THE STATE OF OLLI
By Ira B. Kurtzberg, OLLI Advisory Board President

The State of OLLI

The state of OLLI is strong, and the future looks bright! But as you know, we all have to do our part to ensure continued success.

Let’s look at what has been accomplished so far, and how future changes will make the program even better:

UPDATE

1) Workshop hours have changed. The length of each class is now one hour and 15 minutes.

2) Breaks between classes have been reduced to a half-hour.

3) We extended the summer session to include not only June, but July and possibly two weeks in August.

4) There are now fewer Friday classes so that workshops are more evenly distributed between Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

5) A reduction of 50% in fees for the spring semester, available to prior members who did not reregister for the entire year.

The course schedule (days & times) has been developed in order to accommodate the workshop leaders.

OFFICE CHANGES

As you know, change is coming to the OLLI office. A search is under way to hire a new director (the position’s title has been updated to Program Manager). Once this position has been filled, a search for a Coordinator of Member Relations will be undertaken as well. Three members of the Board, myself included, are participating as part of the interview team. We will help formulate questions for the prospective candidates and participate fully as the interview process unfolds. This will be extremely helpful as our goal is to establish a strong, joint working connection between our Board. The result will be a joint working relationship.

The position of Dean is currently open and is being renamed, Associate Vice President Professional Education and Assistant Provost of Engaged Learning.

YOU SPOKE, WE LISTENED

Thank you to members who participated in the focus groups we recently conducted. Members were able to speak freely about the issues that concern them most and propose potential resolutions. We intend to have one or two additional focus groups during the course of the semester in order to gather more input and help us improve the program.
A CHANGE AT THE TOP

Remember, every year we vote for a President Elect. To be clear, the President Elect has an obligation of 3 years. Year one as President Elect, year two the President Elect automatically becomes President and year three, assumes role of Past President.

We plan to make changes in our Policies and Procedures and perhaps institute new Bylaws in order to make things easier and allow us to achieve a better relationship with the administration. For instance, I believe for the President to be effective, the term should be two years. This will allow the President to assemble a team and institute their vision. A President Elect is unnecessary. However, we propose creating at least one Vice President position. We are currently discussing this idea, in order to allow the President more time in office. Other changes are under consideration, details of which will follow in future updates.

MORE CLASSES

Our parking study revealed a bit of good news. There are more parking spaces available at the metered (paid parking lots) currently assigned to us. The P Lot has many empty spaces available that are not being utilized by commuting students. We will be speak with the administration to increase the number of seats available to us (presently 185) to at least a minimum of 235 to a maximum of 250 seats. With that in mind we are hoping to have classes on Thursday afternoon starting at 1pm instead of 3pm to give us more flexibility.

WE NEED YOUR INPUT

Please keep in mind that our program is a work in progress and more changes can and will be made. However, we need your help and participation. Please attend the focus groups and/or Board and committee meetings. If you don’t, then we won’t know what improvements and changes to advocate. We can only improve with your participation.

Enjoy the spring semester.

Together We Shall Succeed
Ira B. Kurtzberg, OLLI Advisory Board President

2018 Winter Luncheon Celebration

By Jothi Curcio, Co-Chair :Member Relations Committee

In early December, a large contingent of OLLI Members gathered for a luncheon at Watermill of Smithtown to celebrate the Holiday Season as well as an end to the fall semester.

After the choral performance, Ira completed his remarks, thanking the Member Relations Committee volunteers. As he said, ‘They are the lifeblood of OLLI’.

A DJ was on hand to entertain the group, members danced and socialized with friends all afternoon. A Line Dance demonstration conducted by Marvin and Eleanor Karmen drew an enthusiastic response. All in all, it was amazing how quickly the four hours passed.

The success of such a large event depends on contributions from numerous volunteers working together. Kudos to the participants of the Member Relations Committee for participating in the planning meetings; Bunny Avril, Carlo Curcio, Dena Fagan, Diane Hollander, Ira Kurtzburg, Ed Metzendorf, Sue Parlatore, Paul Taub, Thelma Taub and Doris Weisman who worked with Co-chairs Fred Avril, Jothi Curcio and Sheryl Sessa at meetings before and on the day of the event.

2018 Winter Luncheon Celebration

(Continued)

Diane Perillo, Director for Finance and Administration, also spoke, thanking the OLLI Office staff, and acknowledging Leah Todd, our Graduate Assistant.

