Gaining a new perspective on stress**
- **Building skills to manage your stress**
- **Increasing self-awareness**
- **Focusing on the present**
- **Reducing negative emotions**
- **Increasing imagination and creativity**
- **Increasing patience and tolerance**
- **Lowering resting heart rate and blood pressure**
- **Improving sleep quality – Sleep cycles improve**

Meditation manages symptoms of

- **Anxiety**
- **Asthma**
- **Cancer**
- **Chronic pain**
- **Depression**
- **Heart disease**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Irritable bowel syndrome**
- **Sleep problems**
- **Tension headaches**

--Gary Wittman

Mayo Clinic Staff (Oct. 27, 2022).([Meditation: A simple, fast way to reduce stress](#)).

Retrieved April 28, 2023.

Donald Kerker



The SWELL program came to my attention in the summer of 2022 from a couple of fellow Meals on Wheels volunteers. They were very high on SWELL, and it sounded like the kind of program I was looking for and needed. I inquired about joining but was told there was a waiting list. However, I could attend one session to see if the program was a fit. Everything, except maybe the Tai Chi, was appealing. After admittance to the class in the fall of 2022, I eventually came around to enjoying Tai Chi and seeing the benefit. Attending every class is a high priority although sometimes I have to drag myself in but never regret doing so. Gary is a great instructor. He and all the participants are so welcoming that it far

exceeds any expectations I had. Gary likes to say we are getting younger, and I sure feel like I am. I can do so much more physically than when I started the class. Because of peripheral neuropathy in my legs, I deal with balance issues. The class has had a positive influence on improving my balance. I brag about the program to anybody that I think may have an interest, including my doctors.

I was born in southern Minnesota and moved to Dyersville when my dad was transferred by his employer Interstate Power (Alliant) when I was five. I went to catholic school in Dyersville from K-12. I graduated from Beckman in 1969 and went to college at Mankato State that same year. In 1973 I graduated with a degree in accounting. I took a job with McGladrey, Hansen Dunn & Amp, Co. a CPA firm in the Quad Cities and worked there for four years. During my tenure I sat for the CPA exam with 2,000 others in the basement of McCormick Place in Chicago. That was humbling. After going through four busy seasons working for McGladrey I decided to take a job as Controller with Muscatine Power and Water, an audit client of mine. I retired as the CFO in 2013 after nearly 37 years of employment. While living in Muscatine I served on many charitable organization committees and boards as well as the catholic school board and parish council.

My job required me to travel to many larger cities throughout the United States allowing me to see them firsthand. I've traveled to Europe several times for pleasure with family and friends. One of the best trips were to visit my oldest son in Rome when he was attending college classes in Austria, sponsored by Franciscan University. Since retiring I was invited to go on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje, Herzegovina with a daughter-in-law and two of my teenage grandkids. Seeing so many devout Catholics in one place was quite inspiring. I have an older sister that likes to travel. She and I annually, usually in the fall, take a driving trip. Our first trip was in 2014 and the annual trips were unfortunately disrupted by Covid for a couple of years but have resumed. Our most recent trip last fall took us to Jackson Hole, WY where we rafted the Snake River. We went on to check out Yellowstone National Park. From there we went to Salt Lake City and Oklahoma City to check out the sights. My sister has a bucket list and so far we have explored many sights on each of the coasts and down south. Heaven only knows what she

is conjuring up for our next fall trip. Shortly after retiring I moved to Dubuque in 2014 and live in Barrington Lakes. I love Dubuque and appreciate the proximity to my brother in Dyersville and two sons in Cedar Falls.



I am divorced and have lived alone for years. The socialization Gary often refers to in the class is good for me and I enjoy talking to so many of the welcoming and friendly people in SWELL. I have four sons. Two live with their families in Cedar Falls. One unmarried son lives in Tipton and another son lives near Steubenville, OH with his family. My Ohio son met his wife while in graduate school at Franciscan University. Her family lives near Steubenville thus they decided to grow roots there.

