



Dear OLLI Members and Friends,

Our winter term is well underway, and with registrations exceeding 2,000, Winter 2025 has set the record for the largest enrollment to date.

This growth can be attributed to several factors: outreach to local organizations, clubs, and communities; volunteer engagement at the Sarasota Farmers Market and events at Sarasota Art Museum; and especially word-of-mouth. Thank you, all!

Embracing lifelong learning is more than an annual resolution for our OLLI. Studies show that people who embrace learning as they age reap numerous benefits, including improved cognitive health, enhanced mood, increased attention, greater self-confidence, and reduced feelings of loneliness. Exploring new skills and interests, building new and meaningful connections, and challenging yourself are important to growth at every age.

According to a recent article in *Forbes* magazine on lifelong learning: *“Curiosity is the spark that ignites the fire of learning. It is the desire to explore, question, and discover new knowledge and experiences, the natural human inclination that is required for lifelong learning.”*

Albert Einstein agreed.

“I have no special talents,” he once said. “I am only passionately curious.”

We offer a variety of classes that spark curiosity, including those on James Joyce, Russian novelists, short stories, contemporary and classic novels, mysteries, Great Books, Shakespeare, and *The New Yorker*. Drop into any of these courses and you will see active, engaged thinkers where diverse opinions are welcome.

As novelist and nonfiction author Anne Lamott stated in a recent piece for *The Washington Post*, “The greatest gift that people can accept at any age is that we’re on borrowed time, and they don’t want to squander it on stupid stuff.”

OLLI is not about the “stupid stuff.”

So, be curious. Spring term is around the corner.

Best,

The OLLI Newsletter Staff

OLLI Book Club Times Two



A 2024 study in *The Washington Post* noted that mysteries were the most common genre among “Super Readers.”

Joe Cucci, a super reader himself, became the leader of the OLLI Mystery Book Club when it spun off the OLLI Book Club, now led by Carol Ellis, M.D.

Both classes have the same format: the instructor selects the first book, members of the class choose three books, and each class meets on alternate weeks.

This term, author Ray Anderson, Cucci’s Army buddy and an avid hiker, spoke about his book.

The Trail was set on the Appalachian Trail, which he hiked in six months in the year he retired. Anderson’s other books, *Sierra* and *The Divide*, both include his adventures as a solo hiker. The class discussion centered on why Ray did the hike, as well as sharing how he practices his craft when writing mysteries.

Last year, author Janet Heijens, who lives in Venice, discussed her *Wrongful Convictions* series. Janet's session was well-received by the class.

The OLLI Book Club and the OLLI Mystery Book Club are great classes for discussion and camaraderie. Some students enjoy both groups.

Consider joining one, or both.



Spotlight on Instructors: *Debbie Mackler*

By Anne Perry Moore

Read the interview with instructor and volunteer Debbie Mackler below!

[Read the interview](#)

Share Your Passion. New Instructors Always Wanted

Have you ever been curious about a topic? Do you know someone who would be a good instructor for OLLI? Or might you have an interest in teaching a class yourself?

We want instructors who have a passion for a topic, as well as those who have spent a lifetime in a profession that would like to share their knowledge and expertise.

Tobie van der Vorm chairs the Instructor Recruitment Committee and welcomes all inquiries. If you are interested or have questions or suggestions, please email her at tobievdv@gmail.com.

OLLI Needs You! And You! And You!

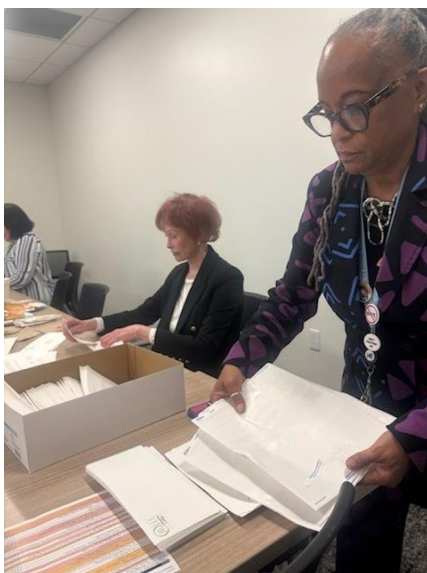


We need volunteers to share their enthusiasm about OLLI at an outreach event such as the Farmers Market, Free Sunday, or Jazz Thursday. After all, word-of-mouth is one of the most effective approaches to spreading the message about OLLI.

