EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

Gary Aten

Fall has come and gone, generally, a nice time of year. I’ll neglect my annual rant about raking leaves. It does little good, especially with the folks who live at the Woodlands. You know who you are! Anyway, the changing leaves can be very colorful, and this year was no exception. If you are a member of one of the hiking groups, you started in the green summer, went through the bright hues of fall, and ended almost in the winter with great views. The best part for me is that OLLI classes start. Trying to decide what to sign up for can be stressful, with many intriguing classes offered at the same time. Choice is a good thing though, and all my fall classes were outstanding. Getting back and connecting with those I haven’t seen through the summer is also a big plus.

This fall, after we had been in classes for a while, we had two new staff members join us. Read about Carson and Samantha on pages 4 and 5. Then, if you haven’t already done so, stop by the office and welcome them to our program. By the way, during her interview, Sam expressed a weakness for brownies but said she has not found an equal to her mother’s. At least, not yet.

One of the duties of our staff is to compile and send the end-of-class evaluations to committees and instructors. I urge you to complete these reviews at the end of the terms. They help the Instructor Support Committee identify where they may be of help, the Curriculum Committee determine the mix of classes, the OLLI staff keep on top of things, and the instructors improve. Comments in the evaluations are passed along to the instructors, but no student names are revealed. Be thoughtful when you do the evaluation. A comment you make may make future students’ class experiences better.

If you are reading a hard copy, remember, Gray Matters is on the OLLI website in full color. Just click on “Member Resources” and then “Gray Matters” to view this issue and past editions.

Thanks to Carole Eisen, Sue Renault, Judy Aten, and Nancy Kennedy for proofing this issue. Heidi Wright puts the issues on the website and arranges for the printing. Thanks to all who contributed articles and photos. Thanks also to our sky diving instructors, Hugo Furst and Hope Anna Praher.
EFFICIENCY, SUSTAINABILITY, THE HERRING CENTER, AND YOU

In the last issue we highlighted the work of Furman’s Energy Manager, Jimmy Looper. That led us into questioning how the Herring Center contributes to the environment. Brad Bechtold explained some of those factors for us. Some of them you may have noticed, some you may not, and some you may not have even realized have an environmental component.

Let’s start with the building design. Placement and orientation of the building was considered to maximize natural light but reduce solar heat gain in the summer. All those large windows look good, but they also serve other purposes. The amount of glass lets in a lot of light, reducing the amount of electricity required for artificial lighting. The glass itself is energy efficient, cutting down on energy transfer into and out of the building. Artificial lighting energy is further reduced by using sensors that turn off lights when no motion is detected in a room.

As you approach those large glass doors, you pass through a foyer that helps keep outside air where it should be - outside. That cuts down on the energy needed for the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. The HVAC components were selected based on their efficiency, further reducing electrical use. They also are set up to operate minimally on unused weekends. Additionally, outside air is introduced to improve building air quality. The touch screens that display building and campus maps and show class locations can also be used to display Herring Center energy use. You can also compare the Herring Center with other campus locations.

The materials used in the construction of the building were chosen with sustainability in mind, reducing the effect on the environment. Environmental effects are further reduced by the rainwater runoff containment and reduction system. Water is trapped and filtered before it is released, cutting down on sediment released into waterways. Water use is reduced by using natural plants and shrubs that require minimal irrigation, and low-flow toilets are installed.

Speaking of water, those drinking fountains in the building may look nice, but consider this: The convenient water bottle fillers save throw-away plastic bottles, also helping the environment. We also use paper cups for coffee that are recyclable, and there are recycle bins for paper, glass, plastic, and cans.

All this sounds pretty good, but there is one more component. As you probably guessed, that component is you. You can contribute making all this sustainability and environmental effort work better by your actions. You have seen all this before in *Gray Matters*, but it bears repeating. First, be aware of where you put items as you dispose of them. Give your paper cups a quick rinse and place them in recycling receptacles and NOT in the trash cans. Better still, bring your own cup and do not use those paper ones. OLLI @ Furman cups can be purchased in the OLLI Office. Remember to also recycle clean paper, cans, and bottles. With a few simple acts, we can all contribute and help realize the vision the designers had when the Herring Center was built.
Our new Department Assistant, Carson Ruffrage, was born in Visalia, California. When she was five, her parents sold their farm in the San Joaquin Valley and moved Carson, her older brother, and two younger sisters to Florence, Alabama, where they raised cattle. She attended Converse College, majoring in history and English, and graduated in 1998. After graduation, Carson took jobs that offered less rigid schedules to allow her to help her ailing stay-at-home mother. Her mother lost her battle with cancer in 1999.

