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30th Anniversary

OLLI Life

Highlighting all that is OLLI

Learning, Laughter, Friendships
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute @ Furman



January 2024

YOUR JOURNEY CONTINUES HERE



Issue #20

News From OLLI Director, Nancy Kennedy



One of the most frequent questions I receive from OLLI members is “how big are we now?”. It’s exciting to think about how far this program has come from the original 62 members in 1993. We grew to more than 2,600 in 2019-2020, and then saw

our membership cut in half by the pandemic. By last school year we were back to 2,147, and I expect we’ll have around 2,300 members this current year. There are advantages and challenges to a growing membership. Let’s talk about those.

More members bring more....everything. You offer to teach new courses. You bring ideas for social events and SIGs. Your experiences and opinions enrich class discussions. You volunteer. Your energy and enthusiasm benefits all of us.

With growth also comes challenges. During some class periods, the Herring Center and parking lot are completely full. Some courses have long waiting lists, causing frustration for members, instructors, and staff. Some long-time members worry that our large numbers make OLLI feel less like a close community.

So, what are the solutions? Several of our volunteer committees are working to address these issues.

- Leading the way is the Long Range Planning Committee, led by Grady Jordan. This group is having good conversations about the future of OLLI, asking questions like “how big do we want to be?” and “should we offer weekend or evening courses?”.
- Staff member Alex Fagan has done an analysis of room usage at the Herring Center and is working with the Curriculum Committee to find courses to utilize the available space.
- Offering courses at local Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs) has allowed us to increase available classroom space.
- The social committee works to provide a fun calendar of events to help us all feel more connected. (Were you one of the more than 280 who attended a neighborhood happy hour in November?)

I’m sure there are other solutions out there as well. I’d love to hear your ideas!

nancy.kennedy2767@furman.edu

OLLI's Success Takes Many Forms

In the vibrant journey of lifelong learning that is OLLI, one finds not just enlightenment but also the warm embrace of camaraderie and shared experiences. OLLI is where friendships bloom, and the mind remains as active as the heart in pursuit of knowledge.

In that vein, let us extend our most enthusiastic congratulations to one of our own, Vito Fiore, and the spirited team of middle school students known as G.O.A.T. (Greatest Of All Tech). This VEX Competition robotics team has made us all proud. On November 4, they stood tall among their peers, clinching not one, but two distinguished awards in this South Carolina VEX Robotics Tournament.

VEX Robotics is a robotics program for elementary through university students. It is managed by the Robotics Education & Competition Foundation and, as of 2018, was named the largest robotics competition in the world by the Guinness World Records.

The Excellence Award now bears the name of our esteemed G.O.A.T. Alongside this, the Team Champion Award graces their trophy cabinet as well—a testament to their skill and teamwork. Out of 28 formidable teams from Upstate South Carolina, it was our G.O.A.T. that demonstrated the greatest innovation and strategic prowess.

Vito Fiore, the G.O.A.T. team's mastermind and mentor, has dedicated two years to coaching this team. His unwavering commitment mirrors the very essence of OLLI—persistent, dedicated, and ever-focused on the goal. The success we celebrate today is not an overnight phenomenon but the result of consistent effort and undying enthusiasm by Vito and his team. But the story of this victory is not theirs alone. It is interwoven



with the dedication of

other OLLI members and volunteers who are integral cogs in this machine. Dr. Sue Berget, the maestro coordinating the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) Tech Teams' competition robotics programs, deserves our accolades. As do Tom Crocker and Sabrina Walker, whose expertise in teaching robot programming has empowered our students to reach new heights. Let's not forget the contributions of Bill Moore and Reid Becker, team coaches who have given their all to the cause.

These triumphs should also serve as a call to those among us who have considered engaging with the minds of the younger generation. STEAM projects are not just about fostering future engineers or artists; they are about passing on the torch of our cumulative experience, knowledge, and passion.

In lauding these young champions and their mentors, we not only celebrate their victory but also the ethos of OLLI—continuous learning, community contribution, and the indomitable spirit of sharing wisdom across generations. Here's to the many more successes that we will no doubt witness, as the OLLI community continues to inspire and be inspired by the leaders of tomorrow.

