



Cardiovascular Wellness Program Newsletter

Issue 36– Student Edition
May 2026

Comments from Linda:

Evolution of this Newsletter. We now have May & November editions that are created solely by students.

Last semester, all of the students that were enrolled in our internship course (ID201, six of them that semester, nine this semester) were asked to write something that represented a specific interaction with a program participant. We repeated that assignment this semester. Reading their stories, you will get a wonderful perspective of how the students are learning from us. I deliberately changed the names, for HIPPA, anonymity reasons, and also to increase the fun factor. Do you know who the students are talking about? Some are repeats from last semester and some are new.

Items in italics are comments from me. I am including brief mentions of the many things that are going on that are student-related. I continue to be incredibly proud of the good job we are doing with our mission of serving students. Thank you so much, program clients, for the continued success of our inter-generational offerings.

Linda

Spring Student Intern Roster

Gerontology (Gero 130/131) Tia, Emily, Cassidy

Community Nutrition (NuFD117) Daelin, Gabby, Malek

Community Psychology (Psy143) Cae, Christina, Paulina, Sarah, Sophia

ID201: Beyonce, Fatima, Joseph, Joy, Karina, Maryam, Melody, Saachi, Vanessa

Social Work (SW95) Edward, Dashnam, Juliana, Andrea

Kinesiology/Honors (194) Andres, Tisyha

Roster also includes PT volunteers who come in Fridays for 2:30 pm balance activities: Justin, Yesenia, their classmates, and now Madison and a host of nursing students, mostly those in community and public health nursing courses – they have been a valuable resource this semester helping take vitals on exercising folks. We are still one of the best kept secrets, but more & more folks are finding us.



Comments about student projects this semester. (from Linda)

- ♥ *We have an ever increasing number of nursing student visitors; nice to see them slowly learn about our program. We will happily take their help monitoring vital signs on clients any time they are willing to come by. With 80 new nursing students every semester, we are happy their attendance is merely occasional, as of course they can't all come in (at the same time).*
- ♥ *Our 2:30 pm Friday balance activities class has blossomed and has steady assistance from several dedicated PT students—Justine & Yesenia were the most regular this semester, and they did a great job recruiting classmates to help them. Madison will be taking over very soon. Thanks so much for helping here!*
- ♥ *The story-sharing sessions that our gero students coordinated this past semester were great and thank you so much for Tia & Emily for coordinating those.*
- ♥ *Functional Assessment—our two 194 students, with help from the ID201 students, were working on data collection skills by conducting functional assessments on clients. We are matching your scores there with typical activity patterns. Thanks for doing that if you participated; (if you didn't there is a good chance you will be asked to do so before long.)*
- ♥ *Inspired by Linda Goode we had a trial of service learning for social work students – there were 4 involved with us peripherally this past semester. Hopefully this experience will grow.*
- ♥ *We have a new poster for our wall – Kim Roberts took her psychology research team to Tacoma, WA for a regional psychology meeting, sharing 3 posters focusing on computer gaming. The one on our wall details how older adults fared in that project.*
- ♥ *Gero 11 went well this past semester thanks to dedicated participation by several of our older adult clients. We had seven “OA Interactions” – Zoom sessions where clients shared experiences with the undergrads, talking about a variety of topics. This will come again next semester and I, of course, am always open to new approaches. I am very grateful to those of you who helped me out this past semester.*

Summer project possibilities

Our student picture changes in the summer, as most of the Sac State undergrads are away. But that doesn't mean nothing happens with us. This coming summer session (now just a couple of weeks away) we will have several high school interns and also a special kinesiology grad intern from Chico State. Once I have cleared my brain from spring semester details, I will start dreaming up summer projects. An important one will be a continuation of the functional assessments mentioned above. Stay tuned! --

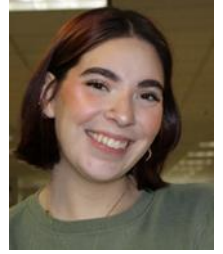


"After analyzing all your data, I think we can safely say that none of it is useful."