In 2001, Carson entered the corporate world as the Property Manager of one of Easlan Management’s various Vinings units in Greenville. In 2005, she transferred to Charlotte, where she opened and oversaw a new Vinings facility. She returned to Greenville in 2007 to take over management of the Vinings on Duncan Chapel Road. At the same time, she enrolled in Clemson’s off-campus graduate program and completed her masters degree in public administration that year. When Furman purchased the Duncan Chapel Vinings, Carson traded the corporate world for an academic one, staying on as Furman’s Vinings Property Manager.

Carson’s love of kayaking and hiking are a good fit with her husband Nathan, who teaches a course on Outdoor Leadership at North Greenville University. They married in 2008 and have two sons; 5-year-old Asa and 1-year-old Ira. This year Asa entered kindergarten, almost as large a step as Carson’s decision to re-enter the workforce.

The hardest part of going back to work is getting ready in the morning - it’s a bit hectic with two active little boys.

Change has been going on with Carson’s father as well. While Carson was young, he got active in local theater productions and caught the acting bug. He sold the farm while she was in college. Since then, he has appeared in commercials and films, earning enough to qualify for membership in the Screen Actors Guild. He called recently to say he had just received his SAG retirement benefits. Now he concentrates on his golf game.

OLLI’s new employee describes her job as “wonderful.” Each day is different, offering a wide variety of challenges that she describes as much nicer than some she experienced at the Vinings. She says the best part of the job is meeting new people and hearing their stories. Carson is impressed by the size of OLLI and the number of volunteers in the program. She says OLLI is “pretty great.” We think so too and are happy to have her a part of our OLLI family.
SAMANTHA KOLLS - A TALL STORY

Judy Aten

It’s hard to miss our new student worker. She’s someone many of us will look up to because she stands 6 feet tall! No, she never played basketball, even though she was approached to play the sport. Samantha is more interested in people than sports, which is to our advantage.

She hails from Greensboro, NC, and is a member of a large blended family. One of 10 siblings - 5 boys and 5 girls - Sam admits that sometimes, in order explain the difference between a full sibling, step sibling, and half sibling, she resorts to drawing a multi-branched family tree. As she puts it, it can be confusing to explain the complexity of her family.

Sam attended Greensboro Day School, graduating in a class of 88 students in the spring of 2015. Even though her small, challenging high school has close ties to Furman University, its excellent reputation opened a good many doors at some excellent universities. However Furman “made the cut.” Not only did the university keep in touch with her all through high school to encourage and support her, but its study abroad opportunities, excellent academic record, work experiences, internships, and generous financial aid package sealed the deal. As she put it, other colleges just sent out their information, a clear message that she would become one of many in an impersonal setting. Even though Furman had never promoted itself all those years that their admissions agent visited with her to see how she was doing, it was clear there was a concern that indicated a demanding, but supportive, learning experience.

Although several of her friends from Greensboro Day School also came to Furman, Samantha made a point of creating a new circle of friends as she embraced her new academic home. An undeclared freshman, she is leaning toward early childhood education as her major. In addition to her wide palate of classes, Sam has applied to join a co-ed club volleyball team. She also works at the Downtown Presbyterian Church nursery on Sundays and has applied for a spot on the Freshman Orientation summer program as well. In her spare time, Sam hangs out with her friends, sleeps (a favorite college inactivity), and heads back to Greensboro and her family.

Her previous work experience was in retail, so life in a busy office is quite different. Does she enjoy it? One look at her bright smile and cheery demeanor says it all. Stop in and say hello to our latest addition. Sam would love to meet you!
WHERE IN FURMAN ARE WE?

This picture was taken on the Furman campus. Can you identify where?
Hints and the answer below.

1. Mid-campus.
2. Not far from the Dining Hall.
3. Close to the Lake.

Answer: Parking lot at the Lakeside Housing driveway into the gate post at the
“Phoebis Sennae: Time Traveler”

Judith Isler

They say you are a common thing,
little yellow butterfly,
yet I watch your creamy undulating wing
wave good-bye to the portulaca
as if its petals
were your cousins,
and I wonder at your
uncommon tenderness
when you kiss the smallest blossom
in my garden
and depart
with summer tucked
inside your vest.

“OLLI-Tutored Third Graders Improve Reading Skills”

Roger Wheeler

In October 2014, OLLI hosted a special lunchtime program presenting several volunteer opportunities available to OLLI members. Tom Nowlin and I organized the presentations. Tom is a well-known OLLI champion of volunteerism. One of the opportunities involved a third-grade reading program at Heritage Elementary in Travelers Rest. A number of OLLI members volunteered as reading tutors. In all, 24 students were tutored. These were students most “at risk” of not reading at grade level, due largely to the lack of adult reading help at home.