Following the welcoming speeches, cocktails, hors d’oeuvres and a four course lunch were served. Happily, everyone agreed the food, service, and ambience were excellent.
New Workshops Bloom this Spring
Mary Hance
Co-chair Curriculum Committee

Happy New Year OLLI members! The Curriculum Committee is thrilled to announce three new classes for the spring semester.

New Course Offerings
1. Contemporary Moral Issues
   led by Richard Hart
   Wednesdays @ 3:30pm
2. The Road to Unfreedom
   led by Irwin Steinberg
   Wednesdays @ 1:45pm
3. Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales
   led by Joel Rothstein
   Wednesdays @ 8:30am

I’d like to express a heartfelt thank you to our returning workshop leaders. A majority of our leaders are returning, and we value their knowledge, commitment and expertise.

Schedule Highlights
- Monday, Wednesday and Friday combined feature 66 workshops!
- On offer Tuesdays and Thursdays: Bridge, Tai Chi and Line Dancing
- Fridays are busy with 25 workshops on the schedule

Remember, all workshops are now 75 minutes with 30 minutes between classes to allow easy movement from building to building.

Please come join us if you have questions, comments or suggestions.

My Stony Brook:
A look back...and ahead
By Bob DeCostanzo

Many years ago, 1965 in fact, I was a freshman, one of 3,000 students enrolled in classes at Stony Brook University. Some were commuters, others of us lived on campus. My first two years I lived in what was then called H quad. H and G quads were on the north side of campus, and were the first dorms constructed. During my junior and senior years I moved to the “brand new” Roth complex as it was closer to the Engineering building. Engineering was a difficult major, but I studied hard and graduated in 1969. (My 50th reunion is coming up!) In spite of the difficult work, I enjoyed my four years on campus...for many reasons. As you can imagine, or recall, the 60’s were a very interesting time to be on a college campus.

After graduating, I worked as an engineer at Grumman in Bethpage (Navy F-14 fighter), I soon left to teach science. While teaching I pursued a master’s at Stony Brook and eventually went on to become a guidance counselor. I retired in 2006 and began to wonder ‘what would come next?’

Then a former teaching colleague told me about a program at Stony Brook called The Round Table—now known as OLLI. I was soon back at Stony Brook; attending all sorts of fascinating OLLI workshops. Being back on campus felt incredible. Every OLLI member knows how superb the program is, and what a rewarding experience it is to socialize with fellow “seniors” in an academic environment. The OLLI workshop selection is extensive: art, music, science, politics, philosophy, history—you name it.

Beyond OLLI, Stony Brook has provided me an additional opportunity—the Senior Auditing Program. (Both OLLI and the Senior Auditing Program are part of the School of Professional Development.) Through this program, I have audited undergraduate classes planned around my OLLI schedule. I have audited at least 10 courses, all but one in Anthropology. Each class has been thought-provoking and rewarding.

The professors have been wonderful; special thanks to Professors Bingham, Shea, Rossie, Stone, Markham, Harmand, Smears, and Hicks. (I probably forgot a name or two—sorry.) I was warmly welcomed to class, encouraged to participate, and ask questions. I believe I have ‘given back’ to their classes as well. For instance, the undergraduates, seeing a “senior” in class, may come to understand the importance and intrinsic pleasure of learning at any stage of life, and that someone would actually choose to attend class for no credit or even the prospects of a job.
My Stony Brook

(...continued from page 3)

My interest in Anthropology, and the knowledge I obtained auditing classes at Stony Brook, inspired me to write a book with an anthropological theme: entitled The Paleo Perspective: The Plight of Prehistoric Man in Modern Times. (Lulu.com) Three years in the making and more work than I imagined, but a learning experience nonetheless. I’m proud of the project, even though engineers are not known for their literary skills!

I have much to be thankful for.

For one, living close to a major university is a gift—concerts, lectures, etc. Just being on campus is stimulating. Thanks to Stony Brook University, OLLI and the Senior Auditing Program, the past several years have been extraordinarily enriching.

See you on campus!

OLLI Special Event at Mosaic

Restaurant

By Virginia Bushart

The chilly February air was no match for the warm, inviting atmosphere that welcomed forty OLLI members to the newly expanded Mosaic Restaurant in St. James. The new dining room was set with crisp white linens contrasting beautifully with dark wood floors, creating a cozy, inviting atmosphere.

