Greetings from the NRC

February 2022

Expressions of love take many forms. Certainly, there are the romantic expressions that we’re reminded of and might enthusiastically participate in this time of year. Still, there are plenty of other ways we can express our love, affection, and our respect for one another. In service to others, in simple acknowledgements of other’s humanity, in greetings, showing gratitude, and simply offering a smile (or a wave if wearing masks). February is a fine time to reflect on these human interactions. And they seem to take on added meaning in current anxious times.

This month our newsletter presents a variety of ways to express love and affection – all in the Osher Institute context. From OLLI at Bradley University, we hear about a session that helped members learn new ways of showing respect and acceptance; from California State University East Bay, we read about a welcome celebration of music, fellowship, and appreciation for their program; and, from University of North Carolina at Asheville, we’re introduced to a clever way that men at OLLI are connecting and developing deeper friendships.
There are OLLIs that use some variation of the tag line “Come for the classes, stay for the friendships.” While it’s a bit more challenging to show your love these days – I challenge you to find ways to do that this month. Show it to the people you love and appreciate, to strangers, and for your OLLIs, which bring so many lovable things together.

With love and gratitude,

Steve Thaxton, Executive Director

Osher NRC
National Resource Center
for Osher Institutes

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OLLI NEWS

OLLI AT BRADLEY UNIVERSITY
The Evolution of Language Within the LGBTQ+ Community
Bringing more diversity, equity, and inclusion to OLLI communities is a common goal of many Osher Institutes; it is one that often begins with education and having frank conversations. OLLI at Bradley University hosted a session last month that explored the evolution of language within the LGBTQ+ community. The session was led by Jon C. Neidy, Bradley University Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Executive Director of the Smith Career Center (and former OLLI at Bradley Director) and Lisa Uphoff, Field Service Director for the Illinois Federation of Teachers. Both serve on the board for Acorn Equality Fund, a grassroots nonprofit organization that provides financial support for the advancement of education, health, and civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons, and their allies in downstate Illinois.

Presenters were able to create a space where participants could comfortably ask questions around the terminology to use and how to use it in support of the LGBTQ+ community. Neidy and Uphoff discussed the use of pronouns and the idea that through the respectful use of pronouns, individuals can show others that they accept and affirm their chosen identity. This in turn helps them to feel safe.

Another concrete example given was to show how updating the options that are listed for gender on forms can be a method to help bring a culture of inclusiveness to an organization. For example, a scholarship application might include the fields: Male, Female, Transgender, Self-Define.

"These open conversations and learnings are a great step in creating OLLI communities seeking to be more inclusive, equitable, and diverse," said Diana Klein, program coordinator for OLLI at Bradley.

Many resources for further details were shared and are included below. These open conversations and learnings are a great step in creating OLLI communities seeking to be more inclusive, equitable, and diverse.

Resources:
After almost two years of COVID-19 restrictions that prevented large indoor gatherings across the Bay Area, the Osher Institute at California State University, East Bay (CSUEB) hosted this year’s three-hour *All That Jazz Concert and Gala* in December. Last year’s event was held online.

“This event is important because it’s live on our campus, and because it’s a social experience, especially for the OLLI crowd,” said interim program coordinator Kathy Cutting. This year’s sold-out gala marked the 20th anniversary of OLLI at CSUEB and included a live jazz band performance featuring several former CSUEB faculty members. Guests listened to music and short lectures about jazz before the reception. Wine, hors d’oeuvres and refreshments were served to all the guests. OLLI’s four founding members, Herb Eder, Bill Reuter, Judy Stanley, and Alan Smith, all CSUEB Emeriti Professors, were also honored in a short ceremony. COVID-19 vaccination was required for all attendees and social distancing was encouraged.
The Osher Institute at CSUEB began in 2001, offering approximately 120 courses and lectures annually. In the past, OLLI courses were hosted at the CSUEB Concord campus by local lecturers and retired professors. Since most courses moved online during the pandemic, OLLI was able to thrive by inviting professors from other parts of the country to present. Courses online eliminated class size limits and inspired more students outside the Bay Area to join, including one from New Zealand. “There’s lots of research that shows keeping the mind active is important when we become older and that we stay younger by continuing to learn,” said Carl Bellone, chair of OLLI’s marketing team and a Board of Advisors member. “It was great to hear the live performance, and this night was a chance to visit with friends we hadn’t seen in a long time.”

