Seasons Greetings from the NRC

December 2024

If your mailbox is like mine, this is the time of the year you find numerous appeals for donations, typically from every cause you’ve supported in the past. The “mail-merge” lists are humming along, campaigns are buzzing, and the heartfelt requests abound in this season when generosity peaks. Supporting those groups feels good. You might experience a warm, nostalgic sense of tradition as you remit annual gifts to organizations you respect and perhaps have volunteered for over the years. Often, but not always among those well-timed and beautifully stated asks, might be one from your Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

I’m occasionally surprised that some folks don’t realize that their own OLLI is a deserving recipient of charitable donations. There’s sometimes a sense that it is a “fee for service business” their university or college offers. End of story. I hope that’s not the case with you. Because your OLLI’s livelihood and future depends on your financial support as well as your personal engagement as a member and volunteer. It’s a spirit of giving that Bernard Osher has generously modeled since he started funding OLLIs in 2001.

Osher Institutes typically have multiple funding sources: a prescribed draw from the earnings of their Osher Foundation endowment; membership and course fees; in-kind services (and often monetary contributions) by their host universities and colleges; along with charitable contributions. Your contributions – no matter how large or small – show the value you place in your OLLI community. Donations help keep membership and course fees lower. And they help your local OLLI sustainably grow and expand learning opportunities for you and future generations. It’s a fallacy
that universities are required to run these programs for older adult students. Nor is it true they produce profits that underwrite other university programs. OLLIs are service programs that indicate the university values you as a student whose life will be enriched and enhanced by the healthy practice of lifelong learning with others in community.

This year, as your donation envelopes stack up, please consider adding your OLLI to that deserving list of recipients of your treasure, along with your time and talents. All of these contributions are great investments in yourself, your friends, and the longer-term future of lifelong learning in your town.

I hope you enjoy our final Osher Network Newsletter stories of 2023. The NRC team sends sincere wishes for healthy and happy holidays.

Steve Thaxton, Executive Director

Osher NRC
National Resource Center for Osher Institutes

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OLLII NEWS

OLLII AT MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Exploring Rural Communities in Montana's Central Plains
Travelers from OLLI at Montana State University (MSU) and the MSU Retiree Association set off last spring for a three-day tour into the central part of their state. Their mission and the tour's title: "Exploring Rural Communities in Montana's Central Plains." The 20 travelers sought to better understand rural and agricultural issues by meeting and learning firsthand from residents in the Fergus, Petroleum, and Musselshell Counties of Montana.

Along the regional route, participants learned about everything from geography, railroads, and wind energy, to the Minute Man III missile program, MSU Extension, rural electric cooperatives, and Métis culture, all while enjoying many local attractions.

In Lewistown, the group visited the American Prairie's National Discovery Center to study the ecology and importance of the imperiled prairie ecosystem. In the town of Winnett, they visited the Brady Ranch, heard from ACES (Agricultural Community Enhancement and Sustainability) and the World Wildlife Fund. They also visited the recently opened Petroleum County Community Center, where local residents led the group through some of downtown Winnett's many community projects. On the final day of the trip, the group visited Grass Range and Roundup. Docent staff at the Musselshell Valley Historical Museum guided them through many exhibits. During a BBQ lunch in the Coal Miner's Hall, the Musselshell Watershed Coalition educated the visitors about the Musselshell River and local cooperative efforts to support the health of this critical Montana watershed.

A final highlight of the tour was a visit to the Kilby Butte Hutterite Colony, just east of Roundup. Travelers were welcomed with a resident-led tour of the Colony's
school, kitchen, and food processing facilities. Colony members shared many cultural details and samples of their dill pickles and sausage production.

One tour participant said: "This OLLI trip to Montana's plains and prairie was memorable in so many ways. Perhaps most meaningful to me was the opportunity to hear directly from rural residents and witness firsthand their resourcefulness and dedication to the health and vitality of their communities."

Submitted by: OLLI at Montana State University

OLLI AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

OLLI at GMU Awarded the 2023 ArtsFairfax Education Award

The ArtsFairfax Education Award recognizes an artist or arts organization for providing exceptional arts education opportunities and experiences in Fairfax County, VA. Each year, honorees are selected by their peers within the community. “The 2023 ArtsFairfax Awards honorees all demonstrate how the arts revitalize communities, improve our wellbeing, and spark creativity in unexpected places” says Linda Sullivan, ArtsFairfax President & CEO.

OLLI at George Mason University (GMU) sparks the creativity of its members by offering creative arts, music, writing, and poetry programs. For those interested in visual arts, OLLI programs a host of historical classes such as the recent “Ancient Aegean Civilizations” or “Storied American Art Museums.” OLLI members are also found with sleeves rolled up in studio art classes, such as “Watercolor Painting,” or
“Dabbling Artists.” Those with a deeper creative itch can be found working throughout the year on projects as part of the “Annex Art,” “Crafts and Conversations,” and “Photography” Clubs.

OLLI classes and clubs not only feed the minds but also fuel the hearts of members; the arts programs are no exception. The Photography Club donates hundreds of hours each year providing photographic services not only to Mason faculty and students, but also community organizations such as the Northern Virginia Senior Olympics. This is one example of how OLLI members enrich the local community. OLLI at GMU executive director Jennifer Disano says “OLLI at George Mason University is honored to receive the 2023 ArtsFairfax Award for Arts Education in Fairfax County; a community of over 1.2 million people. It is especially moving to be recognized by our education peers in this competitive award, as a major contributor to community arts programming and enrichment.”

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

THE OLLI INSIDER

INNOVATIVE COURSES AND CONTENT DELIVERY

Curriculum Corner

Osher Institute at University of Rhode Island
Let’s Skate!

Course Length: Eight sessions
Course Instructor: Instructor Dorothy M. Cunningham holds a B.A. in English from URI and has taught in public and private schools for over 40 years. The Iditarod has been a favorite topic among her students and their parents throughout this time. Last year, Dorothy attended the Iditarod in person for its 50th anniversary. During that same time period, she coached figure skating and hockey skills classes. Her Franklin Blades Skating School has produced skaters for professional ice shows,
various learn-to-skate programs, and coaches who work with all levels from beginners to Olympic skaters. Dorothy teaches private lessons for skating skills in figure and hockey skating at various arenas in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

**Course Delivery:** On the ice at Boss Ice Arena

**Course description:** Refresh your ice-skating skills or get started in a sport that is challenging, social, and a lot of fun. Starting with the basics, each skater will be given personal attention by our coach according to the step-by-step learning programs of the United States Figure Skating Association and the Ice Sports Industry. Participants may continue skating after class.

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

**OLLI at Auburn University Offers Intergenerational Programming**

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 Auburn University Offers Intergenerational Programming**

OLLI at Auburn University presented an intergenerational course titled “Race and Landscape in the Loveliest Village on the Plains” with triple enrollment of undergraduate, graduate, and OLLI students. Led by Associate Professor Elijah Gaddis, the class explored the development of Auburn, Alabama, through stories of those who have lived, worked, and studied there. Each generation shared their perspective on the city’s difficult history and the ongoing struggle for human and civil rights.
CAREER OPENINGS IN THE OLLI NETWORK

Job Board

Senior Program Coordinator - Osher Online
National Resource Center for Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes at Northwestern University

Business Coordinator - Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
UTMB Health

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

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