The OLLI-sponsored volunteers helped produce significant improvement for these 24 “at-risk” third graders. At the beginning of the year, 4 of them (16%) were reading at or above grade level. At the end of the year, 11 of them (46%) were at or above grade level. According to Heritage principal Heather Hester, “This shows that tutoring definitely made an impact.” She goes on to point out the tutoring only started at mid-year: “Imagine the impact we could make if we started in September.” As measured by the MAP reading test, 23 of the 24 students saw gains in their reading achievement. The average growth for this group was 11.8 points, exceeding the school-year growth of 11.0 points for third-grade students generally.

Congratulations go to all 24 of these third graders and to the OLLI members who tutored them. It is very nice when we can see tangible results from our volunteer activities. The tutoring program at Heritage Elementary continued this fall with hopes of even greater success. Anyone interested in participating as a reading volunteer may contact me at rogerdwheeler@gmail.com or 864-895-6097, or let Heidi Wright know.
The nucleus of an idea born over a year ago blossomed into an October 30 OLLI @ Furman event that combined elements of Greenville’s signature events: Artisphere and Fall for Greenville. Fall for OLLI featured the artistic endeavors of our members just as Artisphere does, while the choice of fine food and music reflected the Fall for Greenville event.

Over 30 OLLI @ Furman members shared their creative talents at tables throughout the Herring Center. Authors, carvers, graphic artists, and fabric artists displayed their work along with jewelry, hand-made greeting cards, models of buildings made from card stock, woven baskets, wooden bowls, and mosaics. Even plants were displayed. Some chose to simply display their creations, while others offered their work for sale.

OLLI members attending the event were asked to share their culinary skills. Response was so great that extra tables were set up to handle all the food. Everyone attending found a large selection that they could eat either at tables inside the Herring Center or outside, where the fine weather made the patio a prime dining and gathering site. The afternoon and early evening were spent viewing the arts and crafts, consuming the endless amount of food, and sitting and visiting in the many nooks and crannies in the Herring Center.

PHOTOS
Top: One of the heavily laden food tables.
Middle: Out on the patio - enjoying the fall weather and leaves.
Bottom: Food and conversation in the Crabtree classroom.
There was entertainment as well. Out on the patio, a DJ played a variety of music for dancing and listening. Alyson Amato’s Movement Makers class presented a modern dance prepared for the event. Some of our members wore Halloween costumes in the spirit of the season. Paul Schaaf won the huge basket full of prizes raffled off shortly before the event wound down. OLLI members lingered until the last minute, agreeing as they departed that the year’s worth of planning had produced a delightful evening.

An event this complex required a lot of work by the Social Committee, chaired by Sharon Sickler. The event chair was Lois Parker. Other committee members are Greg Parker, Cindy Smithers, Elaine Granger, Linda Nowlin, and Seth Harrison. The OLLI @ Furman staff was indispensable, as was the support by our Furman Facilities personnel, Sheila Archer and Johnnie Lavender.

PHOTOS

Top: Amato’s dance class presentation.
Middle, Left: Paul Schaaf is congratulated on his raffle win by Lois Parker and Lois Taylor
Bottom Left: Conference room being used for artists’ presentations.
Above Right: Woodcarvings on display.
A POEM FOR TOMMY AND CHERI

Gene Johnston

Oh, the miles we hiked, and the stories we’ve told,
These are the memories that will never grow old.

Tommy, what a leader, with big shoes to fill-
You learned from the best, a Farmer named Bill!

Sassafras, Hickory Nut and one named Table Rock,
Some of those hikes really cleaned our clocks!

Up hill, down hill, “it’s level at the top!”
Tommy kept us moving, forgetting to stop.
An 8 miler on the Foot Hills Trail, we all nearly dropped.

And also to Cheri, who loved the wildflowers,
and kept walking and walking on and on for hours.
But finally, the hike that really made her wobble,
A terrible climb by the name of Dog Hobble!

And who knows the story of ashes and beer?
To the Thursday Group it still brings a tear.

So many trails Tommy knows by name,
If nothing else, this alone brings him fame.

And now you must move, grandparents to be.
That you will excel, it’s easy to see!
But, if in the future to the South you return without fail,
There will always be room for you with us on the trail.

And yet in the end, the thing we all hold dear,
Is to have known them and loved them, of this we are clear.

And, if you ever remember us in your lives as a part,
You will always be with us, at least in our hearts.

Written about Monday’s Intermediate Hiking co-leader
Tommy Cook and his wife Cheri.

QUOTES TO PONDER

Dan Kappel

If you are looking for a reason to join and stay active with OLLI @ Furman, consider this quote from Samuel Johnson: “It is a man’s own fault. It is from want of use, if his mind grows torpid in old age!”

From Jack Benny: “Your money or your life!”
“Take my life. I’m saving my money for my old age.”
THEY GREW UP TO BE … ?

The individuals pictured below grew up to be people you may have seen around the Herring Center. Use your powers of observation and deductive reasoning to figure out who they are. If you think you know, send your answers to Heidi at heidi.wright@furman.edu. The person sending in the first correct answer for each will have the extreme honor of seeing his or her name published in the next issue of Gray Matters along with the correct answers.

