Greetings from the NRC  November 2020

This month’s Osher Institute Newsletter is a bit different from typical ones. With OLLI staff and volunteers so busy holding literally thousands of courses this fall term and having spent hours over the past few weeks presenting and attending sessions at the Virtual Osher Institutes National Conference, we’ve avoided recruiting newsletter contributions. Instead, the NRC Team makes up the full roster of contributors for this newsletter.

Much of what we have to offer you in this edition relates to the just completed Virtual Conference. Stacey Rivera gives us a summary of the Woo-Hoo winners from this year’s competition of great ideas. There are always wonderful idea-generators for local OLLIs in the Woo-Hoos. They’re chock full of successful special courses and events, unique service collaborations and thoughtful community examinations of the tough issues.
Kevin Connaughton writes a handy overview of the Conference, offering you resources and recordings to review – or view for the first time if you weren’t one of the representatives of your Osher Institute.

And I write a bit about my current favorite pastime, listening to podcasts. Turns out they are spreading throughout OLLIs across the country. Making them is easier than you might think. With the fast-growing technology skills of Osher members, I hope this option for community building and instruction keeps on growing.

Speaking of growing technology skills, I just read this week’s Community Cares newsletter from OLLI at Arizona State University. Program Coordinator, Abby Baker reflects on the amazing technical skill building success we are experiencing in OLLIs:

“…I have heard countless stories from you and our staff this year of successes in learning new technology (we’re all becoming "Zoom Masters" now!), silly moments in class with virtual backgrounds or pets, and feeling connected to something you know and love. Beyond the computer screen of your life, showing your life to me, I also know we’ve taught ourselves new skills, picked up dusty hobbies from the past, and been wildly innovative.”

Abby’s pride in the learning ASU members have done over these past eight months is shared by hundreds of staffers across the 124 Osher Institutes, and certainly by us at the Osher NRC. We applaud you brave techno-learners and join you in challenging ourselves in tech skills to keep our Osher communities strong.

Sending you wishes for health and safety from Chicago,

Steve Thaxton, Executive Director

Osher NRC
National Resource Center
for Osher Institutes
The 2020 Virtual Osher Institutes National Conference came to a close last week, but this time there was no luggage to pack or plane to catch home. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the decision was made to conduct the conference online. Not only was the “location” different, the format was different as well. The conference spanned over a week and a half with two sessions offered each day. Despite these differences, there were still many aspects that remained the same. Participants were provided ample opportunities to network, learn, and celebrate the mission of lifelong learning. Almost 600 Osher Institute directors, staff, and member leaders from all over the country attended at least one of the sessions. Programming for 2020 included a keynote session, five plenary sessions, five smaller group
sessions, and three facilitated discussion groups. Many of these included opportunities for networking, collaborations, and conversations.

Plenary session highlights included a presentation on storytelling by author and speaker Andy Goodman, a session on systemic racism by Dr. Rose M. Brewer a Morse Alumni Distinguished Teaching Professor and past chairperson of the Department of African American & African Studies at the University of Minnesota, a presentation by author of *The Happiness U-Curve*, Jonathan Rauch, and, finally, Beth Steinhorn, President of VQ Volunteer Strategies spoke on volunteerism during a pandemic. In the smaller group sessions, the virtual format allowed special guests Donna Butts, Executive Director of Generations United to present on the value of intergenerational programming, Lora Wey, Assistant Vice President of Strategic Philanthropy at Ringling College to speak on engaging donors, and, for morning workout sessions geared to 55+ adults. Attendees repeatedly expressed their gratitude to The Bernard Osher Foundation for their generous support of the National Conference. Overall, 2020 provided another great conference despite the pandemic. Of course, while some lamented that the conference could not be held in-person, many were pleased that the conference took the old stage saying to heart, “the show must go on”, with hopes of an in-person conference in 2022.

The Osher Institutes National Conference is a sesquennial, multi-day meeting that has been held at varied locations throughout the country since 2003. The Conference is fully funded by The Bernard Osher Foundation, and produced by the National Resource Center for Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes at Northwestern University in collaboration with staff and volunteer leaders throughout the Osher Network.

