Greetings from the NRC  
February 2024

This year, the relatively minor holiday of Valentine's Day strikes me as especially welcome. It doesn’t need to be limited to celebrating romantic love, nor considered a Christian celebration as it’s honored saint might imply. It can remind us to express our love to one another in broader ways. It’s personally special this year as my first grandchild is expected to be born during Valentine’s week. Moreover, I’m reminded of the growing importance in our troubled culture of expressing ourselves with kindness and empathy to not only our closest loved ones, but to the colleagues and friends we work and learn with each day.

While those on the NRC team occasionally hear about discouraging behaviors and disagreements from a minority of Institutes, we keep the respectful, kind, and loving expressions of the majority of OLLIs in mind. I hope you will consider that throughout your daily interactions with fellow members, volunteers, and staff in these particularly turbulent times. Changing any culture always starts small. It calls for personal commitment. Just as society and broader culture can drift to the negative, it can also drift to the positive. We’ve seen it throughout history and most of us have lived those cycles many times over.

Among the short articles we offer you this month is mention of one of the winners of our “Woo-Hoo” competition at the Osher Institutes National Conference last October. It was voted as one of the top six prize winners by conference participants – and it happens to be from our host Northwestern University’s OLLI (no vote tampering was suspected). It is conceptually in keeping with this month of love and
promotes a cultural shift that is sought by all Osher Institutes. I hope you will read about it below.

We have other submissions from clever and successful OLLIs in Virginia, Michigan, and California to share with you. As always, all in the Osher Network are encouraged to borrow ideas and apply locally if desired. We hope you will be motivated with this month’s features, too.

Happy Valentine’s Day from your Osher NRC Team,

Steve Thaxton, Executive Director
The Alan Cheuse International Writers Center at George Mason University cultivates a global community of writers, translators, and readers through a variety of curated programs and events, bringing world literature to America and American literature to the world. 2024 is the centennial celebration year of the birth of James Baldwin, an American writer and civil rights activist. OLLI at George Mason University (GMU) will be deeply involved with the Cheuse Center’s Baldwin100 effort in programming for this year. The Baldwin100 is a collaborative arts, scholarship, and cultural project encompassing a year-long series of initiatives designed to convene a wider Washington area audience to engage deeply with his work. By celebrating "Why Baldwin Matters," these programs will highlight a global Baldwin, whose impact on American intellectual and cultural life holds promise for a just world. The desired outcome of the initiative is to connect the individual to their role in progressing America towards a more just society.

At OLLI at GMU, this year-long celebration will take many forms: an OLLI sponsored lecture by famed poet Nikki Giovanni, held free and open to the public in the 400 seat City Community Center; an OLLI led book club discussing Baldwin’s literary works and cultural impact; intergenerational community staged readings of Baldwin’s plays with OLLI members and George Mason University students; and, a wide assortment of amazing programs throughout OLLI course offerings. The entire Osher Institute Network is invited to create content in local communities to celebrate with the Baldwin100.

Submitted by: Nancy Klein, Communications and Program Associate, OLLI at George Mason University
The OLLI at Aquinas College hiking group started 2024 off on the right foot. After taking a three-mile walk in a local park near Grand Rapids, Michigan, everyone enjoyed lunch and social time, exchanging ideas for New Years resolutions.

The OLLI hiking group was originally founded by Mary Jane Lamse and is now entering its ninth year. The group goes on regularly scheduled hikes beginning at the end of April and continuing every other week through the end of October. The value of the group is not only physical activity, but in forming deep friendships which carry everyone throughout the year. During the pandemic, the group would picnic in any weather when dining in a restaurant was not an option.

Submitted by: Susan Kohloff, Program Administrator, OLLI at Aquinas College

OLLI AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO

Sages & Seekers

Both college students and older adults deal with similar issues, even though they seem miles apart. Both generations are searching for meaning and relevance;
fighting feelings of loneliness and feeling that they are “not fitting in” or being marginalized. For both groups, there are issues around independence, self-determination, and their value in the world.

