

# SWELL LETTER

## February 2026 Volume 6, Issue 2

### Meet our new SWELL members.

#### Dave and Jane Heiar



Dave and Jane Heiar joined SWELL in September 2025 and are enjoying the various exercise activities that SWELL offers. As residents of Dubuque for nearly 20 years, Dave and Jane keep busy during their retirement years with numerous volunteer activities as well as spending time with their four children and eight grandchildren.

Dave spent his career in city government, and Jane is a retired teacher. Dave serves on a variety of committees including the Dubuque Museum of Art, City of Dubuque Human Rights Commission, Nathaniel Morgan Memorial committee and "Better Together" with the Dubuque Community Foundation. Jane volunteers at the Dream Academy and serves on the Sister Water Project for the Sisters of St. Francis. While both Jane and Dave are Franciscan Associates, they are actively involved in

several committees with the Franciscans. They treasure time with family and enjoy reading, playing pickleball, gardening (Dave, not Jane) and traveling (Jane, not Dave) and spending time with friends. Meeting new people in the SWELL program has been a fun addition to retirement life along with the benefits of a regular exercise program.

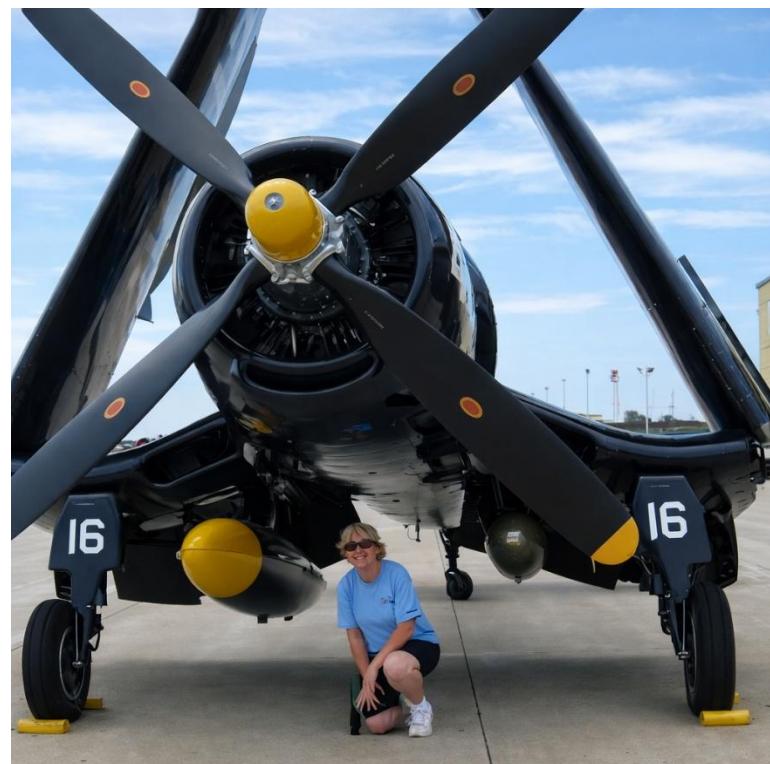
#### Karin Spisak

My name is Karin Spisak. I recently joined Swell in late September 2025 to help me lose weight and get stronger. I

really enjoy the camaraderie of the people at Swell.

I live in Dubuque with my darling husband Matt and have two grown sons. I retired 2 1/2 years ago after working at the Dubuque Regional Airport for 29 years. I love airplanes and air shows and will talk about them all day long. Did I mention I love airplanes, and air shows and will talk about them all day long?

I have an adventurous spirit and love to travel. My husband and I recently took a 21-day trip to Norway where we took a ferry boat from Bergen, Norway up to the Norway/Russian border and back down to Bergen, Norway. Give me 20 minutes and I'll be packed and ready to go anywhere!



I love playing golf, kayaking, baking and airplanes...did I mention I love airplanes? I also am very passionate about being on the Honor Flight of Dubuque and the Tri-States committee where we take Veterans to Washington DC for a day to see the memorials and Arlington National Cemetery.

I look forward to meeting all of you!



## Dubuque couple prioritizes family, friends and faith

Roger and Rose Maiers tied the knot on Oct. 3, 1959, in Peosta, Iowa.