Gero Student Interns

From Cassidy Espinosa

Attending and participating in the CWP has helped me grow both professionally and personally. I'm currently learning how important communication and encouragement are when working with others. Being in this environment has helped me become more confident in interacting and socializing with new people.



I've also learned more about healthy aging, cardiovascular health, and how physical activity can improve both physical and mental well-being. Through this experience, I'm gaining a better understanding of community-based wellness programs and how they can help reduce isolation and improve the quality of life for older adults. It has also helped me strengthen skills such as teamwork, leadership, adaptability, and the ability to build supportive connections with others. *Cassidy will be back in the fall!*

Tia and Emily were Spring 2026 Semester Gerontology interns at the Cardiovascular Wellness



program. During their time, they identified that some participants are not socializing with their peers and are missing out on the benefits of interacting with their CWP community. To combat this issue, Emily and Tia decided to hold Storytelling Fridays, where people from the Silent Generation to Generation Z could come together for one hour and learn about each other's past, aspirations,



fears, accomplishments, regrets, and any other topic that would help us learn more about the people we see almost daily. The Gerontology interns had 5 storytelling sessions in one of the conference rooms located at the CWP. At each storytelling session, they had 4 to 5 questions on the screen where in-person and online participants were able to answer all or some of the questions and reminisce back on their past and share with the group how those memories shaped them now and how sharing and learning from others have shaped their future.

This project's goal was to help create a sense of purpose in one's life and a sense of community amongst the participants in hopes of promoting new relationships, improving social connections, and most importantly, decreasing the chances of isolation and anxiety, and depression. This project aligns with Tia and Emily's career goals, as they both are pursuing careers in the health field where they may come across individuals who may struggle with mental health, connecting with their community, or finding their purpose in life. The sessions were well attended and met the students' goals in good form.



Community Nutrition Students *we had 3 of them this semester. They loved being in the kitchen!*

From Gabby

My time at the Cardiovascular Wellness Program has been a fun and eye-opening experience for me. I enjoyed meeting the participants and other intern students. Getting to know the participants has been really pleasant for me because they have so many good stories and great advice. I am so inspired by the participants who show up and engage in all the activities that the CWP offers with a good attitude. It is such a positive and accepting environment, it is very educational not only for the participants but for us student interns. The topics they present every Tuesday and Thursday are motivational and eye-opening. I have taken what I learned and discussed it with my grandparents back home, who also have heart issues. I am inspired by the drive to thrive from the older adults; they all have one thing in common, and that is to try to create healthier lifestyle choices through diet and exercise.

I have had the opportunity to contribute to the program and create a sweet potato waffle recipe that fits their dietary needs in the program, and it had a great turnout. Participants and student interns who got to try it enjoyed it and had good feedback. It was nice to contribute and help participants find a healthy food swap. I am grateful for my time spent at the CWP and will take what I learned to try and adopt it to my daily life.



In addition to helping Debbie with cooking demonstrations, our nutrition students had an strong interest in trying out recipes on their own, and we had several very good eating days with them around. They also took advantage of our nutrition software and were able to provide some of our clients' feedback about nutritional intakes.

Community Psychology Students -- *we had 5 of them this semester, all very different, all very engaged. Thanks so much for their involvement.*

My name is Cae Davis, and I volunteer for Canine Companions as a “Puppy Raiser.” A Puppy Raiser trains service pups, and introduces them to new environments. Since I am not able to raise a service dog-in-training full-time at the moment, I help others by dog-sitting and keeping up with their training and introducing them to new environments.



So far, I introduced Pancake and Gina, both service dogs-in-training to the CWP. While they were there, they were introduced to workout equipment, new people, learned to keep to themselves and worked on greetings. They loved the clients of the CWP, and it looked like the clients also loved the pups as well. Whenever they would see the pups, they would smile, say hello or pet them, and tell me stories about the dogs that they’ve had. I would notice that most of the clients would keep smiles on their faces after their interactions with the pups until they left! It was so fun bringing Gina and Pancake to the CWP, and I hope to continue bringing service dogs-in-training, not only to focus on their training, but to bring more smiles to the CWP!