We would like to make this an ongoing feature in Gray Matters. You, too, can have the opportunity to puzzle your friends. Email a picture of yourself, ideally from 10 to 20 years old, to gary.aten42@gmail.com.

NEW WALL DECORATION

Graduates of OLLI’s Marvelous Mosaics class, along with instructor Connie DuPre, designed, made, and gave a beautiful OLLI sign to OLLI. Make sure to admire it the next time you are in the building; it is hanging over the large bulletin board outside the Crabtree Room. Thank you to the artists!

Pictured left to right: Judy Render, Marianne Novak, Jane Pilcher, Danna Korell, Nancy Memenga, Connie DuPre. Not shown: Lynn Huler.
GRAY MATTERS NEEDS HELP!

In an effort to continually improve *Gray Matters*, we are looking for more participation from the OLLI membership. We are especially interested in having a column in each issue about OLLI classes and are open to other ideas. If you would like to conduct interviews, write articles, or have another way to contribute, get in touch with Gary Aten at gary.aten42@gmail.com or 307-871-1050. Work will need to be done with Microsoft Word or Apple Pages. Of course, we always welcome articles, photos, and poems from the membership. Use the above contact information and get involved.

INTERESTING INTERNET SITES

Elaine Brummett

coursera.com 1094 free university courses
academicearth.org 750 free courses
memrise.com free courses in many subject areas.
games.aarp.org and happy-neuron.com for a mental workout
eldercare.gov lists local specialists to explain programs for financial, legal, and caregiving help
billshrink.com compares cell phone plans
**HOLIDAY DECORATION**

A small but dedicated, cadre of OLLI members, assisted by the OLLI staff, decorated the Herring Center Manley Lobby for the holidays. The tree, highlighted by many decorations that represented OLLI classes and enhanced by new LED lights, was the centerpiece. The fireplace and the rest of the lobby also got a share of holiday spirit as festive music played. Participants brought in food treats and coffee flowed; a good time was had while the lobby was transformed. Photos by Greg Parker.

**THANKSGIVING CELEBRATION**

In what has become an OLLI tradition, about 70 OLLI members gathered for a Thanksgiving meal for the third year. Although there was an amazing amount of food and drink on hand, not that much was left to take home. After a few hours of visiting and feasting, many left for home with visions of football and a nap on their minds.

Many thanks to the committee that planned the event, the people who came early to help stage it, and those who stayed to help clean up. All the planning payed off in a truly enjoyable event.
What does a guy do with a degree in philosophy and religion? Adam Summer was asking himself that same question as his graduation from Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC, loomed large on the horizon. As Adam put it, he was open to anything that came his way. An Aramark manager who was involved with the soccer team Adam played on loved to harass him about his college major and continually asked what kind of work he could find with that major. Adam took the ribbing in stride until the night he countered with, “Do you have any openings?” It turns out he did. Food service. It conjures up visions of flipping hamburgers, doesn’t it? Well, after his interview with Aramark, a customer service management company that is active in food service, Adam accepted a job that was anything but flipping burgers. He became the Assistant Location Manager at Winthrop University, where he served as the dining room manager - opening and closing the facility. It was there he learned what food service was really about.

Adam met his wife Jennifer at Winthrop, where they were students. She is from the Clemson area and had always wanted to return there. Adam had been working at Aramark’s Winthrop facility for 2 years when Jennifer was offered a job at Clemson’s admissions office. Aramark had an opening at Furman, so, in 2005 the couple relocated to South Carolina and now live in Easley. The Summers have two girls, ages 7 and 5, and a 3-year-old son.

Adam relishes this complicated, challenging business. He works with a wide variety of people and deals with marketing, accounting, human resources, training, and working with managers and associates in higher education. Best of all, he is rarely at his desk, for Adam is on the move every day, meeting challenges and encouraging innovative ideas at Furman’s dining hall. He started out as Aramark’s assistant manager of the Furman food court. That same year, the chef manager who was in charge of all the menu planning, recipe creation, food ordering, and preparation departed. Adam was asked to take over that position. Even though he pointed out that he didn’t know how to cook, he was told they weren’t looking for a chef; they were looking for a highly organized person, one of Adam’s strong points. He admits it was hard at first, but eventually he caught on and was proud to see what he had envisioned as a menu come to fruition. At that point, Adam knew he was in the right profession for him. It was like running his own restaurant without all the instability associated in with a small business. He did so well at that new position, he was promoted to Food Service Director for Furman’s dining service, supervising some 200 employees.
All students who live on campus must have a dining room meal program. Freshmen are expected to take all their meals at the dining hall, for Furman wants them to consider it a part of their new academic home. After their freshman year, students’ eating habits change along with their studies, and they can alter their meal program to best meet their needs. Furman food points are like a small bank account to cover their food choices, and they’re registered on their student ID’s. A swipe of the ID card is all that’s needed to pay for their food, and there are numerous choices for them to chose from.

