Greetings from the NRC  OCTOBER 2020

Two of the overarching themes for the Osher Network in 2020 might aptly be adaptation and creativity. Don’t you think these have both proven to be universally necessary for all of us?

Adaptation and creativity are again content themes of this month’s National Newsletter. We see them in the innovative work of OLLI at University of Nebraska-Lincoln with their multi-purpose television broadcast of the “OLLI Showcase” program. We see it in the creative collaborations of the multiple sites of OLLI at the University of Delaware. And, we see it in the adaptations of an annual fall favorite book festival at OLLI at George Mason University in Virginia.

For those of you who will join us for the 2020 Virtual Osher Institutes National Conference beginning on October 19th, you will hear many stories of adaptation and creativity. While there are limits on the invitees as there always have been with our in-person conferences, a few more folks will be able to attend this year at the invitation of Osher directors. Given the adapted online platform, all the sessions will be recorded. So shortly after the Virtual Conference is over on October 28th, directors will have access to share recordings with volunteer leaders and members.

This newsletter is another example of adaptation. Have you have noticed it looks a little different this month? Right after our intrepid editor, Stacey Rivera hit the send button in
September, she received notice that the previous graphic format was “no longer supported” by the application vendor. Translation: redesign the newsletter with another format immediately or the October edition will not go out. With adaptation and creativity from our esteemed graphic design colleague Liz Rondone here at Northwestern, we sprang into action. I hope you enjoy the new look and functionality – because there is no looking back!

Looking ahead with creativity to an adapted fall term of lifelong learning,

Steve Thaxton, Executive Director

Osher NRC
National Resource Center for Osher Institutes

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For nearly two decades, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University has paired with Fall for the Book to promote books and literacy in northern Virginia. Fall for the Book, a non-profit affiliate of George Mason University, sponsors a book festival every autumn to showcase local and nationally acclaimed authors, part of the university’s goal to extend its learning mission into the community. OLLI at Mason hosts several of the book talk events on its campus, introducing the festival to its membership and beyond.

The pairing is a win-win. OLLI members get a sneak peak of the festival agenda and priority registration for the events that best match membership interests, usually talks on award winning fiction, biographies, or history books. In recent years, students delighted in presentations and dialogues with notables such as Colson Whitehead (The Underground Railroad), Delia Owens (Where the Crawdads Sing), and Lauren Groff (Fate and Furies). In return, Fall for the Book enjoys free venues for accommodating even more events for eager readers, and amplified advertising of its events within the community.

The Fall for the Book Festival is going online this fall to ensure everyone’s safety in the era of COVID-19. While members won’t get to brush up with authors in person, everyone everywhere will now be able to tune in for a front row seat to enjoy wonderful book talks, workshops, and readings that please the whole family. This year’s headliners include Rainbow Rowell and Tommy Orange, along with Porochista Khakpour, Emily Wilson, David Marwell, Art Taylor, and so many more. Visit the festival website for a full listing of the festival offerings and to learn more about this popular event.
So, as the cold weather settles in outside, grab your comfy chair, log into your laptop, and escape to the warm embrace of great literature from your home.

Submitted by: Alice Slayton-Clark, Communications and Program Associate, OLLI at George Mason University

OLLI AT UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

How a Pandemic Provided a New Promotional Opportunity

Nothing creates the will to change more than a crisis. In this case, the crisis is a global pandemic leaving Osher leaders to ponder new ways to engage with OLLI members. With physical distancing, self-isolating and remote learning the new normal, reaching potential new audiences is a challenge. However, there are also new opportunities, perhaps some that have been overlooked, until now.

In 2019, OLLI at University of Nebraska-Lincoln launched the beginning of its 2019-20 membership year with its first public event Showcase. More than 500 people attended. The Showcase replaced the worn-out open house that had been used for several years. It allowed members and guests to socialize, sample abbreviated courses, meet the OLLI travel vendor, check out the 17 OLLI interest groups, and enjoy entertainment by OLLI ukulele players. This successful event spawned the largest membership year for OLLI at UNL.

With large gatherings called off due to the pandemic, the requisite question remained: How can we engage prospective new members if we can’t meet face-to-face? When
the co-chair of OLLI’s Curriculum Committee suggested that television might be the answer, OLLI staff jumped into action.

Lincoln’s television educational access channel has been in place since the mid-1990s. Programming on this channel is typically allocated to local schools and universities by the City of Lincoln. The City provides services, equipment, and television production facilities. The only cost is the use of City staff assisting in producing programming. With a focus on in-person courses and activities, this local resource had never been used by OLLI.

Osher Institute staff worked with the coordinator of Lincoln’s television access channel to produce a new program for broadcast. Arrangements were made for OLLI volunteers to introduce the video, and instructors to record presentations in the television studio. The Chancellor of the University of Nebraska, Ronnie Green, recorded a welcome and greeting. Footage from previously produced promotional videos was included in the program. The final product was a 90-minute, OLLI Showcase video. The program went on the air in early August and is scheduled to run through December on three educational access cable channels.

The OLLI Showcase has since been divided into four individual segments, breaking the program into times slots between 18 to 25 minutes, making it more manageable for viewers. Each segment is scheduled and broadcasted at various times during the week. All the programs are also available to view online.

Showcase videos are promoted in the OLLI at UNL weekly email newsletter “OLLI Connects,” social media, through the City’s television access program guide, and in local newspapers. However, the greatest marketing asset is word of mouth. Members are asked to share the Showcase video links (below) with friends, neighbors, family, and colleagues.

