



THE NEWS

October - November 2025

Dear OLLI Members and Friends,

Searching for answers about aging often brings a smile to one's face. The question, "When are you old?" produces a range of responses and depends on the respondents and their level of independence.

In 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that more than 55 million Americans were 65 years old or older, accounting for 16.5 percent of the total population. By 2050, the number of people aged 65 and older is projected to increase by 47 percent, reaching over 82 million. The most rapid growth will be among those aged 85 and older.

Maintaining our independence as we age will depend on our access to health care, our financial security, and how often we engage in cultural, educational, and social activities.

The October issue of *National Geographic* features an article on aging titled, "Older, Faster, Stronger." One takeaway from the article was this: "even one social interaction a month can cut the incidence of developing dementia in half. And the benefits are even greater if you connect with a person that you can confide in." To access the *National Geographic* article, click [here](#).

OLLI offers many opportunities for social engagement. The OLLI newsletter is one such opportunity. We hope you enjoy!



Pat Singletary using a VR headset during the Virtual Reality class.

Diane Chechik-Temple provides her perspective on exchanging one kind of independence for another. **Judy LaMée** explains why she and her husband **Bill** left Florida to pursue retirement in North Carolina and why they returned to Florida.

We celebrate the 10th anniversary of CONNECTIONS: The Documentary Film series. **Julie Cotton**, the series creator and host, shares the motivation for launching the series.

Pat Singletary was one of a dozen students in the class “How Virtual Reality is Changing the World: A Hands-on Experience” led by Ringling College adjunct faculty **Justin Gast**. Check out Pat’s reaction after her first foray using the virtual reality headset. Pat’s glee represents OLLI at its best!

November is also the time to show our gratitude for this time of our life. Thank you to everyone in the OLLI community.

— **Marion Richter**

Celebrating My New Freedom: *Without Wheels* by Diane Chechik-Temple

I voluntarily gave up driving on March 30, 2025. It was a decision filled with anticipation, apprehension, and uncertainty, but beneath those feelings was excitement. Nearly a year earlier, during a family celebration, the conversation turned to upcoming special occasions, and I announced that I was planning to give up my car and driving after my next birthday. Six months later, I’ve discovered a sense of joy that surpasses the 72 years of happiness and independence I experienced as a licensed driver.

In 2023, I had noticed my reaction time was slower while driving and that other cars were larger and seemed to be moving faster. I began using Lyft and Uber more frequently for evening events. As I became comfortable with the apps, I found the ride-share platform to

be a godsend, especially as an active widow. What started as a necessity has become a luxury and a treat.

Whether I'm heading to the theater or out to dinner with friends, it is a relief not to drive, search for parking, or worry about what might happen after enjoying an extra drink at dinner.

Not driving is a sobering reality, but it's not a sad reality. If an accident occurs, witnesses are often quick to blame the senior driver, despite our defensive driving skills.

Giving up driving has actually given me more to appreciate. It's the first—and perhaps the largest step in my new freedom life.



Diane Chechik-Temple is a 42-year breast cancer survivor and has authored two books about her cancer journey. *Journey to Justice* and *There's Nothing Like a Breast*. She is passionate about good food, good jazz, good wine, and mostly, good people. And while she can still drive a car with a manual transmission, she chooses not to.

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Friends and Family: We Are Moving to...uh, Sarasota!

By Judy LaMée

After 13 delightful years in our Asheville, N.C., townhome, Bill and I were preparing to move to a continuing care retirement community in nearby Hendersonville. We had been on a wait list for nearly a year and were told that our number had come up, and that we could move to the community in early 2024.

Imagine our surprise when our two adult children, Cort and Cheryl, called a family meeting on Zoom scheduled for the Sunday before Thanksgiving 2023. That surprise quickly turned

to confusion when we asked what they wanted to discuss, and their response was, “Finances — yours.”

Their opening salvo was a bolt out of the blue. “Mom and Dad, we don’t want you to move to Hendersonville. We want you to move closer to one of us so that when you need support, we can more easily give you that support.”

Bill was the first to give their request serious thought, and by the next morning, I was ready to take a reconnaissance trip to Florida.

We flew to Sarasota to begin our search for a place to live. We found an apartment in Bradenton. We had lived in Bradenton for 37 years during our working life and had many friends there; however, the Bradenton apartment proved to be untenable.

We then set our sights on finding a place in Sarasota.

We could have stayed with Cort and his wife, Candace, at their home on Longboat Key. After considering four different apartments, we selected a brand-new complex on Main Street, next door to a movie theater.

The other happy choice in moving to Sarasota was connecting with OLLI at Ringling College. Bill and I had both been involved with OLLI at UNC-Asheville and made many lifelong friends there, which made the decision to join this OLLI a slam dunk.

For the Love of Connecting and CONNECTIONS

Origin stories reveal the what, the where, the why, and the how behind a project or program. In the case of CONNECTIONS: The Documentary Film series, the origin story came about from a moment of “outrage and the desire to talk about it.” **Julie Cotton**, the series creator, turned those negatives into something positive. Let’s meet the woman who leads OLLI’s only documentary film series and find out why, after 10 years, she’s still promoting the power of connecting with others and having conversations.