In addition to Cae’s service above, the community psychology students brought other exciting activities in our midst. They have put together a song-trivia game for us – a fun activity that surely will stir music memories. Joining in with Dave & Leanne’s song-writing efforts, they have created a soon-to-be released poem. If you’re not in attendance when this is shared, be on the look-out for it on our webpage. Christina is the student that primarily compiled this and here is her description:

"Come join David and psychology intern Christina to hear a spoken word piece created by CWP members own affirmations and mantras. This spoken word was designed with members’ direct affirmations, mantras or other quotes in mind to help keep folks motivated during hard times. This is meant to bring the community together and to let us all know we aren't alone. We hope you can show up and hear all the amazing things that folks have contributed to this project."



!



AND NOW OUR ID201 STUDENT ARTICLES!

From Joy

During my internship in the Wellness Program, I had the opportunity to build a meaningful connection with this client. Over the course of the program, I interacted with her regularly, both through conversation and by playing Mahjong together each week. These interactions helped create a comfortable and engaging environment where we could learn from one another.



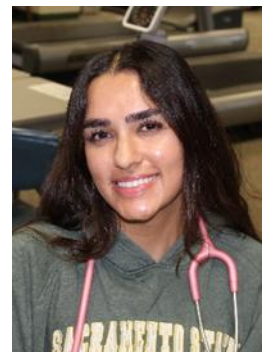
She actively participates in several components of the Wellness Program. She regularly attends the morning exercise sessions, including group stretching and weight exercises, and also enjoys attending educational presentations offered throughout the day. One of her main goals is to stay consistent with attending the program about three days a week, which supports her overall health and well-being. Beyond physical health, she expressed that one of the most meaningful aspects of the program is the opportunity to interact with students. Since she does not have children of her own, she values these intergenerational connections and appreciates the chance to engage with younger individuals. This highlights how the program not only supports physical wellness but also fosters important social connections.

In our conversations, I learned that this client enjoys hobbies such as fishing and hunting, including deer, elk, and antelope. Although we have different hobbies, we found common ground through shared interests in staying active and improving our health. We also connected over familiar places, as she has lived in areas such as Berkeley and Walnut Creek, while I live near Rio Vista.

I was also able to offer support with basic technology, such as assisting with phone-related issues when they arise. Additionally, we discussed common personal goals, including the desire to eat healthier. While she mentioned that her lifestyle makes it difficult to adopt restrictive diets, we both agreed on the importance of making healthier choices overall as I am also trying to eat more of plant-based diet.

From Maryam

Through my participation in the Wellness Program, I had the opportunity to build a meaningful connection with this client. Over our interaction, I was able to learn more about her experiences, goals, and interests. She regularly participates in several components of the program, including group exercise sessions, educational lectures, and independent cardio workouts. She especially enjoys the structured Friday sessions that focus on stretching and light weight training. She shared that she was first introduced to the program through cardiac rehabilitation and has continued attending because it helps her maintain her physical health and overall well-being.



Her main goal for being involved in the program is to "continue feeling good" and to stay active as she gets older. In addition to this, she has personal goals that the program helps support, such as maintaining her independence, keeping up with daily activities, and continuing to travel. She spoke about her past travels to England and Canada, and how staying

physically active allows her to continue enjoying experiences like these. At home, she enjoys reading fiction and historical fiction, completing jigsaw puzzles, and going on walks with her 7-year-old dog Meela. These hobbies help her stay mentally engaged and physically active, which aligns well with the goals of the program.

Throughout our conversation, we found common ground in our shared interest in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and staying active. We both value activities that promote overall well-being and help reduce stress, which made it easy to connect and have meaningful discussions. Sometimes she finds technology challenging, particularly when it comes to managing passwords across her phone and other devices. This gave me the opportunity to support her by offering simple strategies to stay organized and make technology feel less overwhelming.