If you would like to learn more about STEAM Tech Teams, a Special Interest Group at OLLI, please contact Reid Becker at reid.becker@gmail.com. You do not have to be technically oriented to participate in this extraordinary project. Training is available.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL and thank you to Reid Becker for submitting this article and photo for OLLI Life.

"The Most Fabulous Chefs in Greenville" class was a foodies delight!

By Bill Kaiser & Cheryl Cotner



The entire Fabulous Chefs class with Table 301 catering Executive Chef Greg Teal

One of the most unique things about OLLI is that students can volunteer to become teachers and pass along their lifetime skills, knowledge, and passions. They can also create courses. This past fall semester 2023, self-proclaimed "Foodies" Bill Kaiser and Cheryl Cotner did just that by creating a fun and delicious course called "The Most Fabulous Chefs in

Greenville." Bill and Cheryl came up with the idea and then went on a six-month food journey to discover the most fabulous chefs in Greenville. They compiled a list of favorite restaurants, and then approached the chefs, requesting their



Chef Jenifer Minelli from Passerelle Bistro preparing "Mussels Passerelle"

participation. The chefs were more than willing and honored to be asked to teach at OLLI.

The course featured nine different chefs doing live demonstrations of their recipes. Each week one new

chef was introduced. Each chef demonstrated the different methods and ingredients necessary for participants to "cook like a chef" at home. There was interactive discussion and hands-on participation during the preparation of the food. Featured chefs were from Passerelle Bistro, Bocca Italian Restaurant, Table 301 Catering, White Wine & Butter, Upcountry Provisions, Good to Go Gvl, Automatic Taco, Janet Poleski Catering, and Project Host Culinary Institute. Students enjoyed eating the delicious creations each week and they awarded this course a "Five Star" OLLI review.

Comments from students:

What a treat to be up close and personal with the behind-the-swinging doors with chefs at some of my favorite restaurants...Bonnie Davis.

It's a wonderful trip around the culinary world of Greenville without leaving OLLI. We have learned many terrific cooking techniques...Michael and Mary DiRe.

There has never been a better name for an OLLI course. Fabulous Chefs has been FABULOUS!... Deb Willingham.

New classes and instructors are the lifeblood of the success of OLLI. Bill & Cheryl say they had fun creating and putting the class together. Both agree that they make a great team, are happy with the overwhelming success of the class, and are already planning to offer it again for the Fall 2024 semester.



Cheryl & Bill with Chef Horacio from Bocca Italian Restaurant

Thank you Cheryl and Bill for all your work in putting this class together and submitting the article and pictures for OLLI Life.



History lies under the water of man-made lakes in the Upstate and across South Carolina

By James T. Hammond



Take a drive up Alternate U.S. Highway 25, through the Greenville City North Saluda Watershed, and you'd never guess that in the North Saluda River basin there was once a thriving community with a flour mill, motels, homes, and businesses. Woodside Mill had a summer camp within what is now an 1,100-acre lake and its watershed.

Today the North Saluda reservoir supplies about 30% of Greenville's water. Because the city owns all the surrounding watershed, it supplies some of the purest unfiltered water in the nation. (Greenville gets 20% of its water from the Table Rock reservoir and 50% from Lake Keowee.)

According to historian and author Jim Stehlik, before the city bought up all 10,000 acres of land surrounding the lake site in 1955, there was a community named Merrittsville. Stehlik recently delivered a presentation at one of OLLI's Lunch & Learn events, describing in great detail the history of the families who

had lived in this mountain community for generations. Construction of the lake displaced 600 families and 2,200 people.

Merrittsville straddled the state road that connected Greenville with North Carolina towns including Saluda and Hendersonville. Since 1820, the mountain trace has served as a conduit for mountain farmers to drive livestock to markets in South Carolina.

