Greetings from the NRC  June 2024

Average life expectancy is statistical. But eventually, it becomes a personal. When we age to the point of knowing five or six generations in our family, we can better appreciate the amazing gift of added longevity that’s been given to us over the past century.

When my grandmother (above) was born, her life expectancy was 54 years. When I was born (left on both pics above) life expectancy was 66 years. And as my granddaughter was born just months ago it has grown to 85 years. As we all aspire to beat those averages, we have sad and wonderful exceptions that we’ve witnessed. My grandmother’s aunt, the matriarch of three generations, lived over 100 years. But we all have unhappy stories of loved ones who didn’t beat the averages on the other side of the curve.
These statistics and personal experiences help build the case for lifelong learning institutes. As our children live longer lives, I hope they will have OLLIs to help keep them intellectually engaged and socially active. But to ensure our OLLIs are sustainable in the long run, we need to support and nurture them, now. That includes encouraging innovation that attracts younger members and keeps us all up to date. We also need to support our OLLIs financially and by volunteering. Contributions of time, talent, and dollars are of high importance to the future of our Institutes.

This month’s Osher Network Newsletter features ideas that keep programming fresh. Enjoy these articles from OLLIs in Arkansas, Virginia, South Carolina, Indiana, and Montana. And be thinking about how you can help your own OLLI thrive well into the future.

With best wishes for June,

Steve Thaxton, Executive Director
Members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at University of Arkansas have been going on hikes with program director and volunteer hiking guide Josh Raney since the fall of 2016. This past April, Josh offered the outing of a lifetime. On April 8, Josh led 20 members to the Buffalo National River for the Total Solar Eclipse of 2024. Participants took a short hike along the Buffalo River Trail and explored the river’s edge at Steel Creek Campground. Just within the path of totality, the campground was a great spot for the group to enjoy lunch and a view of the eclipse from the large fields below Roark Bluff. OLLI provided solar eclipse glasses and transportation.

“I’ve been thinking about leading this hike since I first heard of the eclipse,” Raney shared. “Our members love getting outdoors and experiencing new things. What better new thing than a total eclipse?” Of the 20 people registered to take the hike, Judy Unrath, longtime OLLI member and hiking enthusiast, was one of the first people to sign up. “I wasn’t going to miss this trip and the bragging rights to say, ‘I
was there, in the middle of the Great North American Eclipse’s path.’ It won’t happen again in my lifetime, and I am grateful to OLLI for offering this epic adventure."

Volunteer, Doug Talbott, who provided support by driving a van also assisted by documenting the outing with his camera. Talbott, who has traveled the world and photographed landscapes in Antarctica to wildlife in Africa, took photos of the group and captured amazing images of the event itself.

This article is excerpted from the OLLI at University of Arkansas blog. Check out the May 1, 2024 blog to read the full article and see more pictures.

Submitted by: Josh Raney, Director, OLLI at University of Arkansas

OLLI AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
An Intergenerational Conversation about Israel and Palestine
The Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University (GMU), along with The University Libraries and The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at GMU, collaborated to host an intergenerational conversation. This event, on March 20th, utilized the “Dialogue and Difference Project” developed by Dr. Patricia Maulden of the Carter School and now carried forward by Isaac Jasper. OLLI at GMU members and GMU Carter School students explored their lived experiences and had the opportunity to speak and listen to feelings, opinions, and thoughts regarding the current events surrounding Israel and Palestine.

OLLI Executive Director Jennifer Disano called the event “a major success and a model for future intergenerational conversations across the campus and beyond.” OLLI member Pat Bangs agreed, stating that the event “was an incredible opportunity to meet and admire students who want to make a difference. I was reminded of the diversity of this generation and have great hope for their future contributions. It was a unique and valuable opportunity for OLLI members and students to discuss issues that are important to us, in a setting that allowed passionate, conflicting opinions to be voiced in a respectful manner.” OLLI member Richard Crawford seconded the value of the event. “It was a rare opportunity to listen and learn with Generation Z, gaining fascinating insights on how social media
influences their understanding. I was impressed with their analytical approach to conflict resolution; what they may lack in experience is offset with their critical thinking and intelligence."

Event participants voiced enthusiasm for planning and participating in future intergenerational conversations, recognizing their value and significance. Anne Osterman, Dean of Libraries, stated, "The Libraries were honored to host and provide informational resources for this event. It is important to our mission to support learning and scholarly conversation. Not only did this event create a meaningful intergenerational dialogue, but it also provided a real-world opportunity for student facilitators to practice their skills. We hope to have more of this kind of event in the future."

