Greetings from the NRC

Can you Osher Institute leaders relate to the above photo? Maybe some of you feel like your rope is much higher off the ground! Recreational tightrope walking, also known as “slacklining,” is a familiar sight in Chicago parks. Those tests of balance look fun until you realize the level of skill it takes. And those are skills OLLI staff and volunteer leaders are developing quickly as they try to balance the interests of members, requirements of their colleges, and various (sometimes contradictory) COVID regulations. Plans to return to campus with Osher courses and activities seem like they should be simpler than this. But while some OLLIs have largely returned to campus, many have not at all. Some members are excited to be on campus with friends; some are reticent. Many have been vaccinated and some have not. Some universities require proof or attestation of vaccination, while others are prohibited by law to do so. And many universities are trying to predict how to remain socially distanced with the undergraduates in the fall, which has an impact on the classroom spaces.
available to OLLIs. As all this balances out in the coming months, we must support all the slackline walkers at Osher Institutes. As members, we send our gratitude, and as staff and volunteer leaders, we commiserate with you.

This month’s newsletter tells us about new friendships formed at Penn State and Arizona State Universities, brings good news from Emory University, and tells a heartwarming story from Western Michigan University. Thanks to our kind contributors at these OLLIs with a reminder that the Osher NRC loves to hear and re-tell your stories. Consider submitting one to the National Newsletter.

With warm summer greetings,

Steve Thaxton, Executive Director

Osher NRC
National Resource Center for Osher Institutes
The COVID-19 pandemic left OLLI members, volunteers, and staff at a loss for how to keep in touch. Isolation and limited social interaction created a barrier to interaction. With this in mind, OLLI at Penn State and OLLI at Arizona State University (ASU) brainstormed a pilot program that connected a limited number of members from both organizations, even though they were 2,000 miles apart. “The OLLI Zoom Buddy Program” quickly became an online social hub during spring 2021.

Pat Stevens, member of OLLI at Penn State, was one of the first to volunteer. “The OLLI Zoom Buddy program appealed to me because my life became pretty narrow because of the pandemic,” Stevens said, “and the experience allowed me to meet someone from a totally different part of the country. As it turned out, our lifestyles were very similar, we enjoyed sharing photos and we both had many of the same concerns about staying safe.”

Buddies met using Zoom, email, phone, FaceTime and Google Meet. A few buddies have expanded to create an OLLI Zoom Buddy Group. “My favorite part
of the program was that it had no structure, we could make it what we wanted it to be,” Stevens said. “In a way, buddies become our pen pals!”

Aimee Shramko, member of OLLI at ASU, said she was surprised how easy it was to talk to a perfect stranger. “I’m enjoying talking with Pat and as things open back up, we have both talked about the travel programs OLLI offers.” Shramko said. “It would be wonderful if we were interested in travel to the same location and could meet in person that way. We both would like to attend the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta in New Mexico, so maybe we can make that happen!”

OLLI at Penn State and OLLI at ASU plan to continue the program. Based on participant feedback, updates to the registration process will be implemented and additional members will be invited to participate. For questions, please contact Spring Younkin, program specialist for OLLI at Penn State, at ser126@psu.edu.

Submitted by: Brynn Rousselin, Director, OLLI at Penn State

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OLLAT EMORY UNIVERSITY, KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

The 2021 "Southern Regional" Conference is On!

Photo Courtesy of the SRCLR Conference - OLLI @ UNC Wilmington, 2019

After an understandable hiatus year, the Southern Regional Learning in Retirement Conference (SRLCR) will return this fall. This traditionally annual conference is a popular and enriching experience for professional development, networking, and idea generation for leaders from both the OLLI Network and
non-Osher affiliated lifelong learning institutes (LLIs). Participants come from not only the Southern Region, but all over the U.S.

This year, conference partners include the OLLIs at Emory, Kennesaw State, and the University of Georgia. The partners are busy planning the 2021 SRCLR, to be held in Atlanta, October 11-12. It will be presented in a hybrid form: both in-person and online for those not able to travel. The hybrid conference will be an extraordinary learning experience where participants are sure to engage, connect, and grow. The conference is open to the staff and volunteer leaders of lifelong learning institutes (LLIs) from across the United States. The past 18 months have been a challenge for all. Every LLI has become creative and adaptive to the new situation and this conference is no exception. The conference will be a great opportunity to learn how others have been addressing curriculum development, marketing, registration systems, volunteer management, staff development, membership retention, community engagement, fundraising, and many other topics. It will also be a great time to network with others passionate about lifelong learning and senior advocacy.