Merrittsville is not the only place where giant water projects flooded communities and displaced residents. The mountain community of Jocassee today is 300 feet under Lake Jocassee. Before the construction of the hydropower complex by Duke Energy, the Whitewater, Toxaway, Horsepasture and Keowee rivers flowed through Jocassee. When I was a child, my parents would take my brother and me to these rivers on summer weekends, where we'd strip down to our underwear and splash and play in the rivers. Divers have discovered the remnants of a lodge still intact at the bottom of the lake. Mount Carmel Baptist Church Cemetery can still be seen by divers.

My own family's history can be traced to the 18th-century town of Petersburg, Georgia, on the Savannah River. My 4th great-grandfather, Job Hammond, received land grants there for his service in the Revolutionary War. He died there in 1822, and while we do not know the exact location of his grave, it's most likely his remains are under the waters of Clark's Hill Lake, which flooded the Petersburg section of Elbert County.

Most of South Carolina's large lakes have covered up former towns, communities, and even significant Revolutionary War sites. The pivotal battle of Eutaw Springs was fought between British and American partisans at a site now under Lake Marion in Orangeburg County. The British forces of Gen. Cornwallis were forced to retreat to Charleston after the 1781 battle with the Continental Army led by Gen. Nathaniel Greene.

Thank you Jim for this fascinating (and probably little-known) piece of history about the upstate.

Special
Thank yous

Thank you to OLLI volunteers - 392 Instructors, 23 office volunteers, 76 bonus event liaisons, 223 class liaisons, 51 OLLI Life contributors and so many others on committees and volunteering their time with various other activities.

Thank you to all those who have graciously driven boxes and boxes of books from Heidi's office to the Greenville Literacy Association.

Thank you to members who have kindly assisted with the kitchen laundry. That is a huge perk for OLLI staff.

OLLI breakfast at the Furman dining hall was attended by 20 members on 10/2.

Over 280 members attended happy hour by ZIP code on 11/7 at 7 locations.

Thank you to the social committee!

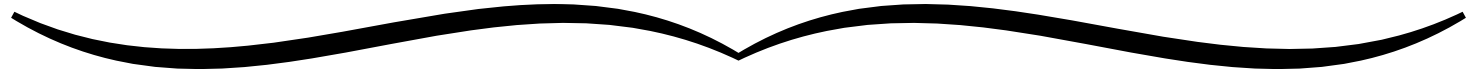


Spring luncheon will be held on May 14, 2024 at the Younts Conference Center.

Chautauqua is coming on Feb. 10, 2024 to the Herring Center.

Celebrate Your State Food Swap

Save the date of **Friday, January 26 from 1-3 pm** on your calendar. Get ready to dive into a scrumptious journey across the heartland of flavors at the Celebrate Your State Food Swap hosted by the OLLI social committee. It's a food extravaganza that promises to whisk you away on a delectable food adventure through the diverse tapestry of American cuisine. OLLI members will bring a favorite dish to share representing their home state (or any state they have lived in). More details will follow, but be thinking about what culinary tradition you want to share.



“Thriving at Thirty Anniversary” was a HUGE success!



Greenville Convention Center was able to accommodate 560 OLLI members and their guests for a cocktail reception, fabulous dinner along with entertainment and music, which was provided by some of Furman’s finest musicians.

30th celebration continued on next page.



Thank you to the 30th Anniversary Celebration Planning Team, Cheryl Cotner (Chair), Doug Dorman, Susan Herring, Bill Kaiser, Eileen McCarthy, Marian Purdue, Marge Scieszka and Debbie Willingham.



OLLI Director, Nancy Kennedy with Master of Ceremonies, Jane Robelot, and keynote speaker and former OLLI instructor Don Cockrill.



Smiles and hugs were in abundance at the social hour prior to dinner.



Whether meeting up with old friends, or enjoying the company of new friends, it was a delightful evening for everyone.

Something for Everyone

Special Interest Groups, Friday Bonus Events, Pop-Up event, and Senior Leaders Greenville Alumni

This winter, there are 29 Special Interest Groups listed in the OLLI winter term catalog, (pages 36 -38.) Here are a few highlights!