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Woo-Hoo, Let's Celebrate!
As is tradition, the 2020 Virtual Osher Institutes National Conference offered the opportunity for Institutes to share their wonderful, amazing, out-of-the-box experiences from their OLLI during 2019. Conference attendees were able to view the 78 submissions and vote on those they found to be the most meaningful. While the Osher NRC thinks that everyone should win as Institutes are all doing such important work, the following OLLIs took home the top prizes last week! These winning submissions are all excellent examples of how Osher Institutes are about more than just learning, they are about giving back to our communities, examining issues such as racism and ageism, and collaborating in service to one another.

Living Longer, Living Better: Changing the Culture of Aging
OLLI at Berkshire Community College held a rockin’ one-day conference on growing older, featuring keynote speaker Ashton Applewhite, author of This Chair Rocks: a Manifesto Against Ageism. Additional terrific panels featured local lawmakers and national experts, a spoken word performance by OLLI members, and an exhibit called “Creative Aging: 65 and Better in the Berkshires,” which featured profiles photographed and written by OLLI members. The profiles went on to be serialized in the local newspaper and displayed at the State House in Boston. Not only was the conference about challenging ageism, it also now provides inspiring examples of creative aging in the weekly newspaper!

Alternative Spring Break, a Student-led Week of Service Learning
For several years, members of OLLI at University of California Santa Cruz have participated in the Alternative Spring Break, a student-led week of service learning with a focus on the Watsonville community. The intergenerational and cross-cultural interactions have been powerful, allowing all to reconsider who is offering service to
whom. There is power in the wisdom of people’s efforts to work together to survive and thrive. We meet, we cultivate, we celebrate.

Monthly Potluck Meals for UNT Students
In 2019, OLLI at UNT members found new ways to serve the community that emphasized their support for younger generations of lifelong learners. Members began hosting monthly potluck meals for UNT students who have aged out of the foster care system, addressed food insecurity on campus by donating to the UNT Food Pantry, and donated school supplies to the local Children’s Advocacy Center for abused children and their families.

Civil Rights Activities in Atlanta During The 1960s
OLLI at Emory University has a long history of offering classes and public forums on the civil rights movement, race relations, and community engagement. This past year, it has made great strides to position itself as a change agent on these issues. Last fall, OLLI at Emory hosted a lecture series on the history of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Atlanta, which was televised on the AIB Networks to over two million homes in Georgia. This spring, the Fulton County District Attorney’s Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU) is partnering with OLLI to investigate the arrests of civil rights activists in Atlanta during the 1960s. Together they are researching the circumstances to determine if the arrests were unjust.

Black and White: Conundrums on Race
OLLI at The University of Alabama in Huntsville initiated an effort to expand members’ understanding of race relations. One popular course—Black and White: Conundrums on Race —engaged outside speakers for two terms to enlighten the predominately white audience on unexplored African American history. Speakers included a retired judge, a political activist, a historian, an arts educator, and city and university personnel with expertise in diversity. A field trip to historical civil rights sites in Birmingham brought the course to a resounding end.

Three Perspectives on Anti-Semitism
In November 2019, the Osher Institute at University of Richmond hosted a panel discussion and conversation on anti-Semitism as presented from the local, regional/national, and international perspectives. The Dean of the School of Professional and Continuing Studies moderated the panel that included the Henrico County Chief of Police, the FBI Special Agent in Charge of the Richmond Field Office, and the Executive Director of the Israel Action Network. They all addressed what is being done to identify, prevent, and address anti-Semitic activities and how organizations and individuals of all ages, backgrounds and faiths can be proactive and help. The Osher member who conceptualized this program also secured the local Jewish Community Center and the Jewish Community Federation of Richmond as cosponsors. This event was free and open to the broader Richmond community.

OLLl Podcasts are Popping Up Everywhere
Wikipedia defines a podcast as “an episodic series of spoken word digital audio files that a user can download to a personal device for easy listening”. Podcasts are hardly a new phenomenon. Their origins trace back to the early 2000s when pioneering journalists and broadcasters coined the linguistically blended term, combining “iPod” with “broadcast.”