BY ELIZABETH KELSEY



Growing up on an Asbury, Iowa, farm in the 1940s and 1950s, Roger Maiers knew who Rose Spiegel was due to her prowess in the 4-H show ring. Rose, who lived in the Peosta, Iowa, area, had been a local grand champion showing beef and had served as president of the girls' 4-H organization. "I knew who she was from afar and was anxious to meet her," said Roger, who was a local 4-H president and hog showman himself in his teens. One day, one of Roger's friends — who had dated Rose previously — told Roger that Rose would be at a roller-skating party that night.

"He couldn't go because he was going to be working that night, but I went and made a point to ask her to skate," said Roger, now 89, of Dubuque. At the time, Roger was a

freshman at Loras College, having graduated from Loras Academy in Dubuque, while Rose was a junior at the Visitation Academy. "I didn't believe him when he told me how old he was because he wasn't very tall," said Rose, now 87, as Roger laughed. The couple began dating soon after and have now been married for 66 years. They continued dating Roger's time at Loras, during which Rose graduated high school and briefly pursued nurse's training at what was then Mercy Hospital before taking a job with a local real estate company.

Rose and Roger Maiers, of Dubuque, have been married for 66 years.

**LOVE:**

**Family, connectivity ‘extremely important’ to couple, son says** “We got engaged in October following my graduation from Loras in 1958,” Roger said. “Then I had to work for a year to save money so we could afford to get married, I took a job in Fort Dodge (Iowa), so we had a long-distance romance for a year.” On Oct. 3, 1959, Roger and Rose tied the knot at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Peosta, Iowa. “The World Series was going on that day between the (Los Angeles) Dodgers and the (Chicago) White Sox,” Roger said. “As we traveled from one wedding venue to another, I was listening to the World Series on the radio.” After their honeymoon — a trip to Oklahoma to visit a college friend and play some golf — Roger and Rose settled in Fort Dodge, where they welcomed their first child, Mark Maiers. In 1961, Roger got a job offer from John Deere Dubuque Works, so the Maiers family returned to Dubuque.

There, three more children joined the family: Mike Maiers, Dave Maiers and Kristine Freeland.

“Family and connectivity were extremely important to my mom and dad,” Dave said. “We had family dinners most nights of the week. We took family vacations every year and had extended family gatherings at the holidays.”

Roger joined the Knights of Columbus and the Dubuque Jaycees, while Rose was a member of the related women’s organization, the Jaynes. The members of both groups quickly became lifelong friends for the Maierses.

Since 1973, the Maierses have taken annual summer vacations with friends from the Jaycees. “Nowadays, we go to the vacation capital of the world: Newton, Iowa,” Roger said, chuckling. “We stay at a hotel there and play cards and do a little swimming and a little golf and have a good time.” In the late 1980s, Roger joined the city of Dubuque’s Human Rights Commission, on which he served for 11 years. His tenure on the commission coincided with a time of racial tensions in Dubuque, including cross burnings and Ku Klux Klan activity. “We were trying to get people to understand how our town was prejudiced and trying to get them to rethink a lot of that, and I think it worked,” Roger said. “It got people upset at the time, but it planted a seed, and Dubuque is a lot different now than it was then.” Rose volunteered at their kids’ schools, the Discovery Shop and Mercy Hospital and also was a longtime member of a local bowling league with her mother. In 1992, Roger retired from John Deere after 32 years in first the accounting and then the computer systems departments. He then worked for five years as a public relations director at Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa, which led the couple to host a number of international students from the college at their home. “One of the neighbors remarked one time, ‘You never know who you’re going to see coming out of the Maiers house,’” Roger recalled. Their relationships with several French students led the Maierses to travel

to France to attend a student’s wedding. “We’re still in touch with at least one of the students we hosted,” Rose said. “We learned a lot about a lot of people. It broadened our horizons.”

Nowadays, Rose plays cards weekly and monthly with different groups. Meanwhile, Roger attends the Spartan Wellness (SWELL) Senior Wellness Class for older adults and sings in the funeral choir at St. Anthony Catholic Church, where he also is a sacristan and Eucharistic minister. “They’ve always had a pretty large social circle, ... and I’ve observed that to be a very healthy component in their relationship,” Dave said of his parents.