This experience was both rewarding and insightful. Building a relationship with this client allowed me to better understand the importance of intergenerational connections and the impact they can have on both individuals. Her positive attitude, motivation to stay healthy, and willingness to share her life experiences made our interactions meaningful. This experience reinforced the value of the Wellness Program in promoting not only physical health, but also social connection.

From Saachi

I spoke with this client about his experience in the cardiovascular wellness program and aspects of his life. He joined the program before the pandemic (2018) because it sounded beneficial and now participates usually three times a week, enjoying both the circuit workouts and social environment. He did not begin with specific goals, but appreciates staying engaged.

He describes himself as someone who has always been active, particularly in traveling and spending time with family. But now, he spends his time gardening, reading, and connecting with neighbors. He lived in Ohio and moved to California around the year 1960, and reflected on past travel experiences, especially enjoying places like Mexico and Egypt.

When discussing motivation, he explained that staying active is simply part of who he is. He identified aging as a meaningful experience that has given him perspective, along with pride in his children and overall life satisfaction. He also reflected on his education and career, noting that he studied architecture before switching to fine arts and later found the most fulfillment in being self-employed and building his own business.

Overall, this client expressed a positive outlook on life, emphasizing personal growth, independence, and the value of lived experience.



From Vanessa H

During my time at the Cardiovascular Wellness Center, I have learned so much and truly enjoyed every aspect of my experience. I've had the pleasure of meeting incredible people who have brightened my days. It's hard not to make friends in such a friendly and welcoming environment. I particularly want to highlight two individuals I've grown close to. I could easily write a whole book



about them if I took the time to learn about their lives in detail.

I want to start by mentioning a first client. She is truly an incredible person. Her fashion sense reflects her old Hollywood essence. Her contagious attitude always brings a smile to my face, and I often find myself saying, “I want to be her when I grow up.” She has countless stories, and every time she shares one, it feels like it’s straight out of a movie.

I particularly enjoyed hearing about her time at Sac State, since she also graduated from the college. Life was so different back then, and I love learning what college life was like then. She mentioned that she always dressed to the nines and wore heels to school, which has inspired me to step up my own fashion game.

While she may not always participate in the workouts offered at the Cardiovascular Center, she consistently shows up with her best foot forward. Her love for music and dance has encouraged me to explore more genres, especially swing, which is her favorite. She is full of fun, and I don’t think I could ever get bored around her. If I had met her when she was younger, I feel we would have been great friends and would have had incredible adventures together.

Now, I want to talk about a 2nd client. I see so much of myself in her; she is pure goodness. We have bonded over our shared love for animals. Since I met her, she got a brand new puppy, which made me so excited that I had to buy her puppy a little welcome gift. The joy in her eyes when she told me she adopted the puppy was immeasurable. I know that the puppy will always love her as much as she loves it.

Something I will never forget about this client is how amazing her parents were while she was growing up. It brings me so much joy and comfort to know that someone had great parents and an amazing childhood. The way she talks about her dad makes me grateful for my own dad every day. Our relationship is something I cherish, and she has taught me to appreciate every moment I have with my parents.

She is also an inspiring woman. She pushes through her workouts even when she is tired, and she truly wants to take care of herself—and it shows. Her motivation inspires me, and I genuinely feel grateful to have met her.

From Joseph

This client is a participant I have gotten to know through the Cardiovascular Wellness Program here at Sac State. She has been attending the program for around three years and would recommend it to others because of the amazing sense of community, the welcoming atmosphere, great activities and the unique interactions with students.

She participates in several parts of the program, including the strength training classes, and morning exercise classes. She also enjoys attending the different lectures and presentations and loves playing mahjong. One of her goals in the program is to stay physically active and social while continuing to learn new things and interact with students and their projects.



During our conversation, she mentioned that her mother may soon move to Sacramento to live with her sister, which would allow her family to be closer together. She wants to eventually bring her mother to the cardiovascular wellness program. She hopes to continue

attending the Cardiovascular Wellness Program because it has become an important part of her routine and social life.