I have eleven grandkids ranging in age from three to twenty-one. Seven of the grandkids are girls and four are boys. It is always tough

getting all of my sons and their families together in the same spot. Last summer, post-Covid, and with the driving force of two daughters-in-law we had a get-together.

We booked a condo large enough to accommodate all eighteen of us near Orland for the last week of June. We packed a lot of fun into a short period. One very hot day was spent at Disney World and another very hot day was spent at Animal Kingdom. On two other days, we went to the ocean. One day in the Atlantic and one in the Pacific. A picture is shown of all the grandkids, minus one youngster, not in the mood for picture taking. Keep in mind the picture was taken after spending the entire afternoon in the ocean and just before we were getting something to eat at a restaurant. I love the photos. All their personalities are shown in their faces.

Another picture I attached is me with three of my granddaughters when we went skiing this past winter at Sundown. Snow skiing is a passion of mine. I have skied since college. Many times, I've skied with my sons and three of my grandkids in Colorado. I'm sure SWELL will help me achieve my goal of eventual skiing with all of my grandkids in Colorado. Hopefully, they will love the beauty of the mountains and skiing as much as I do. Before my body said, no more, I use to be a jogger. I didn't take jogging up until I was forty, looking for a way to be healthier and reduce stress. Jogging was the answer. Over the years I ran many 5Ks, 10Ks, and Bix7s in Davenport. I ended up completing eighteen Bix7s and too many to count Thursday night Bix@6's training runs. In many of the races, I ran with one or more of my sons which is a real kick. I had a personal goal to run the seven-mile hilly terrain in an hour or less on race day. Sometimes it was tough, especially with the July heat, but I stayed below an hour every year. Watching U of D students, along with some SWELL students, run on the indoor track reminds me of how much I miss running. In years gone by my desire to ski in the winter and run the July Bix7 motivated me to stay in shape. SWELL is the motivation I have nowadays. The routine, program success, fellow participants and Gary keep me motivated. Many of the senior SWELL participants show me in real-time what I can accomplish and makes me want to keep coming back each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Thanks.

Susie Kloft



I started SWELL October 2022

I have been married to my husband Brian for 31 years. We have two children, Sara and Luke. Sara is married to Alex, and they are expecting their first child in July. She is employed by Medical Associates in Dubuque as an Optometrist. Luke is in his third year of Medical School at ATSU and is currently living in Phoenix, AZ. I am employed at HLTF as a Reconciliation & Control Specialists. I will be retiring on May 1st. I enjoy biking and golfing. I also like to play bingo. I like to travel and will be taking an Alaska Cruise as a retirement treat. I also enjoy going out on the river and fishing in our boat. Since I am still working full time, I have only been able to come to a few classes. I do enjoy the variety of exercises that are done.

STONE ENGLS SWELL INTERN OF THE YEAR



Stone Engle is the recipient of the 2022 SWELL Internship Award. He is a 2022 graduate Majoring in Wellness and Sports Science. SWELL is a branch of Spartan Wellness that serves over 400 seniors from Dubuque and surrounding areas and over 4,000 on YouTube. Stone has exemplified the qualities of caring and support of our senior population and is our **SWELL Intern of the Year**. He has dedicated time and effort to working with each member of SWELL to improve their quality of life. Stone has made a positive impact working with SWELL members, monitoring walking, weightlifting, stretching, Tai Chi, balance, and other administrative duties.

Congratulations Stone Engle, for being our friend and the **2022 SWELL Intern of the Year**.

Note from Stone

Gary, It was my pleasure to work with you and the SWELL class. I appreciate you helping me grow into my career and as a person.

-Stone Engle Class of 2022

How Important is Sleep?