Mexican Train SIG

This photo is from the Mexican Train bonus event. There is also a Mexican Train SIG that meets on Tuesday afternoons. Mexican Train is a fun and easy game to learn. No experience necessary. Contact Kathy Dorman at Kathyconrad1951@gmail.com



Thank you Doug Dorman for this photo.

Handchimes SIG



Led by Shelden Timmerman, this SIG started in 2019 with 11 members and has been growing ever since. It is a group effort to produce beautiful music and have fun at the same time. Shelden has been a minister of music for 40 years and retired from Furman University in 2017.

Contact Shelden at hsheldentimmerman@gmail.com

Appalachian Melon Basket Bonus Event by Anne Doyle

In my previous job in Continuing Education, we used to joke about how we offered classes in every conceivable subject, even underwater basketweaving!

Fortunately, this November 10 bonus event was not underwater, but at the Herring Center, taught by retired art teacher, the very patient Fran Adams. Fran has a BFA as well as an MFA in Art Education. She has written curriculum and taught elementary art, which prepared her well! She showed us step by step how to weave our choice of yarn, alternating with a water-soaked reed, split, and then whole, over, under, and through the pre-formed ribs of the basket. I progressed nicely on my basket using the yarn and the reeds until the two sides met at the bottom, where Fran had to close the gap!

Like the SC coastal weavers who use the locally abundant seagrass, the Appalachian weavers learned to soak and use the locally abundant reeds to form their baskets. "Early settlers of the 1700s moved into the Appalachian Mountain areas of North and South Carolina, bringing their European basket weaving traditions with them. Greatly influenced by local Native Americans, they developed their own styles using the materials around them. These early study styles were mostly basic split white oak in shapes for specific purposes such as egg baskets, melon baskets, potato baskets, and market baskets."

Having retired in 2016, Fran now works at the White Rabbit Art Gallery in Travelers Rest, SC, where much of her woven basket inventory is for sale. She can be contacted at artislifefdg@hotmail.com.



Step 1 - Choose a basket.



Step 2 - Choose your yarn.



Step 3 - Prepare the reeds in water.



Step 4 - Get busy. Anne's basket in progress



Instructor Fran Adams putting the finishing touches on Anne's basket



Anne's completed basket



Gorgeous completed baskets

Thank you Anne Doyle for sharing your experience and pictures from the Appalachian Melon Basket bonus event.

Senior Leaders Greenville Alumni Committee

sponsored a Lunch and Learn, *Being the Difference*, for Senior Leaders Greenville (SLG) Alumni on Oct. 19.

Panelists Bill Kaiser, Vito Fiore, and Carroll Luck shared different examples from



Cate Caruso (standing) SLG alumni co-chair

their own community engagement experiences.

Bill shared two different experiences. The first was working with a dedicated group, alongside an agency, to create a widescale difference. The second, a more poignant example, revealed how Bill learned to be fully present in his one-on-one interactions with people in distress.

Vito discussed how he combined his love of science with his passion for working one-on-one with middle and high schoolers to create a large impact over time.

Carroll stressed pairing your passion with community engagement, and how to leverage time and financial giving to maximize the most people.

SLG Alumni audience members then shared their own inspiring and powerful stories of community engagement.

These stories, and future ones, can eventually be viewed at the SLG Alumni website under construction.

To learn more about Senior Leaders Greenville, and to apply for the next class, visit <https://www.furman.edu/osher-lifelong-learning-institute/senior-leaders-greenville/>

Thank you Debbie Call (SLG Alumni Chair) for sharing this article to help keep OLLI members aware and informed about this group.

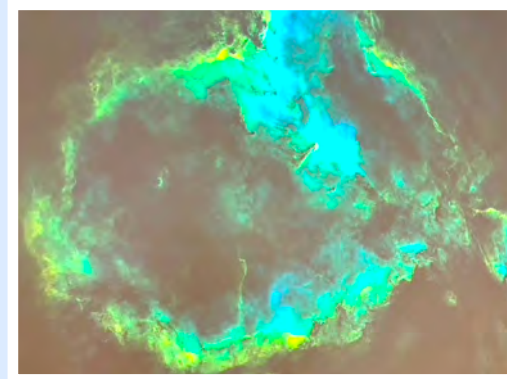
Where were you on Saturday, October 14th at 1:14 pm?