Roger also is an avid photographer. “Over the years, I’ve taken literally thousands of photographs,” he said. “I used to print tons of photos, and we have the albums stacked to the ceiling, but now I can put everything online, and it’s easy to share with friends and relatives.” Each July, the Maiers family — which now includes nine grandchildren — gathers for a weeklong vacation at a cabin in northern Wisconsin.

Rose and Roger attribute their long-lasting marriage in part to their Catholic faith and to a healthy sense of give and take. “It’s all about a willingness to put up with the bad days and enjoy the good ones,” Roger said.

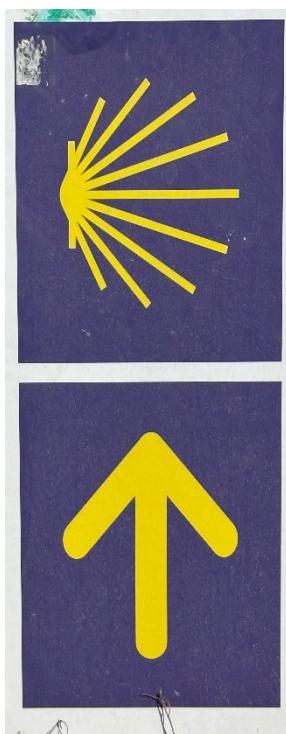
“It’s not a smooth road,” Rose said. “It’s kind of bumpy sometimes, but that’s the way life is.”

Rose and Roger Maiers were married on Oct. 3, 1959, at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Peosta, Iowa.



**Roger Kurt and Aggie Tauke completed the 480-mile Camino de Santiago  
When the going gets tough SWELL keeps going.**

Camino de Santiago in September Roger Kurt and Aggie Tauke completed the 480-mile Camino de Santiago (The Way of Saint James) in northern Spain. They began with a 10 day walk in 2023, completing 110 miles. Then in 2024 they walked from Saint Jean-Pied-du-Port in France and crossed the Pyrenees mountains when Aggie fell and broke her shoulder near Roncesvalles Spain. Sadly, the hike was cut short after just one day. So, on September 4th, 2025, they began again, walking the remaining 370 miles. The entire walk over 3 years took 38 days. They met many fellow hikers along the way from many parts of the world, all walking the same path leading to the cathedral in Santiago. The terrain ranged from village and city streets, steep rugged mountain trails, winding roads, and rocky paths. Despite the setback, they would highly recommend the journey for all who love to experience the true joy of walking.





St. Luke's  
United Methodist Church  
1199 Main Street | Dubuque, Iowa

# FABULOUS FRIDAYS

## 2026 CONCERT SERIES

### PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Jan 9 St. Luke's Artists: Sue Hattel, clarinet;  
Otto Krueger, trumpet; Ann Duchow, violin;  
David Patterson, cello

Jan 16 Dr. Keisy Peyerl Xavier, piano

Jan 23 Dr. Evelyn Dias, piano

Jan 30 Dr. Sharon Jensen & Elisa Cooper, piano duets

Feb 6 Marcus DeJesus, classical guitar

Feb 13 Clarke Vocalists and Dames of Dubuque -  
Dr. Amanda Huntleigh, director

Feb 20 Addilyn Dolan, bassoon;  
Renaissance Recorders - David Overby, director

Feb 27 University of Dubuque Choir - Kristen Eby, director

Mar 6 Dr. Charles Barland, organ

Mar 13 Chuck Bregman, piano

Mar 20 Ralph Kluseman, guitar and vocals

Mar 27 Potosa Strings - Ann Duchow, director

FRIDAYS AT 12:00 P.M.  
JANUARY 9 - MARCH 27, 2025

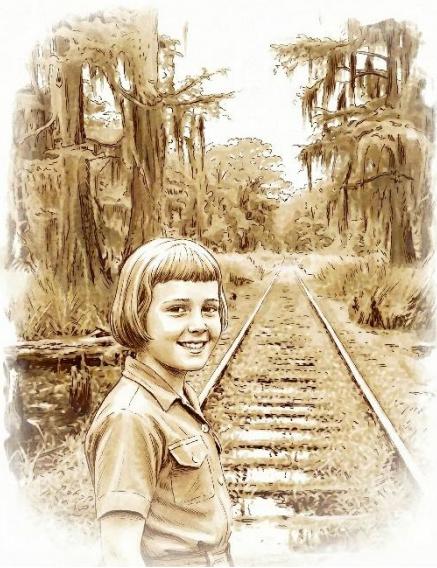
Accessible entry in the rear alley entrance.

