



---

# THE NEWS      JUNE 2025

---

**Dear OLLI Members and Friends,**

Looking back, 2024-2025 was a successful year at OLLI at Ringling College. We remain a community of learners who are vibrant, exuberant, and curious. Newcomers often remark that OLLI is a place where they have made new friends while increasing their knowledge.

OLLI Summer Adventures 2025 provided an outstanding array of classes, tours, and special events to engage new and prospective members. We appreciate the more than 350 participants who delved into the arts, the sciences, history, psychology, and literature.

In addition to the students and the staff, volunteers are vital to the success of OLLI. If you're looking for volunteer opportunities, contact **Debra Ashby** ([dashby@ringling.edu](mailto:dashby@ringling.edu)), OLLI Volunteer Coordinator, for information.

**The OLLI Newsletter Staff**

---

# OLLI Summer Adventures: A Midpoint Update from Our Director

As we reach the midpoint of our OLLI Summer Adventures, I'm proud and excited to share that this summer semester is shaping up to be one of our best yet!

## **Strong participation**

As of June 27th, we've reached 1,116 registrations, and new participants continue to join us. One thing that makes our summer term special is that we offer only one-time classes, meaning each session is presented just once. This format has been well-received by our members and those new to OLLI. 2025 is the third summer we've implemented this class model, which, each year, has outshone the last.

## **Diverse and unique offerings**

Our class topics range from artificial intelligence to the turpentine industry in Sarasota County, showcasing the depth and variety OLLI programs are known for. In addition to classroom learning, we've organized tours with incredible local organizations, including:

- CreArte Latino: The Place for Cultural Exchange
- Minorities in Shark Sciences (MISS) Experience
- Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe
- Newtown Alive Tour
- Save Our Seabirds
- All Faiths Food Bank Tour
- Cheese 101: Artisan Cheese Company

## **Thanks to our supporters**

This success wouldn't be possible without the energy and dedication of our instructors, office volunteers, and greeters—thank you! We also extend our appreciation to the local community partners who warmly welcome our OLLI members and enrich the learning experience.

## **Bringing people together**

Our summer programs keep current members engaged and provide a gateway for non-members in Sarasota and Manatee counties to discover the value of lifelong learning with OLLI. With a mix of fun and educational experiences, we aim to inform and inspire.

## Looking ahead

If you weren't able to participate this summer, we hope you'll consider joining us in the future.

Until then, enjoy the rest of your summer—and I look forward to seeing you in our classes and hallways this Fall 2025.

Best,  
Phyllis

---



## Retirement... Why Dr. Larry R. Thompson Has Been so Important to OLLI at Ringling College

By Jeff Ryder

Chair, OLLI Advisory Committee and Member of the Ringling College Board of Trustees

Recently, **Dr. Larry R. Thompson** announced his retirement, effective June 1, 2026, as President of Ringling College of Art and Design.

About 11 years ago, the Lifelong Learning Academy (LLA), located on the University of South Florida (USF) campus in Bradenton, had to vacate its classrooms and offices because USF needed the space to expand its program.

Thanks to the work done by **Janna Overstreet**, then LLA director, **Sam Samelson**, former chair of the advisory committee, and many others, the Academy found a new home at Ringling College of Art and Design after meetings with President Thompson.

Serendipity played a large role in the partnership because the College had leased the old Sarasota High School with the intention of opening a museum there. Fortunately, the

museum would not need the entire building for its exhibitions. Enter the Ringling College Lifelong Learning Academy, which needed space for its classes and staff.

From that point on, Dr. Thompson has been a staunch supporter of adult learning in the Sarasota area. He was instrumental in the decision to apply for membership with the national Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes (OLLI). One of their requirements was an affiliation with a college or university that would agree to incorporate adult learning into their academic mission.

Seven years ago, we became part of Ringling College, joined the Osher network, and moved into the Sarasota Art Museum, thanks to Dr. Thompson. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit and many of our programs were canceled along with experiencing an enormous drop in membership, Dr. Thompson agreed to keep OLLI going through the recovery.

The relationship between OLLI and Ringling is strong. Last year, Dr. Thompson added an OLLI representative from the Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees.

In short, Dr. Thompson constantly celebrates our achievements in his words and actions. We have been fortunate to have his leadership and support and we wish him all the best in his next chapter of life after Ringling.

**Thank you, Dr. Thompson, for all you have done for OLLI.**

---



### Travel Notes:

## Rome and the Amalfi Coast

Intrigued by the recent travel partnership forged between OLLI and Collette Tours, member **Cindy Millar** jumped at the chance to take a 10-day tour of Rome and the Amalfi Coast in May. The tour included a four-day adventure beginning in Rome and Pompeii, followed by three days along the sheer cliffs and rugged coastline of the Amalfi Coast. The itinerary sounded idyllic.

For her first trip to Italy, Cindy was joined by her sister-in-law. The pair added additional days for a tour of Florence at the start of the mid-May itinerary.

In Rome, Pope Leo had been named to that office just three days before their arrival, so they had been cautioned that St. Peter's Basilica would likely be inaccessible. Fortunately for them, a change of plans led to amazing access to the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican galleries. For Cindy, the vast beauty of the Sistine Chapel was more than a moving experience. In fact, it brought her to tears.