Arriving members greeted each and were welcomed with flutes of sparkling Malbec, generously replenished as the event proceeded. Soon the atmosphere took on a festive air.

The dinner menu at Mosaic is unique; changing daily. As the restaurant’s web site makes clear:

“Each day we source the most beautiful and fresh local seasoned ingredients, then sculpt them into a five course tasting menu. We choose recognizable ingredients and rethink them. With accommodations made for food allergies and dietary restrictions”

While the ingredients are familiar. Each evening’s five course tasting menu remains a daily mystery, adding a sense of adventure to the Mosaic dining experience.

Chefs Morris and Contes opened Mosaic in 2005. They expanded last year adding a bar and increasing seating to forty. Chef Contes led the group on a tour of the small, highly efficient kitchen, complete with a fascinating and animated presentation that encompassing the restaurant’s culinary vision, farm to market shopping tips and a large strip of beef with preparation advice. Our meal consisted of three courses, each paired with a wine:

First Course:
WARMED AHI TUNA -
Pastel-le, shaved cabbage, black bean crema, and Manzanilla olive hot sauce.
Gouguenheim Sparkling Malbec

Second Course: BEEF STRIP -
Cider polenta, Herriot vert warmed salad, Brie, rutabaga jam, Rosemary-

Thank you to Ira Kurtzberg as well as the OLLI Special Events Committee for planning another worthwhile, “Meet the Chef” luncheon.
His Name Is Gary
by Diane Hollander

I was nervous and excited. It was nearly four years ago, and all I knew was his name; Gary and he was 6’2”. We were meeting for the first time and we were to be "Conversation Partners". I had no idea what our meeting would bring and I’m sure he felt the same way.

I liked him from the moment we met! A great guy with everything going for him: kind, polite, sweet and smart. He had it all!! This is going to be interesting. First surprise, it was his birthday!! I decided we HAD to celebrate so off we went to Jasmine at Wang. It was a great beginning to a very special friendship.

Since I have a fear of flying and have not traveled the world, meeting Gary was an opportunity to explore other cultures. I was immersed from the beginning and brought a map so Gary could show me where he was from. I started cutting out articles about China that I thought he would like and began to learn a little bit about his culture and family.

I know OLLI suggests a half hour meeting. We seemed to double that and I always wished we had more time. He was a pleasure to be with and time just flew. Gary was always upbeat, happy and truly loves life and learning.

We did so many interesting things. Who knew that a simple trip to Trader Joe’s could be so much fun. He told me he had trouble figuring out what comes in closed packages, so I suggested we go shopping. We had such a great time and he was so appreciative.

I also took him to Avalon in Stony Brook Village. So close, yet he had no idea it was there.

My husband Jeff became another person in his life and we went out for lunches and dinners together. Basketball games were next on the agenda. We were thrilled to experience his first spaghetti and meatballs!! The highlight for me was having him for the Jewish holiday. He melded quickly with our family and friends. It was as if he had always been in our life. He loved the gefilte fish and matzo ball soup but the brisket was his favorite. Who knew??

With Thanksgiving approaching, the first thing my kids asked, “Will Gary be coming?” Absolutely!!

Now the hard part. Gary graduated on December 17th. We were so honored when he invited us to the ceremony and thrilled to attend. We met his girlfriend Fang Fang who came from China. She is a journalist and an artist in Chinese paper cutting. I felt as though we were already close friends having exchanged several notes translated by Gary.

When he visited China that summer, he brought back beautiful gifts from his parents and sister and a magnificent picture Fang Fang made for us. It hangs in a prominent place in our den. I cannot tell you how much this meant to us.

When Gary graduated with his advanced degree in computer science, he got a job in Seattle, Washington. I was so happy for him but sad our meetings ended. It was very hard to say goodbye.

I do know we will always be in touch. Thank goodness for texting!

There is a special spot in my heart for him and it will always be there.

Will I get another Conversation Partner.......?? Of course, but he or she has a very hard act to follow.

His name is Gary.......and he is VERY special!!!!

Feb. 2019 Update on Gary:

Well, Gary is doing very well and we are so happy for him. He moved to Seattle, accepted a great job at Amazon, married the love of his life, Fang Fang, and is living happily ever after! YES, we still keep in touch. He made a point of going out of his way to see us when he came through the New York area this summer on a business trip. Amazing that our Conversation Partner is now a lifelong friend. I am forever thankful for this amazing OLLI gift!!