Many OLLI members are familiar with the faculty dining room. However, the menu there has changed. Now the menu consists of deli sandwiches, soups, and salads. Things have changed in the dining facility as well. Students’ options include Einstein’s Bagels, or, at the Food Court, you can chose from Moe’s, Sushi Concept, Chick-fil-A, or Southern Pressed Juicery. In the dining hall, there is a salad bar with over 81 healthy choices and the Mongolian grill where you fill a silver bowl with whatever you want prepared before your eyes on the round flat grill. If that doesn’t appeal to you, try the omelet station (open all day on Tuesdays) where you pick what you want and the omelet is prepared while you watch. You could also try the Paddock Restaurant, or the short-order Traditions Grill at the golf course. And, if you are having a special event, you can contact Bell Tower Catering, a separate entity with its own chef and specialized menus only for catered events. The philosophy of Furman dining hall is clear if you look at the sign next to the salad bar: eat local, eat fresh, and eat healthy, gluten free.

Furman students have two big favorites in the dining hall. Chicken Tenders Tuesdays require from 800 to 900 pounds of chicken tenders, and about 2,000 chicken-cheese quesadillas are served on Thursdays. The best-known item in the dining room is the DH cookie (dining hall chocolate chip cookies). It is not unusual for students to trot off with a stack of them, and DH cookies are one of the most popular (and most talked about) items provided to prospective students in the spring recruitment tours. Hummus and yogurt are also popular items. If none of this is up your alley, then go up to the library, where twice a week food trucks park out front and serve the students, who can use their student food points for payment.
Adam sees to it that students are offered a wide, healthy selection of food. He meets with the student government regularly for input on menu improvement. It’s hard to keep up with these savvy students, who are fans of the Food Network and all the latest trends. Furman students have a sophisticated palate, and Adam must cater to it. Wellness coordinators set up a table near the dish return site to show students what they are offering that is good for them. He listens to suggestions from students and meets with the Student Diversity Council who give feedback on what would appeal to them.

Adam is proudest of a program that works with those with learning disabilities who want to work but need training. Furman trains a large number of them, showing them how they can become independent and live on their own without government assistance. Dining hall services also follows Furman’s commitment to community outreach.

Adam is on the job year round, using the summer to prepare for the upcoming year while he continues to feed students in the summer programs as well as the various camps and athletic summer programs. Menus are planned, new staff is hired, and special themed meals are planned.

With all the changes, one thing is the same. There is an area for the traditional banners that always hang in a predominant spot on a wall in the dining hall. When the room was remodeled, an area on the second level was specially set aside for those banners. And while you’re looking at the banners, note that the number of tables seating four outnumber the long tables that used to dominate the room. The smaller tables encourage smaller groups of students to visit, meet new people, feel more at home in an exciting, friendly place… Adam Summer’s domain. It is a place he loves dearly and where he continues to meet the needs of those he serves…those hungry Furman students!

| 3,500 meals daily | 10,000 pieces of dish ware daily | 25,000 chocolate chip cookies weekly |
OSHER NATIONAL CONFERENCE REPORT

Nancy Kennedy

In October, I had the privilege of attending the Osher Institutes National Conference. Two representatives from each of the 119 OLLIs across the US are invited to attend this conference every 18 months. Council president Steve Davis and I represented you at this year’s conference in Charlotte, NC.

Because the conference was so close by, we were asked to provide two volunteers to assist with the event. Our Assistant Director, Susan Rae, and OLLI member and volunteer Lois Parker attended the conference as volunteers. They represented OLLI @ Furman very well and were welcoming and helpful to the conference attendees as they registered and throughout the conference.

Because four of us attended, we were able to cover almost every session and to network with even more people. We learned a lot. We brought home new program ideas. We investigated travel programs offered by other OLLIs to inform the beginnings of our own travel program. We even won a prize!

The biggest thing I learned is how fortunate we are here at OLLI @ Furman. We are fortunate to be hosted by Furman University. Many OLLI programs do not enjoy the same level of hospitality at their host colleges. Members of some OLLIs have to pay for parking, for example. Some of them have to meet off-campus. Some have to pay for services we take for granted—marketing support to develop our brochure, facilities support to take care of our building, and much more. We are also fortunate to have outstanding member involvement and volunteer support. Many OLLI directors and volunteer leaders asked me “How do you get volunteers?” I was shocked by that question. When we ask for help, we get it. In spades. (Thank you!)

