



OLLI News

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
at George Mason University



Summer 2005, Issue 6

www.lli.gmu.edu

July 25, 2005

We Are Not Alone

By Debbie Halverson, Membership Chair

Sometimes we get so immersed in our own OLLI world that we don't realize we are part of a larger one. Hop onto www.elderhostel.org/ein/intro.asp and you will find that we are one of 335 LLIs affiliated with the EIN (Elderhostel Institute Network) pursuing goals like ours. I find it exciting to read about what others are doing, their programs and methods.

Some of them are Osher-backed and some are not. Some are well established and some are start-ups. Some are attached to large universities and some to community colleges, which means that it matters not whether in a large city or a township, senior adult learning is a movement that continues to move.

The current newsletter on the above-mentioned website has interesting information about the larger goals and activities of EIN. It was asked to participate in planning the White House Conference on Aging scheduled for December 2005, focusing on the upcoming retirement needs of Baby Boomers. You can read about the September Mid-Atlantic conference in Asheville, North Carolina, that some of our folks will attend. Also mentioned are specific programs of particular LLIs...like ours.

You'll be delighted to click on a link, highlighted in red, "Our Dutch Cousins-- Outstanding Course Example". There in all its glory is the description of our own spring term class, mentioning Bob Webb and

Mathilde Speier. Please note the words: "Outstanding Course Example"! We are proud to be recognized and should advise you that this is not the first time our program has been mentioned in the EIN newsletter.

More than pride might drive you to periodically access this website. Programs, organizational structure, recruitment methods, websites that teach, books of interest...there's a wide source of helpful information available for your perusal. So, do take time to check it out.

Travel Alert

By Virlinda Snyder, Program Committee

Have you been on a recent trip to an exciting place in the world? The Program Committee is looking for members who would be willing to share their travel stories and photographs during the winter or spring 2006 terms. Recent "trip tales" have covered South America, Africa, Scandinavia, Continental Europe, Cambodia, and Thailand. Where have you been? We are also looking for reports on any Elderhostel trips you may have taken. Our Armchair Travels series has always drawn a crowd and has been well received. If you are interested in helping or want more information, please contact Virlinda Snyder at 703-339-5748 or via email to virlinda@aol.com.

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Committee Chairs Named

by Charles Duggan, President

With the election of new Board members and the commencement of a new program year, there have been a number of changes in the leadership of our standing committees. The OLLI committees and their respective chairs are as follows:

Administration	Susanne Zumbro
Development	Eileen Duggan
Facilities	Ben Gold
Finance	Don Yesukaitis
Hospitality	Sandra Driesslein
Membership	Debbie Halverson
Long-term Planning	Pat Carroll
Programs	Carol Ferrara
Program Review	Kathryn Russell
Publications	Gordon Canyock
Reston Support	Abbie Edwards
Special Events	Florence Adler
University Liaison	Bob Bohall

As president, I am personally chairing the Executive Director Search Committee.

Our organization is managed and run through its committees. As members, we all owe these individuals our appreciation for taking on these management responsibilities.

Search for Executive Director

By Charles Duggan, President

Early in June, OLLI was notified that it had been awarded a second year Osher Foundation grant. Our request for the grant had specified that we wished to use the funds to seek and employ a full-time executive director. The foundation granted our request with the proviso that we use the funds primarily for that purpose.

Once the grant was received, we immediately formed a special ad hoc search committee to seek qualified candidates. Although the person will report directly to me and be accountable to our Board, he or she will be an employee of GMU (at our expense).

An ad for this position is now on GMU's career opportunity website. To access it, enter the following address in your web browser: jobs.gmu.edu (do not start with www. - it won't work). When the site opens, click on "search postings," the second link on the left hand side. When the window opens, type FA511Z in the position number box and then click search. This will pull up the posting. It also ran in the July 17 edition of the *Washington Post*.

I would like to ask all OLLI members to help in the search. If you know of any qualified individuals who may be interested in the position, please direct them to reply to the posting.

Program Coordinator Replacement

By Kathryn Russell, Program Review Committee Chair

The Board has decided to wait until the new Executive Director is hired before recruiting a replacement for Carol Ferrara as Program Coordinator. The fall 2005 program has been completed, but work should begin soon to develop the winter 2006 program. The Program Review Committee, assisted by several volunteers from the Board, is assuming the responsibility of replacing Carol as an interim solution. All members are encouraged to come out for the Resource Group meetings in August and to provide course suggestions to the committee.