The Collette tour guide Mauro was energetic, enthusiastic, educational, amusing and everything you could possibly want in a tour guide. Collette had engineered a mesmerizing itinerary, and Mauro saw to it that the promise was delivered, and even exceeded. From Florence and Rome to Pompeii, the tour then went on to include stops in the coastal towns of Amalfi, Positano, Sorrento, Capri, and Vietri sul Mare.

Reading about the Coliseum in textbooks hardly prepares one for the experience of its vastness, Cindy says. Pompeii's ruins were breathtaking in their sheer expanse. Although excavation there started in the mid-1700s, Cindy reports that only about two-thirds of the site has been uncovered from the ash that was heaped 40 meters deep.

Days were full, often 12 hours in duration. As Cindy said, "Travel is exhausting; that is to be expected. But you wouldn't want to miss a single minute of the wonders of it." On their bus rides from place to place, Mauro talked about the countryside they passed through as he prepared them for the sights ahead. He arranged for the group to get into some surprising sites they had not anticipated. They visited a farmhouse where an Italian housewife was making mozzarella cheese. Refreshing Limoncello and local wines were temptations to sample at every stop. They saw papermaking and singing and dancing in trattorias.

Collette Tours is the company most commonly used by OLLIs nationwide. They offer comprehensive travel packages, and based on the feedback from Cindy and June Carson, Collette delivered what it promised even exceeding expectations!

So, where should we go next? That depends on you—our members. Some OLLIs have a Shared Interest Group (SIG) devoted to researching and planning tours for members.

"I would love to see a travel SIG formed by our members," said Dr. Phyllis C. Brown, OLLI Director.

"Your participation and ideas could help us create meaningful travel experiences. Where would you like to go—nationally, internationally, or regionally?"

How about it? Are you up for an adventure that leads you to experience the joys of learning with a few OLLI companions?

We would love to hear from you. Feel free to send me an email at [pbrown3@ringling.edu](mailto:pbrown3@ringling.edu)

---

## People are Talking...



**Susan McLeod:** *OLLI at Ringling College brings us courses that deepen our understanding of the cultural history of Sarasota. In a Summer Adventures session, Andrew Ford shared 100 years of Sarasota's exciting visual artists and shared some of their renowned works. This is a story rarely told and kudos are rarely given to the fact the visual arts of Sarasota began our reputation of being the heart of the arts and cultural core for the state of Florida, in both the visual and performing arts.*



**Joyce Predmesky:** *The OLLI experience has been unique for me. Prior to taking Writers' Workshop, which I've taken for the last several years, I hadn't surrounded myself with anyone in the writing community. These classes have allowed me to expand my world, meet more people, and become a better writer. It has been an experience I continue to cherish.*

---

## Shared Experiences

These Shared Interest Groups (SIGs) are active and meeting regularly. Remember, you must have an OLLI Gold or Silver membership to participate in a SIG. For meeting dates and times, please contact the facilitators.

**Joyful Women in Transition** (Gail Sussman-Miller) [gail@inspiredchoice.com](mailto:gail@inspiredchoice.com)

**Canasta** (Marty Betagole) [thatgirl830@gmail.com](mailto:thatgirl830@gmail.com)

• All levels are welcome, but instruction for new players is not provided.

**Mahjong** (Joan Caruso) [joancarusoconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:joancarusoconsulting@gmail.com)

• All levels are welcome, but instruction for new players is not provided during the summer.

---

## Support Your OLLI

Your contribution, at any level, demonstrates your commitment to OLLI at Ringling College. All gifts are tax-deductible and go directly to OLLI. You can make an annual gift by setting up a monthly, quarterly, or yearly recurring donation. You can even make a donation when you register for classes.

*We thank you!*

[Donate to OLLI](#)

---

## Mark Your Calendars

- 1 pm Friday, Sept. 5 Fall Preview (McGuire Hall)
  - 2 pm Friday, Sept. 5: New member Open House (McGuire Hall)
  - Fall Term Dates: Monday, Sept. 29 - Friday, Nov. 21
  - **There are no classes on these dates:** Oct. 2, Nov. 27, and Nov. 28.
- 



## Take a Selfie in SAM's *Slumpies*!



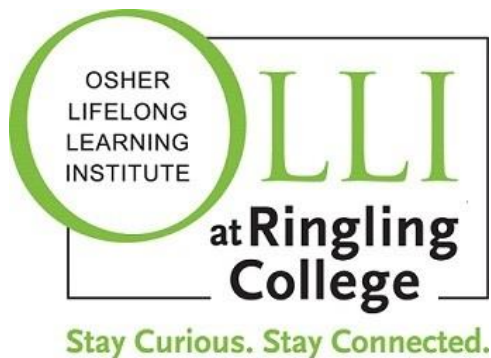
Changes abound at the Sarasota Art Museum with exciting new exhibits on view. Visit the museum website for details. Take advantage of the tours which are informative and deepen the museum experience.

<https://www.sarasotaartmuseum.org/exhibitions/>

---

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

Stay connected with our updates and share yours. Email: [marionr44@gmail.com](mailto:marionr44@gmail.com)



OLLI is located at the Ringling College  
Museum Campus  
1001 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota 34236  
941-309-5111  
[www.OLLIatRinglingCollege.org](http://www.OLLIatRinglingCollege.org)



[Learn More](#)

[Become a Member](#)

[Newsletter Archive](#)

**For the online version of this  
Newsletter, click [here!](#)**