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Members Enjoy OLLI Holiday Party at Country Club of Fairfax, December 2

December 12, 2025

Editor of the Week: David Gundry

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Alerts & Notices

- You should have received the OLLI winter catalog in the mail. All offerings are now 'Add to Cart;' you no longer need to prioritize courses. Register early to increase your chances for enrollment.
- Computer Club meeting on Saturday, December 13 (tomorrow), at 1:00. See article below.
- The next issue of *OLLI E-News* will be published Friday, January 2; the regular deadline for submission of items is Tuesday, December 30, at 6:00.

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From the Desk of the Executive Director

OLLI Mason Celebrates America's 250th with Virginia Humanities Grant



By Lisa Mariam, Executive Director

OLLI Mason is proud to announce its participation in the nationwide commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of our nation through a special programming initiative supported in part by a Virginia Humanities VA250 grant. The semiquincentennial offers a unique opportunity to reflect on the founding ideals of our nation and explore their continuing impact on American life.

With the generous support of Virginia Humanities, the VA250 Commission, and Fairfax County Public Libraries, OLLI Mason will present 10 free lectures offered both online and in-person at

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influence our present and future.

The VA250 grant program, administered by Virginia Humanities, funds projects that engage communities in meaningful conversations about the Revolution and its enduring significance. OLLI Mason is honored to be among more than 65 museums, libraries, and cultural organizations across Virginia receiving support for this historic commemoration. The OLLI project is highlighted in [an article on the VA Humanities website](#).

You'll find these lectures as well as other 250th-related programs highlighted in OLLI Mason catalogs with a tri-cornered hat throughout 2026. Let's come together to celebrate, learn, and reflect on the stories that continue to define our shared American experience.

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Something More to Celebrate in 2026



By Camille Hodges, Humanities and Social Sciences/Current Events Program Planning Group Chair

"The International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists" was proposed by the UN General Assembly in 2022 as "IYRP 2026." Part of its vision statement recognizes the economic, environmental and social importance of rangelands, and of pastoralists worldwide as their custodians as well as the group commitment to conserving biodiversity.

If you or a colleague has expertise in this area, please consider teaching a course at OLLI that shares this important United Nations Resolution.

Here is a link to the course proposal form for your convenience:

<https://olli.gmu.edu/OLLI-course-proposal-form/>.

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Some Exciting Winter Classes in Reston – Plus a Look Ahead!

By Susan Job, Program Associate

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Have you ever wondered who might have the Best Voice on the Planet? Or thought about writing a book? Or were curious about the challenges of retiring single? It's not too late!

Register to join us in Reston for:

- 104R/104Z The Best Voice on the Planet
- 414R It's Never Too Late to Write Your Novel!
- 205R/205Z Retiring Single: Four Key Considerations for a Successful Transition.

Looking ahead to spring, classes in Reston include: 1) Behind the Headlines: Why Government Sometimes Takes Action, and 2) Starvation in the Midst of Plenty (a deep dive into diabetes and its impact).

We're also planning fall 2026 programming in Reston, and we need your help! If you're interested in teaching or know someone who would love to share their expertise, please encourage them to submit a program proposal. The deadline for fall 2026 proposals for Reston is February 9. Your ideas and participation make OLLI Reston vibrant and engaging. Let's keep learning together!

Please submit a proposal; click the following link to access the [OLLI Course Proposal Form](#) or contact Susan Job at sjob2@gmu.edu.

Thanks!

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Topic for December 17 Wednesday Conversation



By Brenda Bloch-Young and Doris Bloch, Co-Moderators

Team Bloch (Brenda Bloch-Young and Doris Bloch) sponsors a biweekly social meeting every other Wednesday afternoon. We always propose a topic for discussion and encourage everyone to feel comfortable and actively participate in the conversation. The December 17th session will be held on Zoom at 4:00.

Our announced conversation topic for Wednesday December 17 is pets. What do pets offer us? We could list companionship, affection, a way to connect with others (pets and humans), but also a way to help and protect another living being. In addition, pets are the frequent source of literary endeavors, e.g., "My Travels with Charley," "Lassie," and so on. (One of us recently attended a play where a pivotal character was a goldfish!) If you have pets now or have had cherished pets in the past, we would love to know about the experiences that you share or have shared.

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casual give and take.

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New French Club Launching in January 2026



By Doris Bloch, Program Committee Co-Chair

Would you like to join a small, informal or "tres" mellow group of new friends and together, just for fun, brush up the French that you learned long ago?

OLLI will inaugurate a club to start in January, a Zoom French Conversation group. The club will be listed on the registration portal by the time this is published and it would be terrific, if you have any interest in speaking French, to sign up for it. We are naming it "French Conversation and Happy Hour Club!" Here are the details. Please contact me with any other questions that you might have. (dbloch50@hotmail.com).