And, about that prize. Each OLLI submits a “WOW”—something from the past year or so that worked really well and that other OLLIs might want to hear about. It can be a class, a social event, a new Special Interest Group, a speaker, whatever. We submitted the OLLI Antique Fest, held in October 2014, because it brought in a large number of members and combined learning, fun, food, and music and made terrific use of our building. The WOWs were presented in three groups. After each group, attendees voted on their favorite from that group. We won for our group by a large margin. What we didn’t know when entering our WOW was that there would be a prize—a brand-new iPad to use in the office! We’ll use it for many purposes such as iPad classes, special events, and use with the Apple TV system in our classrooms. Kudos to the Social Committee for all they do for our program and for planning great events like the Antique Fest!

It was fun to meet people from other OLLIs but even better to come home to ours! Thanks for all you do to make our program great.
Welcome to Synapse, a new column for OLLI’s Gray Matters. A synapse is a connection area that allows thoughts to travel through the brain’s gray matter. This column’s purpose is to connect OLLI @ Furman members with health-related topics and resources unique to Furman and the Greenville area. If you would like to be a part of Gray Matters’ Synapse column research and/or writing team, please contact Patty Roy at roysonice@gmail.com. We welcome comments about this quarter’s topic and/or suggestions for future columns.

BRAIN HEALTH and GAMES: HYPE or HOPE

A major topic on seniors’ minds is exactly that: their minds.

Remember the old science about the aging brain: that a brain has a fixed number of brain cells and those their numbers dwindle as people age because the brain cannot repair itself or adapt. Brains were destined to sink into various stages of senility. People retired. They physically and mentally put themselves ‘out to pasture.’

Groundbreaking new longitudinal studies are disproving those old ideas. Modern MRIs have finally allowed researchers to study live, working brains. Two new concepts are opening a world of possibilities: The brain can generate new neurons (neurogenesis), and it can adapt and change (neuroplasticity). “Taking it easy” risks allowing the brain to figuratively and literally shrink. Brains and bodies seem subject to the same “use it or lose it“ rule. Brain building requires diligence and care. The challenge is determining what environments actually help a person keep mentally sharp and what strategies help the aging person learn to learn.

Open a newspaper, watch a TV commercial, look at the side bar on the computer screen and see promises of new ways to maintain brain health. The advertising claims seem impressive. However, will sitting alone with a low-tech crossword or a high-tech computer brain game keep your brain sharp and reduce or reverse cognitive decline? In a recent interview, Gilles Einstein, professor of psychology at Furman University, expressed his concern about computer-based programs being mass-marketed, especially to the senior population, with claims that exceed solid research proof and consensus. In 2014, The Stanford Center for Longevity with the Max Planck Institute were so concerned with the trend and hype companies use to sell ‘brain game’ products that they issued a statement signed by 69 neuroscientists and cognitive psychologists from around the world, including Furman’s Dr. Einstein. On the next page is their short statement:
Computer-based “brain-games” claim a growing share of the marketplace in aging societies. Consumers are told that playing the games will make them smarter, more alert, and able to learn faster and better. The implied and often explicit promise is that adherence to prescribed regimens of cognitive exercise will reduce and potentially reverse creeping cognitive slowing and forgetfulness, improve everyday functioning, and help to prevent Alzheimer’s disease. It is customary for advertising to highlight the benefits and overstate potential advantages of their products. In the brain-game market, however, advertisements also assure consumers that claims and promises are based on solid scientific evidence, as the games are “designed by neuroscientists” at top universities and research centers. These claims are reinforced through paid advertising and distributed by trusted news sources. Thus, a group of cognitive scientists and neuroscientists felt obliged to issue a direct statement to the public: The strong consensus of this group is that the scientific literature does not support claims that the use of software-based “brain games” alters neural functioning in ways that improve general cognitive performance in everyday life, or prevent cognitive slowing and brain disease. Much more research is needed before firm conclusions on these issues can be drawn. To quote the summary statement:

“We object to the claim that brain games offer consumers a scientifically grounded avenue to reduce or reverse cognitive decline when there is no compelling scientific evidence to date that they do. The promise of a magic bullet detracts from the best evidence to date, which is that cognitive health in old age reflects the long-term effects of healthy, engaged lifestyles. In the judgment of the signatories below, exaggerated and misleading claims exploit the anxieties of older adults about impending cognitive decline. We encourage continued careful research and validation in this field.”

We strongly encourage our readers to learn more details about this subject by reading the full statement, which includes the 69 signers. The link is: http://longevity3.stanford.edu/blog/2014/10/15/the-consensus-on-the-brain-training-industry-from-the-scientific-community-2/

Gray Matters appreciates The Stanford Center on Longevity and The Max Planck Institute granting permission to print this article. Thanks also to Dr. Einstein for his time and input.