New OLLIs Join the Ranks

By Eileen Duggan, Development Committee Chair

Thirteen new OLLIs were awarded grants in June. The total number of institutes is now 73, spread among 32 states. The Osher Foundation stated a goal of funding 100 OLLIs, so additional awards will probably be made. The new OLLIs are U. of Alabama at Huntsville, U. of Alaska at Fairbanks, American U., U. of Arizona, Hampton U. (VA), U. of Massachusetts – Boston, U. of Missouri – Columbia, New York U., Saginaw Valley State U. (MI), U. of South Carolina – Beaufort, U. of Southern Mississippi – Hattiesburg, Texas Tech U., U. of Wisconsin - Madison

Sorry, No Cheese and Crackers

By Debbie Halverson, Membership Chair

One of the liveliest activities held in TA-1 isn't a class, although one can learn from it; it isn't a special event, although one could find it entertaining; it might be social, but there are no cheese and crackers. It's the regular OLLI Board of Directors meeting that lasts a few hours on the third Friday of every month, and it goes largely unnoticed by OLLI members. That's not surprising because a Board meeting surely sounds like the perfect place to be bored.

I'm a Board member and I've never been bored since I came on-Board (I couldn't resist the pun) a year ago. The Board's business is certainly serious; we are, after all, responsible for the fiscal and operational activities of a 689 member organization, and we approach our job very responsibly. But with 18 personalities discussing numerous issues that range from the exact wording of a resolution to classroom use to party food, it can at times rise to high drama as urgently waving hands attempt to signal the President

that one's voice must be heard. We're not robots; laughter, amusing asides, and banter lighten the burden of the job. And again, as with any Board, we have the strongly opinionated, the emotional, the tight-lipped, the loose-lipped, and the very wordy. (Board members who are reading this, you know who you are.)

All members are welcome to attend these meetings and to have their opinions heard. We know that many of our members have had experience in a variety of fields and your expertise in some areas could be exactly what is needed as we deliberate a tricky issue. Come when you wish; leave when you wish. The rest of us will hang on for the words, "meeting adjourned."

Readers' Theatre at Reston

By Gordon Canyock, Occasional RT Coordinator

The overly popular Readers' Theatre at Tallwood will initiate a program at Lake Anne this fall. Current RT members and aspiring thespians are encouraged to give it a try. Full details will be available in the fall catalog, due to be posted on the OLLI Website by August 1. If you would like to try your hand at "acting from the waist up," join Lynn Gramzow, the artistic coordinator, and fellow Restonites in learning more about plays and play reading. Each week members of the class perform as one of the characters in a play or become a part of the audience.

OLLI News

Final Summer Issue

Published weekly when classes are in session

Acting Editor Gordon Canyock

Proofreader Karen Hamilton

Interview With Carol Ferrara

By Arleen Richman, OLLI News Staff Writer

“I’ve had a good time here,” is the way Carol Ferrara begins reflecting on her 15 year career here. “I will remember all the wonderful people who enjoyed the classes and one another and the wonderful camaraderie that flowed through the OLLI community,” she elaborates.

In 1990, Carol was working for Ken Plum, Director of the Fairfax County Office of Adult Education, who assigned her to be the liaison to the steering committee charged with the task of creating LRI as a new learning experience for seniors. Their first task was to research programs offered by other LRIs. Then they focused on ways LRI could best use local resources to become a special education institute for older adults. Carol recalls that “Early on, the committee decided that the program should have an academic focus since other activities, such as bridge, exercise classes and crafts were offered at nearby senior centers and church groups.” All agreed that they wanted an educational institution where seniors could learn, without worrying about grades or other pressures.

Carol became LRI’s first Administrator, registering members and setting up the classrooms and the coffee. In 1999 she moved over to program planning, “which is my real interest.” Her educational background is in biology (she holds a Masters of Science from Fordham University), and she believes that “all aspects of my academic education have played a role in my work here.”

She views her major accomplishment to be the growth in programming. “That first semester we had 13 classes in one site; now we offer 60 classes in two main locations

with other classes off site...and we are exploding,” she says. Fewer than 100 students enrolled the first semester; this semester, OLLI counted almost 700 members.

Carol feels that OLLI –and her work there– make a big difference in people’s lives. “The members join for an education,” she notes, “but they get so much more – lifelong friendships, new interests, the opportunity to share life experiences and to help others.” Conversely, she feels that both the instructors and students have enriched her life. “I love being able to meet these amazing teachers and work with them to plan programs that allow me to glimpse what is going on in their world,” she says. She remembers an art teacher who brought in a Manet lithograph that Carol got to hold. “Where else would I get that opportunity?” she asks. “Over the years, I also enjoyed the opportunity to get to know many of the students.” She is grateful to each and every teacher who gave us their time and experience because “without them we would have nothing.”

Planning programs at OLLI gave her immediate feedback. “Students tell me right away if the program is good and how it could be improved,” she says. Although she leaves her position at OLLI at the end of August, she has completed the programming for OLLI’s fall 2005 semester.

Her immediate plans include a major house renovation -- she lives in Vienna with her husband, Charles, a dentist who practices in McLean. They have four grown children, but no grandkids to date. She doesn’t know what will follow this, but she might choose to come back to OLLI as a student, “after taking a breather so that people have time to forget that I know how every piece of equipment works,” she notes with a chuckle.