French Conversation and Happy Hour Club

Coordinator: TBD

Second and fourth Fridays in and out of term – Zoom.

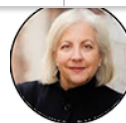
4:00-5:30, Jan 9, Jan 23, Feb 13, Feb 27

This online club will first be launched in January 2026, and so the scope is not yet finalized. But it is anticipated that the members would be advanced beginners and intermediate speakers of French who wish to practice and brush up on their language skills, with much (although not necessarily all) of the conversational interaction being in French. Because of the scheduled happy hour time of the day, there might be occasional discussion, and partaking, of French aperitifs and snacks à la Française, as a possible icebreaker topic. Other potential topics might be French movies, French music, sights and sites visited in France, etc. Vast sharing of French culture and knowledge is anticipated. Anyone who has basic conversational knowledge of French is encouraged to join the group and help us develop our understanding of what this club could evolve into.

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Volunteer Spotlight

By Lisa Mariam, Executive Director

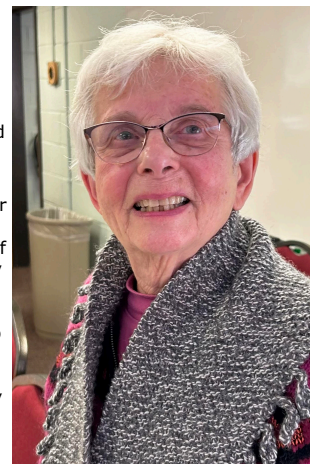
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By Lisa Mariam, Executive Director

OLLI Volunteer

Let's count the ways Doris Bloch serves OLLI Mason and connects our members.

A long-time member (since 2005), Doris is known for her incredible dedication and involvement in a multitude of volunteer roles. She not only serves on established committees and program planning groups but has also created new clubs and programs to meet our members' needs. Her energy and creativity have touched countless lives at OLLI Mason.



Here are just some of the ways Doris makes a difference:

Program Planning Leadership: Doris co-chairs the OLLI Program Planning Committee (P5), helping shape the rich variety of classes and activities we all enjoy.

E-News Contributor: Doris periodically writes insightful articles for *OLLI E-News* (e.g., announcing meetings of clubs and other groups), keeping members informed and engaged.

Social Connector: As a member of the Diversions Committee, she contributes treats and ideas for our many social events.

Class Coordinator and Instructor: Doris has coordinated and taught the popular "Let's Read a Play" classes. Furthermore, she often works to recruit instructors and class coordinators.

Crafts & Conversation Leader: She co-coordinates the Friday morning Crafts and Conversation group and even staffs the table for this club during Activities Fairs each term.

Support Group Founder: Doris founded and co-coordinates the Caregiver Support Group, offering resources and a safe space for those in caregiving roles.

Zoom Chat Facilitator: She has served as co-coordinator of the Wednesday afternoon Zoom chat group, giving members the opportunity to connect and discuss timely topics.

Doris Bloch exemplifies what it means to be a volunteer—innovative, committed, and deeply caring. OLLI Mason is fortunate to have her as part of our community. Thank you, Doris, for all you do!

If you'd like to nominate an OLLI volunteer to be highlighted in the *E-News*, please use the form available at [this link](#) (includes attaching a photo if possible).

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Artificial Intelligence (AI): Fun and Useful Tips PC Clinic in the Annex



By ***Paul Howard***, OPCUG Program Chair

The Computer Club (OLLI Personal Computer User Group, or OPCUG) will meet with its partner, the Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society (PATACS), on Saturday, December 13, <http://patacs.org/clinicpat.html> in person and via Zoom. The Zoom session opens at 12:45.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): Fun and Useful Tips—Presented by Chris Taylor

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools have exploded over the last few years. They can: supercharge your web searches and help you find the most relevant information; generate images and videos from text prompts; summarize web pages, YouTube videos, and PDF files; help you accomplish tasks in your programs; assist with creative writing; and more.

Chris Taylor from the Ottawa PC Users' Group will show you how easily it can be done and how to avoid dreaded "AI hallucinations." And you can do it all (well, most) for free. Chris Taylor worked for the Canadian Federal Government for over 36 years in user and server support, IT architecture, and IT security. He has been active in community user groups for over 45 years and is president of the Ottawa PC Users' Group. He co-hosts the very popular weekly Q&A sessions hosted by the OPCUG. Chris has been awarded 15 times as a Microsoft Most Valuable Professional. He received the Ottawa mayor's City Builder Award and the Ontario Volunteer Service Award in recognition of his volunteer efforts.