FREE CONCERTS, donations accepted for  
St. Luke's Food Ministries  
& People In Need (P.I.N.)

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1199 MAIN ST | [STLUKESDBQ.ORG](http://STLUKESDBQ.ORG)

## Karen Knepper In Frog Town

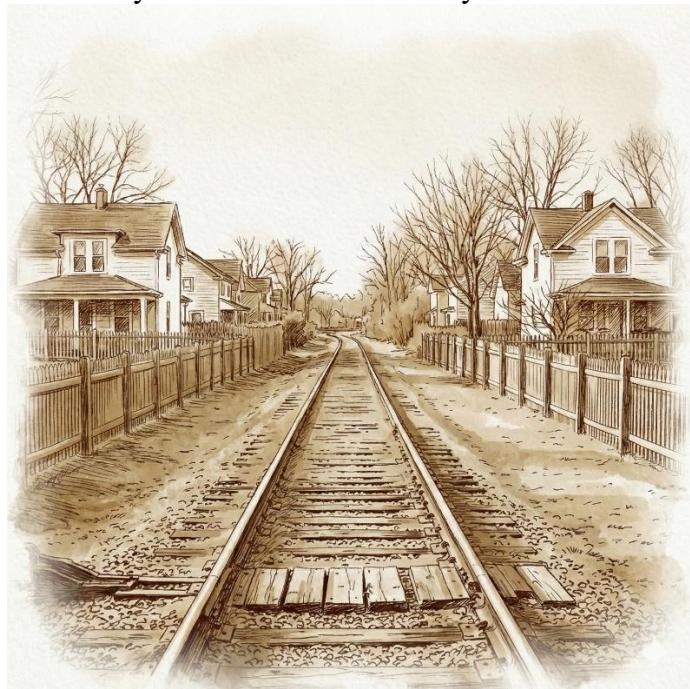


Life in the Jackson Street neighborhood was defined by a relentless cycle of duty and hard work. Karen Bird Knepper grew up as the eldest of nine children, all born within a staggering ten-year span—a house overflowing with siblings and a grandmother who shared their crowded space. For Karen's mother, the days were a marathon of non-stop chores, dominated by a wringer washing machine that never seemed to stop. The sheer volume of clothes and cloth diapers for nine children made for very busy weeks of laundry. As the oldest, Karen was drafted into service as her mother's primary helper before she had a chance to be a child herself.

The weight of adult responsibility fell on Karen's shoulders which was common in the 60's with large families. When one of her younger

brothers was caught tampering with the neighbor's mail, the Dubuque Postmaster didn't just speak to her parents; he came to the house and sternly told Karen she needed to keep better track of her brother. She was only eight years old, yet she was already being held accountable for the moral failings of her siblings.

The family's routine was dictated by the bells of Sacred



drainage where the railroad tracks ran parallel to Central Avenue. It was a place of grit and necessity, named for the frogs that thrived in the stagnant waters—frogs that the historic French-Canadian immigrants would hunt to put food on their tables. Though the tracks were eventually converted into the Heritage Trail in the mid-1980s, the Frogtown of Karen's youth that she experienced was defined by the "B" Branch sewer planning, which started 80 years earlier. The city's attempt to channel the creek that eventually saw the neighborhood vanish under decades of development. By 2017, the swampy terrain of Karen's childhood had been transformed into a restored natural creek, leaving the old "north end" to live on only in the memories of those who experienced it.



Heart School and the meals waiting for them at home. Every day, the children walked back for lunch, where their mother typically served "chipped beef on bread"—a salty, budget-stretching meal. They had a lot of fun on the steep slope of Queen Street. There, they would go sledding with a reckless abandon that often ended with them rolling off their sleds as they plummeted toward the stone wall at the bottom of the hill. Nearby Comiskey Park offered fun with winter ice skating and summer playground activities. There, they found a different kind of competitive fun in box hockey, jacks, and tetherball, where if you kept winning, you could hold your spot against any challenger. These were the same simple escapes found around the city at many playgrounds where the rhythmic thud of a four-square ball offered excitement and fun for children of the 60's.