We discovered that we share similar hobbies and interests, especially fishing and traveling. She talked about taking fishing trips with her husband on their boat and how much she enjoys being outdoors. She has traveled to Alaska, Belize, and Baja California for fishing and vacations. We were able to connect because I also enjoy fishing and outdoor activities. She also shared that she used to go hunting for deer and antelope.

Overall, getting to know this client has been a positive experience. Our conversations helped me see the importance of staying active, social, and connected to hobbies and family as people get older. A big thank you to her for allowing me to interview her. She is an amazing person, very funny, and great at mahjong.

From Karina *This student had to take a time-out from attending due to being quarantined with a younger brother with an interesting illness.*

Topic: Overcoming the Infectious Disease of Hand, Foot, and Mouth as a Child Caregiver.

Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease is an illness among children which arises with fatigue, fevers, rashes all over the body, and swelling of the hands which can end up affecting families of the child as well. After my younger brother contracted this disease himself, navigating proper sanitation and taking precautions to not contract the disease ourselves was my mother and I's responsibility. We had to quarantine and be cautious with our interactions with others to prevent spreading the disease further. Continuously sanitizing surfaces we used, maintaining proper hygiene and taking proper medication if any symptoms were to occur, is what we did.



Having to deal with this disease for a week and a half straight taught us how to be more cautious, patient, and overall eager to protect our own health as well as others around us by keeping our distance and maintaining proper precautions. Meanwhile the disease slowly disappeared.

From Fatima

During my internship at the Cardiovascular Wellness Program (CWP) I was able to connect with this client, who joined the Wellness Program a couple of months ago. Both she and her husband joined the program because friends of the couple told them about it. The program fits her lifestyle since it has offered her a great opportunity to settle a routine for her everyday life, and it has allowed her to stay on track with her vegan dietary lifestyle; she has been vegan



for over the past 30 years.

She shared with me that one of the goals she wants to work on while attending the Wellness Program is to improve her balance, since she has a neuromuscular disorder, and the exercises and information provided at CWP are useful resources to improve her condition. In addition to this, she hopes to lose some weight in order to improve her overall health. She also shared with me cheerfully that another of her goals is improving her sleep schedule, since she has struggled during most of her life to keep a great sleep schedule and a good quality of sleep. The talks given by the experts have given her the input to start taking some steps towards improving her sleep routine such as reducing some of her caffeine intake by swapping regular tea for decaffeinated tea.

Even though this client and I belong to different generations, we found out that we have some hobbies and interests in common. She has been an artist for most of her life and enjoys doing watercolor, an art I have been practicing for almost two years. She also has a great passion for reading and writing, hobbies that have been interests of mine for over a decade. She and her husband honored me by gifting me a copy in Spanish of Don Quijote, which I am hoping to read over the summer. Funny enough, since we both like to write, we both have the goal of publishing a book in the near future. Traveling and exploring not only California, but other parts of the world, such as European countries are on both of our bucket lists.

She shared with me that even though she considers herself somewhat knowledgeable with technological devices due to her background as an editor, she feels like she could use some assistance on getting more knowledgeable about the recent updates in the electronic devices that are of daily basis use, such as the phone and the computer. I compromised myself to help her sync her computer calendar with her phone calendar, since she has found no success on syncing the information in these devices.

Getting to know this client was insightful. I was happy to listen, discover and connect with someone who has an interesting personality, life-story, and knowledge. Bonding and making these kinds of connections is what makes CWP a unique program, and I was grateful I had the opportunity to learn from her and share my nutrition and life knowledge as well.

From Beyoncee

Being an intern at the Cardiovascular Wellness program, you get the chance to interact with so many different people, whether it is the interns or the older adults. I was lucky enough to speak with this client that had originally been at UC Davis and decided to attend the program about five years ago.