In preparation for the conference, the partners seek the input of potential participants. If you are interested in participating, please take a moment to complete the online survey [here](#). The survey will take less than five minutes to complete.

To join the mailing list or express interest in presenting, email contact information to [ollie@emory.edu](mailto:ollie@emory.edu) or call (404) 727-5328.

More information about the 2021 Southern Regional Learning in Retirement Conference may be found [here](#).

Submitted by: Jeffery Alejandro, Director, [OLLI at Emory University](#)
Confections with Convictions: Course Partnerships to Highlight Community

OLLI at Western Michigan University has adapted to the isolating nature of the past year’s pandemic with a simple goal: community connection. In spring 2021, the dedicated OLLI Events Committee along with the Institute Director Toni Woolfork-Barnes established the Founders Series (in honor of the Founding Members) to achieve this goal: each course in the Founders Series highlights one local business from which the course attendees receive consumable goods as a part of their class fee. The most recent of these courses featured Kalamazoo chocolate shop Confections with Convictions, a unique store which aims not only to satiate the desire for sweets, but to give back to members of the public who may struggle to find traditional employment.

Chocolatier and founder of Confections with Convictions Dale Anderson conceived of Kalamazoo’s only exclusively fair trade, organic chocolate shop in 2010. Following a career in carpentry, Dale had pivoted to working in counseling and was looking to start a business that could provide work for young people who were moved through the courts and penal systems, and who traditionally did not have the education required for many career paths. He initially believed that his work in building would be the key, but as he brainstormed ideas for this new venture the title “Confections with Convictions” stayed front of mind, despite Dale’s utter lack of experience in the candy world. From a tiny seed of an idea came the purchase of a physical storefront, which Dale renovated and began his journey into chocolatiering.
“70% of chocolate consumed in the world comes from two countries, Ivory Coast and Ghana, both of which have a history of hard labor and slave labor to harvest their cacao. And I thought, if I am helping six young people in Kalamazoo but supporting the slave labor of 60 young people in the Ivory Coast, how does that balance out? And that is where my decision to use only fair trade and organic came from,” Dale explained in a video distributed to all OLLI class members. He continued to illuminate that though fair trade/organic are not perfect systems, it is important to invest in these systems to avoid taking advantage of individuals throughout the world.

What started as a humble storefront with only twelve different chocolate flavors has evolved into an impressive display with over 90 different flavors each developed in the shop. Dale continues to hire young people primarily with felony records, but some with other barriers to employment (more than 35 people over ten years). To provide resources and a salary to his employees, Dale has partnered with a local education organization which places individuals in part-time work as they complete certain levels of education. Dale foregoes a salary himself in order to ensure that his employees are properly compensated, and as a near-lifetime Kalamazoo resident, he is “happy to be a small part of the support system in this community.”

“I feel so blessed to be affiliated with our OLLI at WMU members and volunteers,” says OLLI at WMU Director Toni Woolfork-Barnes, “the Events Committee worked tirelessly to bring to fruition this series, which has been positively received as evidenced by member evaluations. Collectively OLLI at WMU is committed to our community and we look forward to continuing future courses/events with other local establishments, organizations and agencies.”

Submitted by: Toni Woolfork-Barnes, OLLI at Western Michigan University
We are currently researching audio enhancement devices for classroom and mobile program use. Do you have any recommendations? We would appreciate your insight and advice.

-OLLI Director

Dear OLLI Director,

As we return to the classroom, those with the need for hearing assistance will be without the Zoom benefits of captions, volume control, and headphones. To aid those of you considering how to assist members with need of hearing assistance, the NRC does have some resources available. First, there are two webinars on the NRC secure site (available to Osher Institute directors): a 2019 webinar: Would You Repeat That? Assistive Hearing Technology in the Classroom and a 2016 webinar: Listen Up, OLLI. To summarize these resources, there is a wide range of options depending on your budget and needs. Different Institutes have found different paths to success, from the high end of classrooms outfitted with hearing loops to members using applications on their Smartphones. Consider speaking with University departments of Disability Resources, or other community service agencies and individuals who may aid with educational resources locally.

Thanks!
Olli

Have a question for Olli? Please send it in care of Kevin Connaughton (kevin.connaughton@northwestern.edu).

CAREER OPENINGS IN THE OLLI NETWORK

Job Board

Director - Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
California State University, San Bernadino

OLLI Program Support Assistant
Granite State College

Assistant Director
National Resource Center for Osher Institutes at Northwestern University (Osher NRC)