Submitted by: Nancy Klein, Communications and Program Associate, OLLI at George Mason University

OLLI AT FURMAN UNIVERSITY
The Rocket Boys of Michigan


Each winter, OLLI at Furman University holds “Read and Explore with OLLI,” a community read program. Members are encouraged to read the same book and
then participate in discussions and lectures suggested by the themes and events in
the book. The selection this winter was *Rocket Boys* by Homer Hickham. While
reading, OLLI member Doug Stowell realized he had a personal connection to the
book:

“I was 15 on October 4, 1957, the day Sputnik was launched. I was a sophomore in
a small, farm-town high school in Southwest Michigan. Homer Hickham's
recollections about growing up mirrored my own, including starting a rocket group
with four buddies!

We had access to a fiberglass plant which made tubing, and my dad’s construction
company shop. We made nose cones on the lathe and crafted fiberglass fins. We
built a block house on an old trailer to take our remote launch site onto state forest
land out in the country. We poured a cement launch pad which my older brother,
the state park manager, found. He left a tightly worded ‘remove and desist’ note. I
told him who it was about 30 years later, and we had a great laugh.

Our chemistry teacher taught us about potassium nitrate, sulfur, and charcoal.
Because we were buying it in large quantities, we had to go to the only three
pharmacies in the county to get each chemical. ‘You boys aren’t making
gunpowder, are you?’ ‘No sir, rocket fuel!’

We didn't win any prizes and we didn't set any altitude records. The whole town
never showed up to watch a launch ... certainly no girls. None of us went on to be
rocket scientists. I don't know what my dad did with the trailer. But I did decide to
get a degree in Physics and Math, simply because of Sputnik!”

Nancy Kennedy, Director of OLLI at Furman, notes that “one of the best things
about working with an OLLI program is getting to know the members and hearing
their stories. Our members bring so much experience to OLLI, which is what makes
our courses, events, and discussion so rich and engaging.”

Submitted by: Nancy Kennedy. OLLI at Furman University
Osher Institute at Indiana State University
"Global Food Systems"

Course Length: Two Weeks (two sessions)
Course Instructor: Anne D'Orazio, JD, PhD
Course Delivery: In-person, followed by discussion

Course description: We know that food is the stuff of life, but how do we understand the systems that dominate the packaging, the marketing, and the pricing of what we eat? This class will study the historical development of food governance that arose in the course of industrialization in the mid-nineteenth century, who controlled it at what times, and how it is determined now in the twenty-first century in the face of a global food crisis.

Of Note:
This is just one of the many classes OLLI at Indiana State University offers on the topic of food, ensuring members have the opportunity to learn about food from many different disciplines including:

- Art (Charcuterie Board Art),
- Science (Soil Microbiology - the roles bacteria, fungi, and insects play in creating better produce),
- Engineering (Engineering Coffee - participate in a Food Science and Engineering lab to learn important societal issues related to food production and distribution, sustainability, and nutrition, as well as explore the scientific principals and engineering techniques used to create popular products such as coffee, chocolate, and more.),
- Craft (Grow Your Own Mushrooms; Make Your own Cannoli while learning the origins and traditions of this treat).

QUICK TIPS FOR HELPING OPERATE AN OSHER INSTITUTE

Quick Tip - Recruit an OLLI Photographer

With limited marketing budgets, Osher Institutes often seek the expertise and skills of their talented member volunteers. Having a variety of photographs of members and OLLI activities to use on websites, printed materials, and in communications is invaluable for an Institute. One great way to find individuals with these talents is to send out a request to membership asking for anyone with a particular skill to
complete a short volunteer form. Here is an excellent example from the Osher Institute at Montana State University.

**Help us connect and learn!**

Are you a retired photographer or budding visual art enthusiast? We like to feature our members in action on our print and web communications. If you would be interested in helping to take pictures and video during OLLI programs, let us know via our [short volunteer form](#) and we will work with you to get the camera rolling!

**CAREER OPENINGS IN THE OLLI NETWORK**

**Job Board**

Director, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute  
*Clemson University*

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Coordinator  
*Casper College*

Program Coordinator - Osher Lifelong Learning Institute  
*University of Richmond*

Academic Program Coordinator - Osher Lifelong Learning Institute  
*Johns Hopkins University*

Department Coordinator - Osher Lifelong Learning Institute  
*Temple University*

OLLI Program Assistant  
*University of Pittsburgh*

Administrative Support Specialist II - Sr  
*Oklahoma State University*

Is there a staff opening at your Osher Institute? Please send it to us at [oshernrc@northwestern.edu](mailto:oshernrc@northwestern.edu)