He explained that he felt safe in the program because he was able to focus on himself while being surrounded by people who were also trying to stay healthy. What caught his attention the most was how caring everyone in



the program is. People genuinely want to help and support one another. He knew it was a good environment for him because it made him feel good and offered many helpful resources such as exercise, blood pressure monitoring, nutritional foods, and educational presentations. This client also mentioned that when he lived in Southern California, there were no programs similar to this one, which made the Cardiovascular Wellness program unique to him.

His goal is to stay “fruitful” and enjoy life to the fullest. Something that stood out to me during our conversation was the importance he placed on having a positive attitude and sharing that positivity with others. One thing that continues to motivate him is the love he has for his family. He enjoys supporting his wife and grandchildren and believes that simply being present for someone can make a big difference in their life.

This client shared memories of traveling throughout California with his children and grandchildren. Since his family is spread across different cities, they would make it a priority every year to spend time together and travel as a family. One of his favorite memories was driving across the country with his wife and having the opportunity to experience and explore new places together.

Overall, being able to speak with this client gave me a closer look at how individuals experience the Cardiovascular Wellness program on a personal level. It was meaningful to hear directly how much the program is valued for both its health resources and supportive environment.

From Melody

This client often spends his time using the treadmill and rowing machine in the program. He’s tried David’s morning Tai Chi before, but does not gravitate towards it anymore, as it is too complicated for him. He does not have any specific goals. He attends the program as a means to work out and have something for him to do since he gets tired quickly. His main issue lies with his heart, for which he has a pacemaker.

This client’s hobby is woodworking. He doesn’t do it as much anymore, but he would make items for his household in the past. He believes he doesn’t have much of a problem with the machines in the program. However, he’d prefer to have someone show him the leg and arm machine as he struggles to navigate it. He frequents the treadmill as it is much easier.

This client used to travel a lot! He and his wife converted a van for camping and would visit the state parks in California. He has been to parks like Sequoia and Yosemite. They would do lots of sightseeing together and spend a couple of nights in these parks. He frequented Fort Bragg a lot while staying in a bed and breakfast there. Initially, the bed and breakfast was a farmhouse that had been converted.

Despite not having goals himself, he attends the program so he “has something to do.” He was strongly encouraged by nurse Cari! After the program, he finds himself relaxing at home.



Sweet Potato Waffles

Author: [Yumna Jawad](https://feelgoodfoodie.net/recipe/sweet-potato-waffles/#wprm-recipe-container-5621) <https://feelgoodfoodie.net/recipe/sweet-potato-waffles/#wprm-recipe-container-5621>

Ingredients

- 1 medium sweet potato peeled and cooked (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup mashed)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup rolled oats
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsweetened plant-based milk
- 2 eggs (2 TBS flax meal w/ 6 TBS water)
- 1 tsp baking powder
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt
- 1 orange zested
- Cooking spray
- Chopped pecans for serving
- Maple syrup for serving

Directions

Makes 6 waffles

Place the mashed sweet potato, oats, flour, milk, flax eggs, baking powder, cinnamon, salt, and orange zest into a blender. Blend until well combined and there are no chunks of sweet potato left. Spray a preheated waffle iron with cooking spray and pour in $\frac{1}{3}$ cup batter. Cook until the outsides of the waffles are golden and cooked through, about 6–8 minutes. Serve with maple syrup and chopped pecans, if desired.

Notes

- **Cool** the waffles on a wire rack. They'll stay warm on the inside and crisp up on the outside.
- **Storage:** Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for 3–4 days. Reheat in the oven at 350°F until warmed through, about 5–10 minutes.
- **Freezing:** Flash-freeze the waffles in a single layer on a baking sheet for 1 hour. Transfer them to freezer bag or airtight container. Keep in freezer for up to 3 months. Reheat in the oven at 350°F for 10 minutes.

*Truly Fun Intergenerational, Interdisciplinary, Social Connection Activity – Our Flower Fest!
The Thursday before Mother's Day we had a great activity going on –creating "Tussie Mussies'" – sentimental flower bouquets. Too bad for you if you missed it~!*