— Sheila Reed

CONNECTIONS: The Documentary Film Series is the longest-running program at OLLI. **What inspired you to create this series?**

Actually, it was one specific experience. Sometime in 2014, I went by myself to see a documentary about how humans are destroying our environment. The film was quite well done; it filled me with outrage and the desire to talk about it. But in this situation, people left right after the film ended. As I drove home, I kept thinking, “Someone should have been there to lead a discussion after the film.” This doesn’t happen to me often, but I woke up the

following morning with a fully-formed idea about a documentary film series for OLLI, including the title and the major themes it would address. I wrote down my thoughts and sent them as a program proposal to the then-OLLI Director. She told me she loved the concept and followed that with, “Do it.” And so, I did.

What personal connection do you feel to the themes in the series, and how has that shaped the way you choose the films?

I mentioned that I woke up knowing the title and themes. The title was CONNECTIONS because even 10 years ago, I felt our world was becoming increasingly disconnected through both political differences and the newly emerging technology of social media. And I wanted people to sit together to watch the film to enhance the connections among them through our post-film conversations. In addition, the three types of connections that I wanted to explore were people to people, people to our environment (including technology), and people to other species. So, from the start, I specifically looked for films that focus on those three areas.

Students always rate the post-screening discussions and your skills as a moderator as excellent. **How does CONNECTIONS contribute to the conversations happening today?**

I love the post-film conversations. Each and every time (after almost 60 films), they’ve been rich and rewarding. The best example of how these conversations contribute to the larger ones occurring in the “real world” is what happened recently with the first film of the 2025-26 academic year called *Mission Joy*. The film focuses on two great men, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama, their unique friendship and their shared commitment to compassion and joy as a way of life. The first comment after the film was from someone who was very moved by the film’s message but was struggling to see how she could apply that today, here in the U.S., given our political strife. Many subsequent comments echoed this theme, and the conversation was energetic and thoughtful.

Sustaining a program like CONNECTIONS takes commitment. **What has kept you motivated?**

The answer to that is very simple. I love doing it. I knew that when I retired, I was going to have to find ways to use my psychology background and my professional experience as a consultant and coach to keep learning and to make some kind of difference. OLLI and CONNECTIONS have given me the opportunity to do all three.

Looking ahead, what’s next for you? For CONNECTIONS?

I anticipate continuing with CONNECTIONS as long as I can find well-done documentaries that fit my three themes and that I can engage people in discussing. Right now, like many others, I am concerned about the future of the U.S., and I’m looking for ways in which I can engage with those concerns in a positive way at OLLI and elsewhere. And I love making connections!

Winter Highlights

Curious about what's ahead for the winter term? Check out a few of the course highlights:

For Culture Aficionados: An Armchair Tour of Sarasota Public Art, Ballet: Beyond the Curtain; Forgotten Operas; and Learn to Love Classical Music: A Beginner's Course

For History Buffs: Introduction to the U.S. Civil War; and A History of Modern Japan.

For the Tech Savvy: Portraits, Still Life, and Landscapes with Your iPhone; and Getting the Most from Your Apple Watch

Ways to Age with Grace: Grow Your Peace: How Gardening Nurtures the Mind and the Body; and Decode Your Life Purpose

David Eisner will return this winter after the passing of lifelong partner, Barbara Shocket. His courses will center on the work they so skillfully developed, "heart centered and emotionally educative," which integrated developmental psychology and world literature. Join him for a sequence of courses: Psychology of Self-Knowledge, Grief, Grace, and Gratitude and Psychology of the American Experience According to Carl Sandburg.

Listening to Women 2026 returns with 16 fabulous women ready to share their stories. Don't miss it. Jan. 22-Feb. 26 Thursdays · 2-3:30 pm. **See the flyer [here](#).**

Mark Your Calendars

- **Nov. 21:** Winter Preview from 1-2:30 pm in McGuire Hall
- **Nov. 24:** Gold Member registration opens at 8 am
- **Nov. 27-28:** OLLI is closed for the Thanksgiving holiday
- **Dec. 2:** Silver Member and General Admission registration opens at 8 am
- **Dec. 22-Jan. 2:** OLLI closed for winter break
- **Jan. 5:** OLLI office opens
- **Winter Term:** Jan. 12-March 6, 2026
- **No classes:** Jan. 19



OLLI Gold Members lined up outside the office on the morning of Gold Member registration for fall!

Interested in Volunteering?

Contact Debra Ashby, Volunteer Coordinator, at 941-309-5112.



Longtime OLLI Volunteers Millie Finkel (left) and Lynda Rizzio (right), in unintentionally matching attire, with SAM gallery admission stickers.

Join a Shared Interest Group

Our Shared Interest Groups (SIGs) connect members who enjoy exploring similar topics and learning new skills together. Currently, we have four active SIGs. You must have an OLLI Gold or Silver membership to participate in a SIG. Unless noted, contact the SIG facilitators for meeting dates, times, and the location.

Canasta: Marty Betagole (Facilitator). Contact: thatgirl830@gmail.com

Current Events: Bruce Maggin (Facilitator.) Meets Tuesday afternoon via Zoom twice a month. Contact: sarasotasig19@gmail.com

Joyful Women in Transition: Gail Sussman-Miller (Facilitator). Meets every other week.

Contact: gail@inspiredchoice.com

Mah Jongg: Joan Caruso (Facilitator). Participants must purchase the current Mah jongg card. Contact: joancarusoconsulting@gmail.com

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](#)



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

See all the wonderful exhibits, events, and more!

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



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