Submitted by: Kathy Cutting, **OLLI at CSU East Bay**; excerpted from a **longer article** by Elias Barboza.

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**OLLI AT UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT ASHEVILLE**

**Men's Wisdom Works: Supporting Men at UNC Asheville**

Members of *Men’s Wisdom Works* (above) and Chuck Fink (below)
Not unlike many Institutes across the nation, the OLLI at UNC Asheville has a wide range of special interest groups (SIGs); ranging from art, to poker, and everything in between. However, there is one group that sticks out as a unique among the pool of national offerings: the *Men’s Wisdom Works* (MWW) group. The MWW SIG is for men to hold frank, open, and confidential discussions about issues that impact men during life’s transitions in order to bond and build a social network. Topics include retirement, aging, career change, moving, and many more.

This SIG is the brainchild of Chuck Fink. In 2008, Fink attended a presentation at the UNC Asheville OLLI given by then-AARP Vice President Rick Moody. In this presentation, Moody described patterns that effect retired men: depression, listlessness, purposelessness, etc. It was a lightbulb moment for Fink as he too was experiencing many of these patterns. As Fink stated, “The problem with most men when we retire — and women are experiencing this too as they grow in corporate, organizational America — we establish our meaning through our work. And when our work goes, if you’re not prepared, it hits you like a wall of bricks.”

That presentation was a catalyst for Fink and sparked the creation of the *Men’s Wisdom Works* SIG. Fink reached out to fellow OLLI members and formed the group with eight other men. Their humble beginnings have skyrocketed. The group has grown and replicated many times over. Now, there are 20 such groups in western North Carolina. These groups of men meet twice a month for breakfast, lunch, or happy hour (or on Zoom during recent times). The discussions delve deeply into the members’ lives. As Fink stated, “The focus is on living life, not winding it down. The focus is on regenerating new passions. And it works.”

Additionally, the MWW has had a positive impact on the OLLI. As Catherine Frank, executive director of OLLI at UNC Asheville, stated, “You see it become the sacred time in their weeks. It’s one of those things where you may not know you need it until you actually participate and see the effect it can have on your life.” Now, she attributes her chapter’s relatively high proportion of men to the presence of MWW.

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**THE OLLI INSIDER**

**AN ADVICE COLUMN FOR OSHER INSTITUTE STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

**Dear Olli**
Dear Olli,
I'm an Osher Institute director looking for ways to market and/or boost our membership. I have heard that some OLLIs use "refer a friend" or "bring a friend" programs. Can you share some information or examples on this practice?
~OLLI Director

Dear OLLI Director,
That is a great question, many OLLIs are looking to boost membership right now. I have heard from some Institutes finding success in these types of referral programs. The beauty of a referral program is that it can be easily done and often have little impact on your marketing budget.

So here are a few ideas:

- OLLI at the University of Texas at El Paso does a "Each One Reach One" referral program. They offer a 50% semester discount to members who refer a friend that joins the OLLI (with "referred by" option in their registration forms/catalog).
- OLLI at University of Oregon does a "holiday gift" referral in the form of a one-month free trial membership. Members can gift this membership to their friends/family.
- OLLI at University of California Irvine has a "One-bring-One" program. They allow current members to bring a non-member to one free class by using a referral card (and notifying the class facilitator).

As you have likely heard, the strongest form of marketing is personal recommendations. Thus, referral programs often work well and can be an excellent membership recruiting tool.
~Olli

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