Some innovative Institutes like OLLI at the University of North Texas (UNT) have been producing podcasts since 2018, currently with 55 episodes in their archive. The infinitely interesting people of OLLI – instructors and members with fascinating backgrounds and stories – offer a stream of subjects for these audio pleasures. Podcasts appeal to those of us with auditory learning style preferences. They are ideal for multi-taskers, too. Podcasts, like audiobooks can be terrific listening while driving, doing housework, exercising, or walking the dog. They also appeal to those in our OLLI demographic who were brought up on radio, because they often emulate quality radio programming, with hosts who curate and smoothly move us through interviews, stories, and information.

During these pandemic times, I find myself needing to get outside of the house/home office to avoid cabin fever. A good walk (masked, of course) with my headphones becomes a treat. Lately, I’ve searched podcasts produced by or featuring OLLIs, finding them easily. There are multiple aggregators of podcasts such as iTunes/Apple Podcasts, Google Play, and Stitcher. But a simple search using key words of OLLI and podcast finds some of these without going directly into the aggregators:

- OLLI at California State University San Bernardino
- OLLI at Duke University
If you haven’t discovered the delights of podcasts, try some out. You can use the links above to sample and learn about some of your peers at Osher Institutes across the country while raking leaves. And if you are an ambitious teacher, you might consider producing a podcast to augment your class presentations. Have some supplementary content you can’t fit into your classes? Observations on something related to your topic or just that side-road your students might enjoy? Offer it up with a short podcast full of stories and your passion for the subject will spread.

Podcasts don’t need to be highly produced or fancy. You can use your smart phone to record them and with a little help from your OLLI staff, post them for classmates to access. [Click here](#) to listen to my short “Podcast on Podcasts” highlighting three of the above OLLI podcasts. I hope you will hear, almost anyone can make one of these – even this podcast fan from the Osher NRC.

*Submitted by: Steve Thaxton, Executive Director, Osher NRC*

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**THE OLLI INSIDER**

**AN ADVICE COLUMN FOR Osher Institute Staff and Volunteers**

**Dear Olli**

**During Winter/Spring ‘21 Term Institute will offer courses/classes:**

Dear Olli, I am a volunteer leader working with the OLLI staff to determine how best to offer classes for the upcoming spring semester. I know many OLLIs are considering returning to campus, offering hybrid classes, or continuing online. It would be very helpful to know what other Institutes are planning at this time.

~OLLI Volunteer

Dear OLLI Volunteer,

In recent surveys conducted by the NRC, we can see the direction of spring classes is varied across the network. With winter and spring terms just around the corner, now is
the time to decide the best option for your members, Institute, and university. As with the fall term, many Institute directors are planning for all possibilities: a plan for online, for mixed, and, for on-ground. Although for many, multiple plans and options are just not a feasible route and decisions have already been made. This graph shows the results from our most recent survey at the end of September, where you can see that the majority (70%) of Institutes are already planning to offer courses remotely only. Hopefully, this perspective can offer insight as you make your own decision for winter and spring.
~Olli

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

QUICK TIPS FOR HELPING OPERATE AN OSHER INSTITUTE

Quick Tip - Recognize Volunteers

Volunteerism in Osher Institutes is as important now as it ever has been. In her conference session *Engaging Volunteers in Our New Reality*, Beth Steinhorn, President of VQ Strategies stressed the importance of recognizing the contributions that volunteers make to your Institute through more than just a branded gift or verbal "thank you." This recognition can take many forms, but a few suggestions include:

- Invite volunteers to write an article on their project for a publication
- Offer to send volunteers to a conference or cover their registration for a virtual conference
- Provide volunteers with training or mentorship on new technology, practices, or research
- Donate a book to a library in volunteers’ names
- Create a photo album or digital slide show with pictures of volunteer activities, programs, or events

CAREER OPENINGS IN THE OLLI NETWORK

Job Board

Program Manager, Center for Graduate and Continuing Studies - OLLI
Widener University

OLLI Director - College of Education and Human Sciences
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Is there a staff opening at your Osher Institute? Please send it to us at oshernrc@northwestern.edu

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