Karen's world was framed by the swampy, industrial edge of Dubuque known as Frogtown. Located just two blocks from her house, this low-lying area was a maze of natural springs and poor



—Gary

# Mobility exercises important part of fitness as people age

BY ALBERT STUMM

*The Associated Press*

As they age, it's not uncommon for many people to let out a muted groan when getting out of bed in the morning. But if you "oof" every time you get in a car or "aargh" while bending over to pick up something, it might be time to prioritize exercises that target your mobility.

Dr. Miho Tanaka, a sports medicine surgeon at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, said good mobility is increasingly recognized as an important part of overall health. She pointed to research showing that high mobility has long-term effects in reducing rates of cancer, cardiovascular disease, dementia and depression. "It's not just about how you look and how your level of fitness is at any given point," Tanaka said. "For anyone who wants to stay active later in life, there has to be a deliberate process of maintaining that level of activity by doing mobility exercises."

## MOBILITY EQUALS STRENGTH PLUS FLEXIBILITY



### MOBILITY:

Body-weight exercises are a good start.



### TWO EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Starting from about 30 years old, muscles and tendons start to lose collagen, Tanaka said. That's the same substance that in hair and skin relates to going gray and getting wrinkles.

Without regular exercise, weaker muscles put extra pressure on joints, she said. Even active people lose muscle in areas that are overlooked at the gym, such as the rotator cuff around the shoulder and postural muscles that support the spine and neck. Tanaka said two early warning signs likely point to the need for mobility training.

The first is aching joints and muscle stiffness without exerting a lot of effort. Back soreness after a long day of sitting at a desk could signal limited hip or pelvic mobility, she said. Achy knees after being on your feet all day might be a sign of weak quadriceps.

The second sign is more acute pain, such as when you don't get injured, but you still experience swollen or painful joints for several days after participating in a sport like basketball or skiing for the first time in a while.

She cautioned against following a recent social media challenge to test mobility by standing up from a seated position on the floor without using your hands.

"I've seen some injuries from that, so I definitely don't recommend that," she said.

Instead, try sitting in a chair and standing up without putting your hands on the chair arms. Next, try to stand on one foot. If you can do both, that's a good sign.

Tai Chi and yoga are also both great for mobility training, she said.

## OTHER RECOMMENDED EXERCISES

Dr. Corey Simon, associate professor of orthopedic surgery at Duke University School of Medicine, urged people to prioritize mobility before they experience pain in their joints or difficulty moving around.

“You don’t have to have a gym to do this,” Simon said.

He suggested working body-weight exercises into your day. That could include setting an hourly timer to get up and walk around the house. When you return to your desk, add chair sits to work the quads, hamstrings, calves and glutes. Assuming your balance is OK, doing pushups against a wall or a countertop helps to mobilize the shoulders. Once those exercises become easy, add exercise bands to build strength.

Valant said that people who are sedentary should simply start walking every day.

“It’s the lowest barrier to entry,” she said.

Beyond that, she suggests adding 10 minutes of mobility training to whatever exercise you’re doing. She offers short mobility routines on her YouTube channel targeting the hips, spine and full body.

Some basic hip movements include lying on your side and lifting your top leg, lying on your back and squeezing your

knees to your chest and sitting up with your feet together, lowering your knees toward the floor. For the spine, try the cat-cow stretch, arching and curving your back with hands and knees on the floor. Or sit in a chair with feet on the floor, twisting your shoulders to both sides.

“This isn’t something that changes in five days, but I tell people, give it four weeks,” she said.

“You will see results over time.”

--Submitted by Anonymous



## Boning up on dementia prevention

BY MICHAEL ROIZEN

### King Features



An estimated 10 million Americans have osteoporosis, AKA brittle bone disease. The disease, caused by a combination of hormonal, genetic and lifestyle conditions (lack of estrogen, not doing weight-bearing exercises and an excess of smoking and alcohol) accounts for 2 million bone fractures annually.

But that’s not all osteoporosis can break. According to a study in Bone Research, osteoporosis is linked to an 80% increase in the risk of dementia!



There’s an intrinsic biological connection between bone and brain health. Bone and muscle proteins and hormones can cross the blood-brain barrier and promote neuron growth and neurotransmitter production. But if that flow is reduced or blocked (often because of self-damaging lifestyle choices), the communication pathway between bone and brain is reduced and cognition suffers.