**Full 90-Minutes Program**

*Fall Blub Planting* (18 Minutes)
*American Author Willa Cather* (21 Minutes)
*The Big Bang Theory: A Universe from Nothing* (18 Minutes)
*The First Amendment* (25 Minutes)

OLLI at UNL will soon evaluate how this new format will reshape future promotional efforts. Video and television have the advantage of accommodating the disruptions of in-person life. These mediums are having particular impact during the pandemic in reaching broader audiences. OLLI at UNL considers this an opportunity to grow and connect in different ways. After all, even in a pandemic lifelong learning doesn’t retire.

Submitted by: Patricia Saldana, Communications Associate, **OLLI at University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

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**OLLI AT UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE**
Collaborating Across the State for a Joint Online Program

When the University of Delaware’s on-site OLLI programs were put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic, some classes were able to continue their discussions virtually for the rest of the semester. Virtual social groups kept OLLI interactions alive, and OLLI’s extracurricular needlecraft groups sewed masks for donation. In the meantime, staff and volunteers set their sights on developing and launching a fully-online pilot program that ultimately enrolled more than 700 participants in over 40 courses and activities for a one-month summer offering.

The videoconferencing format was new to many, but instructors and students adapted quickly, crediting OLLI staff and volunteers for providing the needed support and virtual hand-holding. OLLI staff and volunteers held numerous Zoom training sessions and persevered through many first-time challenges. “I am amazed at how much I'm enjoying the virtual interaction,” said OLLI member Marge Felty. “We're navigating new territory together and learning in the comfort of our own homes.” In addition to taking OLLI classes, Felty hosted a bi-weekly “Whatever Makes You Happy Hour” with fellow OLLI member Susan Watkins.

The UD OLLI programs normally operate as largely independent locations in Wilmington, Bridgeville, Dover, Lewes and Ocean View, Delaware, but have joined forces to share strengths among staff, volunteers, instructors, committees and membership, said UD OLLI managers Jennifer Merrill and Anna Moshier. Following a successful summer program, the fall semester is now underway with nearly 1,900 enrollments and more than 200 course offerings. “Science of the Delaware Coast”
(photo above from 2019) is an example of a site-based course that was adapted as a virtual offering. Initially hosted on-location at UD’s marine sciences campus through a partnership with the Delaware Sea Grant program, it was adapted as “Water Sciences Grab Bag” for an online summer offering with 84 participants.

“Everyone who took the class told me how remarkable the speakers were and how much they enjoyed hearing about UD’s research,” said Moshier. “Our members feel more a part of UD through this initiative.” Another all-online UD OLLI Online Spring 2021 semester is currently in the planning stages.

Submitted by: Anna Moshier, Manager, OLLI at the University of Delaware in Kent and Sussex Counties

NRC UPDATES

2020 Virtual Osher Institutes National Conference
Keynote Address by Jonathan Rauch
Midlife crisis, like the Seinfeld show, is often literally about nothing. Yet it seems unshakable for those experiencing it. Society treats it as a joke or a cliché, yet it is natural, normal, and lays groundwork for surprising happiness and wisdom in later adulthood. Drawing on cutting-edge psychology, neuroscience, and even economics, while also tapping his own experiences and those of dozens of interviewees, Jonathan Rauch — author of the major Atlantic magazine cover article "The Real Roots of Midlife Crisis" and the engaging book, “The Happiness Curve” — explains why even chimps get midlife malaise, and how humans can cope with it far better than we do. Rauch emphasizes that older adults are healthier, happier, and have more to give than ever before, and they and society are already starting to invent new ways to contribute. The old black-and-white distinction between work and retirement is giving way to the mixed pursuits of “encore adulthood.”

Jonathan Rauch
Senior Fellow, the Brookings Institution
Contributing Editor, The Atlantic
Author, The Happiness Curve: Why Life Gets Better After 50

Dear Olli,
I’m very excited for the upcoming virtual conference. This might be a silly question, but what should I wear?
~OLLI Member

Dear OLLI Member,
It is not a silly question, as depending on the presentations you attend, you may be asked to be on camera. Several of our smaller group sessions will have interactive elements that ask participants to engage (and view) other participants. You will never be required to have your video camera on, but it does add to the discussions when applicable. So, if you do attend sessions where you will be on camera, we suggest wearing whatever you are comfortable wearing.

You can be formal, business casual, or just plain casual; anything from a tee shirt to a
tuxedo. Just use common sense as to what is appropriate, and as the camera typically only shows from the shoulders up, we won’t ask if you’re wearing any pants. ;-) ~Olli

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

QUICK TIPS FOR HELPING OPERATE AN O Sher INSTITUTE

Quick Tip - Tell Members about the Osher NRC Monthly Newsletter

The Osher NRC publishes this monthly e-newsletter with the hope that it is interesting and useful to Osher Institute staff, volunteer leaders, members, as well as others in the world of lifelong learning. A great way for Institutes to spread the word about happenings throughout the Osher Network is to encourage members to subscribe to the Osher NRC Monthly Newsletter in your own e-newsletters as shown above in this example from the OLLI at Northwestern University.

CAREER OPENINGS IN THE OLLI NETWORK

Job Board

Program Assistant II - Academic Affairs - Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
West Virginia University

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

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