Were you safely watching the solar eclipse?
Were you able to photograph the partial eclipse over South Carolina?

In order to prepare for this eclipse, the OLLI photography curriculum sub-committee provided a “pop-up” event that covered the art and skill of photographing (and safely viewing) the eclipse.

Bill Griffith, an astrophotographer and doctor, offered tips and discussed useful camera accessories and apps for celestial photography.

Bill also plans to present a session before the total solar eclipse on April 8, 2024.



Heart nebula - color enhanced for viewing.

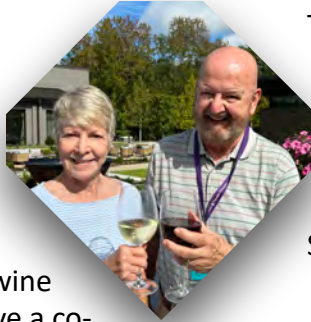


Dr. Bill Griffith, family physician and astrophotographer
Watch for his upcoming class in the spring.



Starting a new Special Interest Group (SIG) – Wisdom from the Wine SIG Leaders

Marilyn Bracy, and Dan and Marge Scieszka, have been friends and neighbors for a long time. They have enjoyed many bottles of very good wine together. Marilyn, a Certified Sommelier, began thinking that she wanted to start an OLLI SIG to share her enjoyment of wine with others. But – she wanted to have a co-leader. She approached her friend, Dan, who happily agreed to co-lead the SIG with her.



The OLLI Wine SIG began in the 2022 Fall Term. Today, the group has 62 members. If you would like to join, e-mail Marilyn Bracy at winesensing@yahoo.com or Dan Scieszka at maddjs@att.net.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are not intended to be instructor-led teaching sessions. They are designed for the members to share their experiences with one another. Members may take a turn at leading the group. Some Wine SIG members have hosted tastings in their homes. Marilyn and Dan plan special treats for those members.

There are times when the SIG may have some instruction from another professional. For example, the Wine SIG has met at some local wineries for tastings and teaching from the winemaker.

Wisdom from Marilyn and Dan for starting a new SIG:

- Survey the members at the beginning to get their ideas. Ask for feedback at the end of the year. The members are the real planners. Marilyn and Dan act as facilitators to get the planning started.
- Use this information from the members to plan ahead. Marilyn and Dan create and publicize the calendar for the entire academic year at the beginning of the fall term.
- Make sure to have a variety of experiences. The Wine SIG has met for tastings in local wineries, in members' homes, and at larger venues, such as a hotel or restaurant bar.

Thank you Susan Sanders for submitting this interesting, informative article and photo for OLLI Life!



Bridge SIG players in the Manly Lobby of the Herring Center on Monday afternoons. Some experience required. For more information contact Arnie Schlusberg at arnie.schlusberg@gmail.com

Meet Leah Pommerer

by Gary Aten



On a day trip from her home in Asheville, Leah discovered Furman University. When she visited downtown Greenville, she decided this was where she wanted to be.

Leah's mother is a psychologist and her father is in information technology. Her only sibling, a brother, is a senior in high school.

Leah likes everything about Furman, with one exception - the geese. They hiss at her! She likes dogs, though; her family has three. Her favorite, Teddy, is a Maltipoo.

Leah is majoring in psychology, and is a member of Delta Gamma Sorority. Her favorite class this semester is math because it requires solving puzzles, and she loves doing that.

She also likes to read books and watch movies. She's watched and rated 660 movies, and she read 40 books over the summer.

Leah hopes to take a study away program next year. She is pleased to be working in the office on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings.

Stop by to say hello, and welcome her!

Thank you to all the wonderful contributors to this edition of the OLLI Life Newsletter.

