Greetings from the NRC........................... August 2024

My beautiful grandmother turned 96 last month. She is healthy, vibrant, and full of joy. When asked what her secret is, she attributes her longevity to her daily consumption of wine and chocolate! She also notes two other important factors: her eternal optimism and her quest for learning.

My grandmother claims that when I was just seven years old, I announced, “Grandma, if you don’t learn something new every day, the day is wasted.” Was that somehow a foreshadowing of my career with the Osher network? Grandma
says that even though I was just a child, she fully embraced my wise-beyond-my-years words and never let a day go by that she didn't learn something new.

While I'm not advocating for my grandmother's dietary habits, there is science to support the connection between learning and a healthier life. At last month's Southern Regional conference hosted by OLLI at University of Kentucky, I spoke with keynote speaker Linda J. Van Eldik, Professor at Sanders-Brown Center on Aging. The Center has been a pioneer in research on healthy brain aging and age-related brain disease. Dr. Van Eldik shared research that confirms that learning new things creates new connections, or synapses, in the brain which in turn, decreases the likelihood of dementia. As if the simple joy of learning wasn't enough!

I hope to follow in my grandmother’s footsteps, living a healthy life well into my 90s. So today, I plan to pour myself a glass of wine, enjoy a brownie with dinner, and pop in on one of the Network's amazing OLLI courses. Who's with me?

With Joy in Learning and Community,

Kari Fagin, Associate Director
The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at University of Oregon (UO) has found success in a series of recently reformatted recruiting and retention events.

To provide a comprehensive overview of OLLI at UO, create entrance points for participation, and maximize volunteer and staff time and resources, the once-per-term “OLLI-UO Expo” combines outreach to lapsed members, integration for new members, and introduction for prospective members, thereby creating a one-stop experience for engagement. Across all three OLLI-UO program locations (Bend, Eugene, and Portland), recent events greatly exceeded attendance expectations and resulted in a significant increase in registrations by new and returning members.

The success of these events highlights the importance of creating a casual and engaging learning environment. Modifying the event plan to include a shortened but strategically placed formal presentation allowed for more natural conversation. Attendees could ask questions and get personalized information directly from program instructors and facilitator-leaders. This also fostered a more approachable and friendly atmosphere. Casual settings encourage potential
members to mingle, share experiences, and build connections with each other, which in turn reinforces the community aspect of the Institute. Further, by allowing people to walk around and explore different program tables, they discovered new interests at their own pace. This self-directed learning experience created a more curated and engaging event.

Now, instead of a few short class teasers with a narrow topical focus, this new model shows potential members a full demonstration of how the OLLI works and what classes are coming in the term ahead. This allows for more informed and empowered decision-making about registration, participation, and entry points for OLLI at UO’s “one-fee, all-access” registration model.

Of special note in the marketing efforts for these events, Facebook ads have proven to be an affordable and effective way to reach a large, targeted audience. Combined analytics showed nearly 70,000 views and 5,000 clicks across the three spring events. Over time, analytics reports will allow OLLI at UO to better understand where to put staff/volunteer time and dollars in this new membership endeavor.

Submitted by: Brenda McDonald, Program Manager, Central Oregon, OLLI at University of Oregon

OLLI AT UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Brain Health
The OLLI at University of Washington (UW) has partnered with the UW Department of Bioengineering and the Dana Foundation to deliver the Brain Health Lectures Series. Experts in the field of neuroscience discuss a variety of topics related to human brains, cognitive functioning and physical health. Throughout 2024, lectures are offered in-person and via Zoom to community members and also recorded for general public viewing.

The Brain Health Learning Network program aims to educate and empower older adults to understand disorders of the brain, including neurological and mental illnesses. Significant research efforts are underway to determine the underlying causes and effective treatments for these illnesses. However, most people are not knowledgeable about neuroscience and have many misconceptions about the brain and therapies for brain disorders. A more informed public will benefit people when faced with age-related symptoms as they discuss treatment options with their healthcare providers, and as they explore information about brain research in books, magazines, social media, online, and television.

The goal of this series is to help people understand neuroscientific research, and raise awareness about neurological disease, mental disorders and brain health. The program, called Brain Health Learning Network, is funded by a $115,000 grant from the Dana Foundation. The funds allow the partnership to develop a speaker program and online resources. This includes videos and
activities that engage older adults in learning about the brain and help them critically analyze information that they encounter in the media. The program explores issues that were determined by OLLI-UW focus groups related to healthy brain aging including diet, mental and physical exercise, sleep, and social engagement.

The aim of the program is to help older adults become more knowledgeable about brain health and confident in their abilities to convey this information and their concerns to others including their peers and healthcare providers. The brain health website contains free videos and resources that are available to the general public.

Submitted by: Natalie Lecher, Director, OLLI at University of Washington
"Murder, Magic, and Medicine"

Course Length: Four Weeks (four sessions)

Course Instructor: Emerita Professor of Biology, Dr. Jane Ellis, taught a variety courses (plant taxonomy, plant physiology, botany, medical botany, human anatomy/physiology) in her 30+ years of educational experience.

Course Delivery: In-Person

Course description: This course will provide an overview of the historic use of plants that have been used in murder, magic and medicine since ancient times. We will discuss the major classes of medically relevant compounds and then compare differences among plant/fungal poisons, toxins, and medicines. It will be important to explain how plant/fungal products act as stimulants, hallucinogens, and depressants in the body. After this we will briefly cover how plants/fungal medicines have been used to treat problems in digestion, circulation, respiration, and other body systems. Finally, we will examine present issues surrounding the use of plants as medicines and important areas of research moving forward.

QUICK TIPS FOR HELPING OPERATE AN OSHER INSTITUTE

Quick Tip - Reminding Osher Communities about Civil Discourse
In light of the division and contentiousness of local, national, and international political landscapes, it is important to remind members and instructors of the expectations of civil discourse within the OLLI community. Reminders can be posted on bulletin boards, noted in newsletters, catalogs, and e-blasts, and articulated at the start of class. Below is an example from OLLI at Northwestern University which is similar to other notices recently appearing in other Osher Institute e-newsletters.

**Respectful Debate**

- Disagreement is common in an academic environment that encourages discussion and debate of ideas. With this being an election year, we remind you that political discussions are only appropriate in study groups that are focused on this topic and that disagreement must be voiced in a respectful manner.

### CAREER OPENINGS IN THE OLLI NETWORK

**Job Board**

Program Director, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

*Duke University*

Customer Service Assistant - Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (Jupiter)

*Florida Atlantic University*

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