PC Clinic in the Annex

Get hands-on help with your computer and technology problems from PATAC experts. Bring in your computer, and we'll help you lose the 'blues' – system slowdowns, unwanted programs, viruses, and malware. We can help install new RAM, optical drives, hard discs, and software. Be sure to read the Clinic Rules – click this link: [Clinic Rules](#).

See full details on this meeting by [clicking here](#). For information on the Computer Club, see the [OPCUG Website](#). OPCUG dues are \$5 and are now due for 2026 membership (and 2025, if you didn't get around to paying earlier)—see <http://olligmu.org/opcug/comm.html> for details on making payment.

To attend via Zoom's cloud meeting service, beginning at 12:45, please click <https://olligmu-org.zoom.us/j/88388435350?pwd=hfaEFO7vfkvhVsp13okJXKnzpia7uTOh.1> to join the meeting and use passcode 804997. (Note: enter passcode with NO spaces) or enter meeting ID 883 8843 5350 in the Zoom app and use the above passcode (preferred method) or dial in at 301-715-8592.

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New Next Spring – Sports Talk Club: Game On!



By Dennis VanLangen, Sports Talk Club Co-Coordinator

Love sports? Want to connect with fellow fans? OLLI members Steve Greenhouse and Dennis VanLangen are excited to launch a brand-new club where you can talk about everything sports!

What we'll discuss: All sports are welcome—pro and college, national and local, current games and legendary moments. Football, baseball, basketball, hockey, women's sports, and more. If it's sports, it's on the table!

When we meet: First and third Fridays of each month via Zoom, year-round (both in and out of term).

Kickoff session: Friday, April 3, 2026, at 10:00.

How to join: Official registration opens in late February when spring 2026 registration begins.

Want to express early interest? Email olliclub@gmu.edu with 1. Subject line: "Game On: Talking Sports" and 2. Message: "I am interested in joining this new club."

Whether you're a die-hard fan or just enjoy a good game, Steve and Dennis would love to have you join the conversation. See you in April!

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Poet's Corner

Courtesy of the Poetry Workshop

Winter Days

long days of winter
crawl slowly along
ashen days of rationed light
dormant disrobed trees
bloomless brown gardens

too stony cold for strolling
or outdoor polar delights
confined inside
little sun for the soul
cocooned with books

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biding time
sleeping time
serving time

a time for rest
cozy warm fires
a time for
contemplation
and hopeful
illumination

–Margie Wildblood

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Arts & Music at George Mason

Performances December 12 through December 23



By Shelly Gersten, OLLI E-News Staff Writer

The College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA) has several web sites of performances, talks etc.

[CFA ticket purchase page](#)

[Center for the Arts YouTube channel](#)

[Hylton ticket purchase page](#)

The new <https://masonartsimplified.gmu.edu/>

music.calendar.gmu.edu/

theater.calendar.gmu.edu/

dance.calendar.gmu.edu

masonexhibitions.org/

And if you miss a live performance, there is a pay-per-view for many:

<https://cfa.gmu.edu/events/paid-digital-performances>.

Dr. Linda Apple Monson produces a periodic "Notes from the Director." This email is full of information on interesting online performances by the students and faculty of the School of Music. If you would like to receive these bulletins, just sign up at [this link to stay in touch](#). Also, the Center for the Arts has a website, [Mason Arts at Home](#), which has a calendar of online events and access to many past performances.

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At the Fairfax Campus venues

American Festival Pops Orchestra: *Songs of the Season*

Sat, Dec 13, 4:00
A pre-performance discussion begins one hour prior to the performance.
Concert Hall
Admission: \$71, \$60, \$45.

Vienna Boys Choir

Sun, Dec 14, 4:00
A pre-performance discussion begins one hour prior to the performance.
Concert Hall
Admission: \$71, \$60, \$45.

Fairfax Symphony Orchestra: *Celtic Women Christmas*

Tue, Dec 16, 7:30
Concert Hall
Admission: \$105, \$75, \$54.

Fairfax Symphony and Fairfax Ballet: *The Nutcracker*

Sat, Dec 20, 4:00
Sun, Dec 21, 4:00
Concert Hall
Admission: \$45 to \$95.

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Fairfax Campus Visual Arts

(details can be found at <https://www.masonexhibitions.org/>)

None currently at the Fairfax campus

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Mason Student and Faculty Performances

(see music.gmu.edu for additional student recitals)

No Performances

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American Festival Pops Orchestra Holiday Pops: *Songs of the Season*
Fri, Dec 12, 8:00
A pre-performance discussion begins one hour prior to the performance.
Merchant Hall
Admission: \$71, \$60, \$45.