Carol Ferrara

Letters to the Editor

As news of Carol Ferrara's departure spreads, the editorial staff has been receiving messages recognizing her contribution to OLLI.

In about 1989, after I had been meeting for some time with Katherine Brooks, our founder, in an attempt to get GMU's sponsorship for OLLI (then LRI) and space for us, Katherine called me and said she was inviting Ken Plum, her Delegate to Richmond and her friend, to meet us for lunch. Ken Plum, who was then Director of the Office of Adult Education, Fairfax County Public Schools, arrived with his assistant, Carol Ferrara. I took one look at her –she was approximately 25 years younger than I, which made her about 40 years younger than Katherine, and I thought, "this won't do." How can she help us? What does she know about senior citizens and worse than that, we don't need the "attitude" young people have to "old folks." Within 15 minutes after meeting Carol, I realized I was the only one with an "attitude."

That is the very essence of Carol – everyone is her friend, and since the very birth of this organization, she has treated all of us that way. Friends do their very best for friends. That's Carol – she has always given us her very best and I shall miss her.

---Lilyan Spero, past president

In my brief time on the Program Committee, I have gotten to know Carol much better than I had previously. I have come to respect her both for the encyclopedic knowledge that she carries in her head and for the unflappable way she handles pressure. She is warm and supportive to everyone, and never seems to freak out over instructors who bail out at the last minute or just disappear. She will be missed.

---Eileen Duggan, Director

I first met Carol in 1990 shortly after my retirement when a local newspaper carried a report that several persons, including Carol (then working for Ken Plum), were establishing a lifelong learning institute in Fairfax. I became an LRI member the next spring when the first classes were offered in a single room that included a wobbly old desk for Carol as the first administrator. LRI/OLLI has come a long way since then. Many have said that she was the "glue that held LRI together" and helped it prosper. Indeed, she was and is!

---Michael Styles, past president

President's Message

This is the last edition of the *OLLI News* for summer 2005, and it is the last time that we will publish while Carol Ferrara serves as our Program Coordinator.

It is therefore with sadness that I write to say farewell to Carol. She has been a mainstay at OLLI throughout our history as she was hired shortly after our formation. *(continued)*

While with us, she has literally performed every job and has been our program coordinator for the past seven years. The Institute will not be the same without her.

When you look at the catalogs of other LLI's, you quickly realize that we have one of the best programs in the nation. Or, to quote from this year's Osher grant letter, "Yours is a mature program, which serves as a model for others..." Carol's contribution in making this happen is immeasurable.

She has touched all our lives and we owe her our gratitude. To celebrate her contributions and to say thank you, we are planning a mid-day gathering on September 7th at 1:00 pm. I hope to see as many of you as possible at this reception.

--- Charles Duggan, President

Our Schools: A View from the Top

By Roxanne Cramer, OLLI News Staff Writer

Dr. Jack Dale, Superintendent of the Fairfax County schools, and Phillip Niedzielski-Eichner, Chairman of the School Board, spoke to OLLI members on July 12.

As head of the 12th largest school system in the country, who has been on board for just a year, Dr. Dale spoke of his observations so far. First, he finds high value placed on people at all levels. Next he sees value in diversity. In a county where students from 200 countries attend school speaking 100 languages, diversity is a factor in all interactions. Third, Dr. Dale has high expectations—from everyone from himself through the administration, support staff, teachers and the students themselves.

One of the most important forces currently affecting education is the Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Dr. Dale's

vision is that eventually no students will fail. While students at the top do very well, there are many who are not being well served and are likely to drop out.

One way struggling students' needs can be met is through a collaborative effort among all teachers on a grade level. They work together to ensure that no student slips through the cracks.

Additionally, the extra time and effort needed for low achieving students could be effected, Dr. Dale believes, by means of a two-tiered pay scale. Some teachers prefer the 190+ school year while others would prefer a longer contract, with the resulting higher pay. Dr. Dale feels this could accomplish the goal of serving the needy students, as well as raise the pay for teachers who want the longer contract, and help with the serious problem of teacher retention.

Dr. Dale took a few questions. One concerned the Standards of Learning (SOL) and NCLB testing of developmentally handicapped students. He agreed that such students need special consideration. He stressed that teachers need to avoid teaching to the test. He also praised the "CAPPY Award" winners and students at Thomas Jefferson High School who are some of the stars in the county's crown."

Philip Niedzielski-Eichner, School Board chair, spoke briefly, and then took questions from the floor. He stated that Dr. Dale was "someone who built bridges." Indeed, working with a huge community that is both ethnically and socio-economically diverse, with the parents and teachers of these diverse students, and with a school board that pays 75% of the school system's budget, a superintendent would HAVE to be a bridge builder!