Tribute writers:

Judy Brooks - for Judy Vick
John Dean - for Tim Baiden
Patty Roy - for Dudley Tower
and Keith McMahan
Scott Withrow - for Joe Epley



Article writers and/or photographers:

Gary Aten - Meet Leah Pommerer
Reid Becker - OLLI's success takes many forms
Debbie Call - Senior Leaders Greenville
Cheryl Cotner - Fabulous chefs
Doug Dorman - Mexican Train photo
Anne Doyle - Appalachian melon basket
Jim Hammond - History under upstate SC lakes
Bill Kaiser - Fabulous chefs
Susan Sanders - Wine SIG, and starting a new SIG

Proofreaders:

Lynda Fredsell
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Special thanks and acknowledgment to Jeremy Fleming Photography for "Thriving at Thirty" photos.



OLLI Remembers



Keith McMahan, died in October, 2023

For over 14 years, Keith (A.K.A. The Bashful Baron of Ruffton) enjoyed OLLI's creative writing courses.

He preferred scrawling old-school cursive rather than neatly typing pixels. His essays expressed perspective, a positive attitude, and especially, humor. Each time he read aloud one of his memoirs' clever golden nuggets, his eyes sparkled. An impish smirk would often precede a **zinger**. Then his teacher, Judith Chandler, and classmates could not restrain their laughter ... and sometimes, neither could he. Keith was a gentle man, a gifted writer who brought joy to OLLI.

Thank you Patty Roy for this thoughtful tribute.



Tim Baiden, died on Sept. 15, 2023

OLLI lost a prominent long-term member in September with the death of Tim Baiden. An experienced world traveler and writer, Tim contributed much of his energy and business acumen to OLLI's governance and finances, not least to the funding activities for OLLI's building. With his quick wit and generous sense of humor, he also maintained many lifelong personal friendships. Tim Baiden's devotion to OLLI and Furman will long be remembered. Tim will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

Thank you John Dean for this thoughtful tribute.



Joe Epley, died on Nov. 11, 2023, at 85.

Although we were from the same area in North Carolina, I met Joe only twenty-some years ago through our common interest in the American Revolution. I have kept up with him upon his move to the Woodlands and participation in OLLI. Joe was a Green Beret, TV journalist, and leader in global public relations. I remember Joe as a friend and novelist who had a passion for life and history, especially the American Revolution. I enjoyed co-teaching one class with Joe at OLLI and had hoped for more.

Thank you Scott Withrow for this thoughtful tribute.



Dudley Tower, died on Sept. 28 2023 at 74.

For over two decades, Dudley Tower served FULIR/OLLI as a teacher, committee member, and financial patron with his wife, Chris. Friends and colleagues appreciated his quirky brilliance and keen sense of humor. He was a successful Peace Corps teacher, corporate executive, cancer survivor, and counselor. A perpetual student, he developed the academically inspired *Dynamic Aging Program* (DAP) courses. DAP's objectives encouraged renewed purpose in retirement. As a *Senior Leaders Greenville* (SLG) Class #2 alumnus, he collaborated and built the Personal & Community Engagement initiative, which is the foundation of SLG's outreach program now called *Senior Leadership Alumni Community Engagement*. Dudley personified dynamic aging.

Thank you Patty Roy for this thoughtful tribute.



Judy Vick, died Oct. 7, 2023

"OLLI Cooks", the 25th-anniversary cookbook, was a result, in part, of Judy's hard work. Her recipes reflected her love of fine food and gracious dining, including "Elephant Stew" and "Tequila Christmas Cake." Her serious side was reflected in her expertise with growing orchids which she shared in OLLI Bonus Events. A conversation with Judy on all kinds of topics was always fun and stimulating. She loved traveling and sharing stories about her adventures with her husband Bing. Judy loved music. She was involved with Furman Singers and traveled internationally with them. She was a surrogate mother to many students, whom she & Bing hosted in their home. She taught many of the students to cook! Judy was always in attendance at performances of the Greenville Chorale. How fortunate we all were to have had Judy in our lives.

Thank you Judy Brooks for this thoughtful tribute.



If you have any comments, suggestions or would like to submit an article for OLLI Life, please contact Jean Hess, editor, at jean.hess66@gmail.com