Prince William Little Theatre: *It’s a Wonderful Life*, A Live Radio Play
Fri, Dec 12, 8:00
Sat, Dec 13, 2:00 and 7:00
Sun, Dec 14, 2:00
Fri, Dec 19, 8:00
Sat, Dec 20, 2:00 and 7:00
Sun, Dec 21, 2:00
Gregory Family Theater
Admission: \$30 Adult, \$25 Senior.

Manassas Chorale: *Merry and Bright*
Sat, Dec 13, 7:30
Merchant Hall
Admission: \$30.

Bria Skonberg Quintet
Sun, Dec 14, 2:00
A pre-performance discussion begins one hour prior to the performance.
Merchant Hall
Admission: \$71, \$60, \$45.

Manassas Ballet Theatre: *Nutcracker*
Wed, Dec 17, 7:30
Thu, Dec 18, 7:30
Fri, Dec 19, 7:30
Sat, Dec 20, 3:00 and 7:30
Sun, Dec 21, 7:30
Mon, Dec 22, 3:00
Tue, Dec 23, 3:00
Merchant Hall
Admission: \$91, \$81, \$71, \$60, \$50.

**Visual Arts: OFFERINGS TO THE POTOMAC
ACKNOWLEDGING INDIGENOUS PLACE**
February 24 - May 15, 2026
Buchanan Hall Atrium Gallery, Manassas Campus

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For further details on any of the above events, see the [CFA Event Calendar](#) and the [Hylton Center event calendar](#).

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Meetings & Clubs

Please note: OLLI Meetings and Clubs may currently take place in several formats: some are in person only, some are online only, and some are hybrid, meaning that they take place in person and are accessible online simultaneously. OLLI events and activities meeting online bear the identification "Z" in their course or event number (except clubs; you may need to check the [OLLI calendar](#) and daily schedule email for location and other event information).

The following list covering the next two weeks is extracted for your convenience from the master online calendar maintained by the office. The list is accurate as of mid-week. *Note: All OLLI members are welcome at, and encouraged to attend, meetings of the Board of Directors, committees and resource groups, kick-off coffees, etc.. The OLLI office has sent (or will send) emails with links and meeting passwords to club members.*

Sat Dec 13	10:30 am 1:30 pm	Tai Chi Club Personal Computer User Group
Mon Dec 15	9:30 am 11:00 am 4:00 pm	What’s in the Daily News? – online Poetry Reading Club – online Chair Yoga and More – online
Tue Dec 16	2:00 pm 2:00 pm 4:00 pm 4:30 pm	Caregivers Support Group – online Chair Yoga and More – online Mah Jongg Club – online Tai Chi Club – online
Wed Dec 17	10:00 am 10:00 am 10:30 am 12:00 noon 2:00 pm 4:00 pm	Board Game Club Bridge Club Investment Forum Chair Yoga and More – online Memoir and More Writing Group – online Spanish Page Turner Book Club – online
Thu Dec 18	11:50 am 3:00 pm 4:30 pm	All the News – online Chair Yoga and More – online Tai Chi Club – online
Fri Dec 19	9:30 am 11:00 am 12:00 noon	Crafts and Conversation – online Homer, etc. – online Chair Yoga and More – online
Sat Dec 20	10:30 am	Tai Chi Club – online
Mon Dec 22	9:30 am 4:00 pm	What’s in the Daily News – online Chair Yoga and More – online

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Wed Dec 24	No meetings		
Thu Dec 25	4:30 pm		Tai Chi Club – online
Fri Dec 26	9:30 am 11:00 am 12:00 noon		Crafts and Conversation – online Homer, etc. – online Chair Yoga and More – online
Sat Dec 27	10:30 am		Tai Chi Club - online

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About *OLLI E-News*

OLLI E-News was created by Rod Zumbro, who served as its editor from 2005 to 2013.

Editorial Staff

Chief Editor: Paul Van Hemel
Associate Editor: David Gundry

Weekly Editor Team: David Gundry, Chitra Mohla, John Nash, Paul Van Hemel
Proofreaders: Rebecca Jann, Susan Van Hemel, Thomas Appich, Martha Kossoff, Anne Hartshorn, Bonnie Becker, Carol McManus

Submissions: Members are encouraged to submit letters to the editor, letters to Ms. Ollie Ettakit (on etiquette matters), OLLI-related news items, articles, and photos. Submit material to: ollienewseditor@gmail.com.
Deadline: Tuesday, 6:00, for that week's issue (Monday, 6:00, for letters to the editor); early submissions are greatly appreciated. Please limit articles to about 250 words.
Note: You can view past issues of *OLLI E-News* on the DocStore. To search the content of issues, use Search Our Site or put your search term in Google followed by "site:olli.gmu.edu/" without the quotes.

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