I am reading a New York Times bestseller “Why We Sleep”, by Dr. Mathew Walker PhD. professor at UC Berkely. His life has been dedicated to the study of sleep and its effects on the brain. This is an important topic for us because of our age. When we turn 50 our brains start to change. Many of us don’t get the required sleep and as a result our sleep cycles get messed up. This limited sleep puts us in danger of many health problems and even accidents while walking or driving our car. In one of my previous articles, it was pointed out by the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that the number one cause of accidental death after age 65 is falling because of lack of balance. Recently it has been discovered that we have 3 to 4 second microsleep during the day that can lead to very dangerous situations and can happen at any moment. Many seniors fall and don’t remember falling, this is an example of a microsleep. Many of our mental and physical problems are related to not getting our required 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night. Routinely sleeping less than 7 hours a night can weaken our immune system, risk certain forms of cancer and cause Alzheimer’s disease. With inadequate sleep blood sugar levels go up classifying us as pre-diabetic, coronary disease, strokes, and congestive heart failure chances also increase. Mental diseases such as depression, anxiety, and suicidality are linked to lack of sleep. You may notice you are hungry when tired, so you eat. Too little sleep swells concentrations of a hormone that makes you feel hungry while suppressing a companion hormone that otherwise signals food satisfaction.

I know what you are going to say, “I try to sleep at night and would love to sleep that 7 to 9 hours, but I have trouble falling asleep or wake up throughout the night.” Scientists have even started lobbying doctors to start prescribing sleep to prevent health problems related to sleep deprivation. Do not, however, mistake this plea to doctors to start prescribing sleeping pills. In fact, considering the evidence, mental and physical problems come with the use of these drugs. The CDC stipulates that adults need 7 hours of sleep or more per 24 hours. Thanks, CDC, for your warning but how do we get to sleep? I have listed tips below that have helped people get to sleep.

List of helpful tips that can help you sleep soundly throughout the night.



1. Set your bedtime schedule to get consistent sleep cycles.
2. Start winding down the same time each night.
3. Try Bigelow Sweet Dreams Herbal Tea, this tea will take you naturally into deep sleep. I have personally used it with great results.
4. Limit caffeine and alcohol before bed.
5. Unplug your electronics.
6. Take a warm shower or bath.
7. Meditation 82% of individuals sleep better following meditation.
8. Ask Gary about getting started with meditation.
9. Get a massage or use a massage gun or machine.
10. Avoid intense exercise before bed.

--Gary Wittman

Walker, M. PhD (2017). Simon & Schuster, Inc. Why We Sleep. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc.



**33 SWELL PEOPLE IN 43 DEGREE WEATHER
Are we crazy, maybe so, but look at these excited happy faces.**

Healthy Recipes By Sue Olson



Springtime is perfect to enjoy all the fresh spinach that is in season at local farmers markets. Celebrate Cinco de Mayo with this entree full of delicious nutrition



TACO SALAD serves 4-5

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 lb. Grass fed ground beef
- 1/2 c. Chopped onion
- 1/2 c. chopped organic red bell pepper
- 1/2 c. Chopped organic orange or yellow bell pepper
- 1/2 tsp. Sea salt
- 1 tsp. Coconut Aminos
- 1 tsp. Chili powder
- Fresh, washed organic spinach
- 1 can Black Beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 large organic tomato, diced
- Organic Red and Yellow Bell Pepper cut into strips to top salad with
(Use what is remaining from what used for chopped peppers)
- 1/2 c. Pitted olives, optional

1 fresh sliced Avocado, guacamole and/or salsa of choice

Organic sour cream, optional

Organic corn or black bean chips, optional

DIRECTIONS:

1. Mix well together the meat, the onion, peppers, sea salt, Coconut Amino's , chili powder.
2. Decide if want Patties or ground meat consistency and either form into Patties, grille or sauté the meat mixture till done.
3. Place fresh spinach on individual plates.
4. Top with desired amounts of black beans, tomatoes, pepper strips, olives.
5. Place desired amount of the cooked patty or sautéed meat on top.
6. Enjoy with sour cream, avocado, and/or guacamole or salsa, plus organic chips.

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 **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