Please note: Check out the two free winter lectures at OLLI: Furman’s Dr Gil Einstein will present a Bonus Event on January 22 titled Remembering to Perform Intended Actions (important info for anyone who has walked into a room and couldn’t remember why he or she went there.) That event requires signup. Dr. Frank Powell will give a Lunch and Learn presentation titled Physical Morality open to all on February 2.
Over the past few weeks, several members have asked “Who does what?” They aren't sure whom to ask about various questions they may have now that we have a new staffing structure. Any member is welcome to ask any of us a question, and the five of us on staff try to stay informed about everything. For example, during registration week, all of us are available to help. Generally, any of us can sign you up for an upcoming event. And we all know how to do the paperwork for dropping or adding a course. But, following is more information about what each of us does and where to go with specific questions.

**Director**

**Nancy Kennedy:** Full-time, year-round. Hours 8:30-5:00, Monday-Friday.

Nancy oversees the staff and overall vision and mission for the organization. She also serves as Assistant Building Facilitator for the Herring Center for Continuing Education. Nancy sits on the Executive Council; OLLI Council; and Administration and Finance, Long-Range Planning, Senior Leaders Greenville and Outreach Committees as an ex-officio member. She works with the Riley Institute to develop the summer series, Straight Talk SC.

Talk to Nancy if you have questions about OLLI policies, suggestions for program improvement, or ideas for new OLLI initiatives.

**Assistant Director: Curriculum and Registration Manager**

**Susan Rae:** Full-time, year-round. Hours are 8:00-4:00, Monday-Friday.

Susan provides staff support to the Curriculum Committee, which involves development of term curriculum and course brochures. She also oversees the management of the registration software CampusCE and the registration process. Susan sits on the Curriculum Committee and subcommittees as an ex-officio member.

Talk to Susan if you have questions about proposing an OLLI course or online registration. She also processes all drops/adds for courses.

**Program Coordinator: Instruction**

**Pam Roberson:** Full-time, 10 months. Hours are 8:30-4:30, Monday-Friday, mid-August through early June.

Pam provides support to OLLI instructors once they are placed on the course schedule. Pam coordinates instructor training, honoraria payments, and classroom support. She is responsible for managing the deposit and reconciliation of all financial accounts with the University, and she sits on the Instructor Support Committee as an ex-officio member.

Talk to Pam if you are an instructor in need of training or support, or if you have questions about payments, refunds, or reimbursements. Pam also distributes instructor honoraria payments and works with Bonus Events.
Program Coordinator: Enrichment
Heidi Wright: Full-time, 10 months. Hours are 8-4, Monday-Friday, mid-August through early June.

Heidi works with social events, volunteers, SIGs, travel program, Senior Leaders Greenville, and other events/programs that enrich OLLI offerings (not curriculum). She provides support for OLLI Council and sits on the Volunteer, Travel, Senior Leaders Greenville, and Social Committees as an ex-officio member.

Talk to Heidi if you have questions about or suggestions for social events, if you’d like to volunteer with OLLI or start a Special Interest Group, or if you want to know more about OLLI travel.

Department Assistant
Carson Ruffrage: Part-time, year-round. Hours are 8:30-1:30, Monday-Friday.

Carson oversees the management of the office and the volunteers who support its day-to-day operation. She maintains office supply and coffee inventory. Carson manages the systems to distribute Wi-Fi passwords and OLLI Paladin Passes. She provides support to the Assistant Director for registration system and brochure development. Carson works on other special projects, such as art shows for the Baiden Wall.

Talk to Carson if you need a Wi-Fi password, if you have questions about an upcoming art show or your OLLI Paladin Pass, or if you’d like to help with the coffee bar.

Student Workers
Laken Weaver & Samantha (Sam) Kolls:

We have two student workers who each work 10 hours a week in our office. The winter and spring terms student workers are Laken and Samantha. They can help you with registration questions, sign you up for special events, direct you to your classes, make copies, and answer other general questions. They are also great on the computer and might be able to help you with basic smart phone/laptop/iPad questions!

Editor’s Note: If you are wondering, Kelly Rae is not returning as a student worker. She is a senior and will be doing her student teaching this spring semester.

IMAGES OF FALL

Photos by Bruce Schlein
TRIBUTES

Barbara Leimsieder  Tributes Editor

Louis Buzek by Gary Aten

Louis passed away November 1, 2014, at the age of 94. He served in the Army during WWII and rose to the rank of Technical Sergeant. After retiring from the Philadelphia Gas Works, he briefly resided in Tryon, NC and moved to Greenville in 2009, where he was the fourth resident of The Woodlands. He began taking classes at OLLI and taught classes on Charles Dickens. Louis was one of the veterans featured in the Gray Matters WWII Edition. You can read more about his Army service by visiting the OLLI website, selecting “Member Resources” and then “Gray Matters.”