Sages & Seekers seeks to address these concerns for both generations while also filling a gap in educational institutions where faculty and administrators focus on course requirements and devote little time to promoting communication skills or other foundations of social emotional learning. Sages & Seekers is a national non-profit organization offering intergenerational programs designed to develop empathy and diminish social isolation and ageism. The eight-week program at California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) provides both undergrad students and OLLI members a sense of purpose and a connection to the larger picture of society and the world.

This semester, Dr. Bob Leo and graduate student Amanda Reigle facilitated a pilot intergenerational Communication Studies course that paired 16 OLLI members (Sages) and 16 CSUSB students (Seekers) for important weekly one on one conversations as part of their course work. After six weeks of meetings, the response has been overwhelmingly positive. Sages and Seekers are seen weekly, heads together in intense conversations. Faces light up when they see each other and it's clear that trust and an intergenerational relationship have been well established.

Dr. Leo reports that his students are very enthusiastic about this experience and the OLLI members are already looking forward to next fall’s program to begin. When asked, would you do this again? A resounding “YES!” is the answer for all the participants. Looking forward, Sages & Seekers will become an important part of the educational experience for the CSUSB Palm Desert students and OLLI members.

Submitted by: Angela Allen, Director, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute @ CSUSB Palm Desert Campus
Osher Institute at California State University, Dominguez Hills
Rethinking the Media

Course Length: Two sessions
Course Instructor: Dr. Brant Burkey, Associate Professor and the Communication Department Chair, CSUDH. Dr. Burkey teaches Journalism major and core courses and has assisted in the redesigning of the new Journalism major curriculum at CSUDH. His research consistently focuses on media literacy, memory, and digital culture in journalism, cultural heritage, digital humanities, social media, and digital media production.

Course Delivery: In-Person

Course Description:
Session 1: Visual Truth in the Media:
From the news media to the advertising industry, society has been influenced by the use of fake and manipulated images, which impacts how we view the past, ourselves, each other, cultural norms, the world around us, and even politics. By recognizing how fake images can be used, and how much more prevalent they are than most of us realize, we can start to understand that seeing isn't always believing.

Session 2: Effects of Social Media:
As more and more of our interaction and information comes through smart phones and social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tik Tok, it is important to consider what effects our digital consumption and practices are having on our socialization skills, attention spans, mental health, and relationships. This conversation will look at these effects through a critical lens to better understand the consequences of our liking, sharing, posting, and scrolling habits, and perhaps to prompt us to pay less attention to our phones and more to the real world around us.

Of note: Dr. Burkey is a popular instructor for the Osher Institute at California State University, Dominguez Hills. He taught a popular course as part of the “Saving
Democracy” series last year on fake news and the importance of knowing your source.

**WOO-HOOS FROM THE 2023 OSHER INSTITUTES NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**Kindness, Patience, Positivity & Respect - The OLLI Way**

What is a Woo-Hoo? A Woo-Hoo is one of those wonderful, amazing, out of the box experiences at an OLLI. All Osher Institutes have the opportunity to submit and showcase their Woo-Hoo for peer Institutes at the Osher National Conference. The Woo-Hoos are shared during general sessions at the conference, and attendees vote on their favorites. The following is one of the top six winners from the 2023 Osher Institutes National Conference held in San Diego in October.

**OLLI at Northwestern University: Kindness, Patience, Positivity & Respect - The OLLI Way**

Operating with a lean staff and serving members with high expectations can sometimes create stressful interactions. So, our community established a culture of Kindness, Patience, Positivity, and Respect — values we call The OLLI Way. We implemented the OLLI Way in classrooms, publicized it in catalogs, placed it in email signatures, and wove it into everyday language. These values have transformed our culture - becoming intertwined into every interaction with and between members.

**CAREER OPENINGS IN THE OLLI NETWORK**

**Job Board**

Director, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute  
Northwestern University
Executive Director - Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
California State University, Fullerton

Is there a staff opening at your Osher Institute? Please send it to us at oshernrc@northwestern.edu

National Resource Center for Osher Institutes, Northwestern University
Wieboldt Hall, Sixth Floor, 339 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611