You may also consider helping in the office by answering phones, assisting with registrations, or copying course materials for instructors. We also need “greeters” to welcome fellow students, help them locate their classrooms, and get acclimated.

Contact Phyllis Brown at pbrown3@ringling.edu to let us know you want to help.

Membership Committee Update



The Membership Committee, led by **Marilyn Pinsky**, met in January to prepare

two letters: one to members whose membership had expired and one to people who expressed an interest in learning more about OLLI during an outreach event.

Who would have thought that signing, folding, and stuffing would be so much fun?

Next up: the membership committee is working to plan a focus group designed for new retirees. The goal is to learn what types of lifelong learning classes and programs interest them.

Membership

Did you know that our OLLI has not had a membership rate increase since 2017?

Think of all the things that have increased in price in eight years.

Not only is our membership a great value it's also an important way to keep our program growing. When it's time to renew your membership—please, do it.

We offer two membership levels: Gold at \$85 and Silver at \$25. Memberships are good for one year from the date of purchase. And yes, you do need a membership to take multi-session classes and to participate in a Shared Interest Group (SIG).

[Become a Member](#)

Support Your OLLI

Each contribution is an investment in yourself, your friends, and the future of lifelong learning in Sarasota and Manatee counties. Consider giving a Qualified Charitable Distribution from your annual Required Minimum Distribution each year.

OLLI appreciates your generosity at any level.

[Donate to OLLI](#)

SIGs: We Got Them....We Need Them

Shared Interest Groups (SIGs) offer members with similar interests an opportunity to meet and bond over a hobby or interest. Currently, OLLI has two active SIGs. **Bruce Maggins** sarasotasig19@gmail.com hosts Global Affairs & Current Events (on Zoom) and **Gail Sussman-Miller** hosts Joyful Women in Transition in person.

There is no shortage of ideas for SIGs. Maybe you enjoy wine or beer tasting, exploring lunch and dinner locals, or maybe you prefer bridge, canasta, or Mah Jongg. There could be a SIG in your future.

For information on how to start a SIG, click [here](#) for details.

Video Savvy

The newsletter staff is looking for someone who enjoys using their phone to take candid photos and to record short videos of students and interviews with instructors. If you are tech-savvy, contact Anne Perry Moore at anne_perry_moore@hotmail.com.



SAVE THESE DATES

Join us for the Spring Preview. Find out what great classes are coming up. **Call the office at 941-309-5111 or sign up online [here](#) to register.**

Date: Thursday, Feb. 20

Time: 10-11 am

Location: Auditorium

Spring Dates:

Spring term: March 17-May 9

Catalog online: Week of Feb. 17

Gold Member registration opens: Feb. 24

Spring Member registration: March 4



Come Dance With Us!

There's a dance party in your future. The Oldies Dance returns with Alan "DJ Al" Fisher.

Date: Friday, March 14

Time: 1-3 pm

Location: McGuire Hall

Gold and Silver Members and General Admission: \$10

Call the office at 941-309-5111 or sign up online [here](#) to register.



www.sarasotaartmuseum.org

Current and upcoming exhibits:

Larry Fink / Martha Posner: Flesh and Bone

Now through April 13, 2025

Joe Fig: Contemplating Vermeer

Now through April 13, 2025

Future Now: Virtual Sneakers to Cutting-Edge Kicks

Feb. 9-May 4, 2025

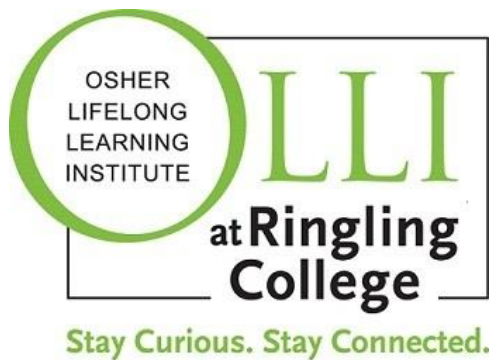
This groundbreaking exhibition explores the intersection between design innovation and technological advancements in footwear.

Sarasota Art Museum also offers a variety of events listed on its website.

Visit <https://www.sarasotaartmuseum.org/learn/current-season/>

The OLLI newsletter staff: Marion Richter (editor), Gary Reinmuth, Anne Perry Moore, Tom Miller, and Meghan Burrows (OLLI staff).

Stay connected with our updates and share yours. Email: **marionr44@gmail.com**



OLLI is located at the Ringling College
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[Learn more](#)



For the online version of the catalog, click [here](#).