Bette Smock by Peggy Farmer

Bette Smock, who died on September 10, 2015, at age 89, was a librarian, published writer, and equestrian. FULIR/OLLI was a fulfilling endeavor in retirement for her. She taught an equestrian course, sharing her love for riding and showing horses in competition. Dr. Crabtree's Shakespeare classes were her favorites. In 2002, Bette was instrumental in organizing a group of 10 ladies, the FULIR Thursday Friends, who had lunch every month for over 12 years, sharing their appreciation and love for FULIR/OLLI. Bette is greatly missed.

The Tributes section recognizes departed OLLI classmates, teachers, and staff who have enriched the OLLI program. We invite you to submit your name and contact information along with a brief notice of up to 125 words to the Tributes editor, Barbara Leimseider (bleimsieder@gmail.com). Please emphasize the significance of the deceased to OLLI.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Elaine Brummett

The committee met three times this fall to start developing the 5-year plan. We reviewed recent information such as the classroom utilization study, membership projections based on the last 5 years of growth, and suggestions for accommodating such growth. As a basis for the 5-year plan, the seven OLLI committee chairs were asked to provide their committee goals and actions plans, especially any addressing the OLLI goals. The 10 OLLI goals relate to membership expectations, membership participation, membership services, community, finance, Herring Center and Furman facilities, planning, administration, and annual reporting. Some committee submittals were discussed at the November meeting, and the need for more information was identified.
A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Christmas. On Thursday, December 3, “Far As the Curse is Found,” was performed by the all-woman cast of the Good Hearted but Small-Talented Players. This holiday event benefited a library at the public Greenville Child Development Center. Admission was by donation of a book for a 4-year-old, and many books were collected for this worthwhile cause. The cast is shown above in this Greg Parker photo.

BUILD A NEW COURSE WITH AN OLLI CURRICULUM ENHANCEMENT GRANT

For the fifth year, OLLI @ Furman is offering Course Enhancement Grants to members and instructors. Anyone who has been an OLLI member or instructor for at least 6 terms may apply for a grant from $200 to $2,000. Within two years, recipients must share their knowledge with the OLLI membership in some way: teaching a course, presenting a Bonus Event, starting a new Special Interest Group, or developing a series of seminars or other offerings.

In the past, recipients have used these grants to pay for travel, seminars, lectures, admissions, and materials to learn about a topic that was later developed into a course. Grants have also been awarded to purchase items used in the classroom to enhance existing courses. Use your creativity in applying for a grant. Is there a course you think we are missing that you might be able to teach? Would a grant help you complete research or give you skills you can share with fellow OLLI members? Have you always wanted to teach but didn’t have the resources to create a class? Then this grants program is for you!

You can find applications on the OLLI website, and hard copies are available on the bulletin board in the Herring Center.

Applications are due March 1 in the OLLI Office. The Grants Committee will review completed applications in March and April, and notifications will be sent in early May. A public announcement of the grantees will be made at the OLLI Spring Luncheon on May 17.

Please contact members of the Grants Committee with questions: Judy Lineback (Chair), Tim Henry, Dave Johnson, Connie Memolo, and Geraldine Weyermann.
innovation |ˌɪnəˈvænʃən|
noun
the action or process of innovating.
• a new method, idea, product, etc.: technological innovations designed to save energy.

ORIGIN: mid 16th century:
from Latin innovat- ‘renewed, altered,’ from the verb innovare, from in- ‘into’ + novare ‘make new’ (from novus ‘new’).

This issue of Gray Matters is full of examples of innovation related to our OLLI @ Furman program. A good example of this is the recent Fall for OLLI. Two Octobers in a row, beginning with the 2014 Antique Fest, we had events that had never taken place before. They both proved that an idea can develop into something great. Note, though, that the idea is not enough. As the definition says, the innovation is an action or process. That takes work and dedication, which the two October events illustrate. The Herring Center is innovative. From the idea of combining Furman Continuing Education with the OLLI program to the sustainable design, the building fits us well, contributing to a culture that encourages new ideas and innovation. If the building had not been designed as it was, those two fall events probably wouldn’t even have been attempted. You expect innovation to be evident in a university setting. One place you might not think of in that context is the dining hall, but read about the changes in the Furman food service area and you will see innovation.

Innovation doesn’t have to be a big thing, however. The artwork on our cover or a poem about a butterfly might not bring to mind innovation at first. However, if this artwork came from a new idea that was then developed into the final product, is that not innovation? What if the end product came about as a result of taking an OLLI class? Coming up with a new OLLI member tutoring program for third graders is certainly innovation. An instructor that has an idea for a new class, or a new way to teach a class, is innovative. Committees developing new ways to accomplish their goals are innovative, as is the idea for a new Gray Matters column on health. You can probably think of other ways OLLI @ Furman exhibits innovation.

You can contribute (You just knew this was coming, didn’t you?) to our innovative program. When you have an idea for something new, don’t just dismiss it. Be willing to share it and help bring it to fruition. You’ll be proud you did.