To prevent osteoporosis — and protect your brain — it’s essential to get weight-bearing exercise at least twice a week for 20-30 minutes. You can use your own body weight, hand weights, barbells or weight machines at the gym. Walking (aim for 10,000 steps daily) counts, too!

A diet rich in bone-building calcium and vitamin D is also a top priority. Foods loaded with calcium include non- or low-fat dairy; tofu and soybeans; dark, leafy greens like kale and spinach; and canned salmon, anchovies and herring (it’s the bones!). Vitamin D is found in salmon, sardines, mushrooms and fortified cereals (sugar-free please!) and plant-based milks. Ask your doc if you need to take vitamin D supplements, too. For more nutritional advice, check out my book “What to Eat When.” *Health pioneer Michael Roizen, M.D., is chief wellness officer emeritus at the Cleveland Clinic and author of four No. 1 New York Times bestsellers.*

Submitted by Lisa Wittman

## 17 Below Zero



As I passed the young girl at the front desk and asked how her walk to work had been, her response was immediate and blunt: “TERRIBLE!” Looking around the Chlapaty Recreation and Wellness Center (CRWC), it was easy to see why. The building was a ghost town; the weight room was empty, the fitness and conditioning crowds were nowhere to be found, and even the baseball team was missing in action. Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.

Then, I spotted a sign of life. There was Mary Jo, dutifully setting out the sign-up sheet and preparing for her laps. I thought to myself, *well, at least we will have the minimum of one to conduct class.* But as I cranked up the Buddy Holly tunes, the atmosphere began to shift. Father Mark was walking around the track, and before I knew it, more SWELL members were filing into the CRWC despite it being the coldest day of the year.

It makes you wonder: who are these people who show up no matter what? Why do they brave the elements when even the college students are still in bed and the standard fitness classes have been cancelled? The answer is in the faces you see here almost every day—the dedicated die-hards of SWELL.

Chris McNamara told me, “It’s because of you that SWELL continues to thrive.” I reminded her that the program wouldn’t even exist without the people who attend; she looked around, seeing the SWELL die-hards, and replied, “Then it is a combination of both.” Truly, for a program to succeed for 39 years, it requires collaborative effort. It starts with those who are willing to challenge themselves to try something different in order to improve their quality of life. These are people who choose to turn their backs on assisted living, opting instead for independence and a vitality that defines who they are, those who are getting younger each and every class they attend.

This is why SWELL members show up even when it is -17°F. We actually set two records today. The first was for the coldest day ever attended in our history. As for the second? I asked Lisa for the final count. She grinned and said, “A record for the fewest to attend SWELL in 2026: thirty-four!” Even on our least attended day, the SWELL spirit remains a fire that not even the coldest day of the year can dampen.

--Gary

Thomas Gleason has asked me to share this information with you. He writes for the TH and is looking for more wonderful people like you to write about.

The Telegraph Herald writes a weekly series titled "Love That Lasts," which highlights a couple who have been married over 50 years. They are seeking people interested in being featured in the series. It entails an interview of about 45 minutes to an hour, and the reporter will come to you. If interested, please contact reporter Thomas Gleason at [thomas.gleason@thmedia.com](mailto:thomas.gleason@thmedia.com) or 708-738-9171.

Holiday CRWC closed dates Special events not listed I will announce these times and dates.

- Fri., April 3, 2026
- Mo., May 25, 2026

#### Daily Hours For SWELL

SWELL starts walking at 7:45 am on most Fridays because of the Clark College track team rental. We can walk outside until 7:45 am on Friday until the track is open.

Exercise class 8:00 am to 9:00 am

SWELL walking after class 9:00 am to 9:45 am

Early walkers can walk in CRWC unless there are other rentals, University events, team's rentals and Holiday hours when students are on break. We can start at 7:45 am when this happens.

#### **THE STAFF**

**Editor..... Gary**

**Biography Submitted by ..... Dave and Jane Heiar**

**Biography Submitted by ..... Karin Spisak**

**Article by..... Elizabeth Kelsey**

**Vacation by ..... Roger Kurt and Aggie Tauke**

**Fabulous Fridays Submitted by..... Susan McGovern**

**Article Submitted ..... Lisa Wittman**

**Feature Writer ..... Gary**

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