$1M Endowment, Instructors & Volunteers Celebrated at 10-Year Anniversary Event

On Feb. 7, an enthusiastic group of more than 100 members, prospective members, instructors, and friends of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at SDSU assembled at the university’s Parma Payne Goodall Alumni Center to celebrate the Institute’s 10th anniversary. During the festivities, SDSU President Elliot Hirshman announced that OLLI at SDSU had received a $1 million endowment from The Bernard Osher Foundation.

“We are deeply grateful to Bernie Osher, Mary Bittner and the entire staff of The Bernard Osher Foundation for their extremely generous support of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at San Diego State,” said Hirshman. “Through their endowment support, San Diego State will provide opportunities for lifelong learning and enrichment to members of our community in perpetuity.”

The Bernard Osher Foundation currently supports 119 Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes on university and college campuses across the country, with at least one grantee in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

“We are delighted to recognize the accomplishments of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at San Diego State University with this endowment gift,” said Bittner, president of The Bernard Osher Foundation. “We applaud the Institute’s dedicated volunteers and staff — as well as the leadership of the University — for developing such an exceptional educational program.”

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at SDSU’s courses are offered through the College of Extended Studies (CES), and the Institute is operated by CES staff and supported by OLLI volunteers, including an advisory board and four committees.

In fall 2004, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at SDSU was established with the support of The Bernard Osher Foundation and six founding advisory board members. It has grown from offering seven courses to 16 members in its first semester to now providing 145 classes annually to nearly 700 members, with feedback and support from more than 20 member volunteers serving on the institute’s four committees and/or advisory board.

“Osher keeps students intellectually engaged and challenges us to keep growing and learning new things,” said Dee Quashnock, an OLLI member.

Many SDSU faculty and those from other universities are among the instructors, lecturing on a wide variety of subjects including history, theatre, world affairs, literature, political science, cultural studies, and creative arts.

During the 10-year anniversary celebration, three instructors were honored with awards, based on OLLI members’ nominations:

- Peter Bolland (world religions and philosophy), Most Inspirational Presentations
- Susan Cayleff (women’s studies), Most Intellectually Engaging Topics
- Rebecca Romani (film and media studies), Most Creative Visual Presentations

Students had many words of praise for all the instructors, and had this to say about the winners:

“Peter Bolland is the most enjoyable instructor I’ve had in my 68 years,” said student Gary E. Matthews.

“Susan is a wonderful teacher; very dynamic. She uses her life experiences to tell stories on the course topic and makes historical figures live,” said student Nan Moser.

“I think we’ve grown together as I share what I know and the students have been able to share what they know,” Cayleff said. “I look forward to seeing familiar faces and am very excited when I have new students in class.”

In addition to the instructor awards and volunteer recognition ceremony, members and prospective members had an opportunity to meet course instructors, learn about ways to get involved at the Institute, and view video highlights from the first decade of the OLLI at SDSU.

Advisory board member Eddie Baca was among those featured in the video, emphasizing the “commitment to excellence” he has witnessed at OLLI from the leadership to the participants to the professors. “At every level, I saw the people were genuinely interested in the success of the program and doing the best for the students,” he said.

“The Osher Institute has a virtual smorgasbord of educational offerings … a myriad of previously unexplored and surprisingly fascinating subjects. It’s also addictive,” said member Wayne Sander.

“Rebecca meticulously prepares creative power point presentations to visually engage her students and to introduce the themes, characters, plots and background information associated with the various genres of films she is teaching,” said OLLI Committee Member Barbara Stroud.

To share your ideas or get more involved at the OLLI at SDSU, visit neverstoplearning.net/OsherVolunteer.

Director’s Corner

Welcome to the first issue of our new newsletter, the OLLI Outlook! This issue features highlights from our recent 10-Year Anniversary Celebration, stories about OLLI members making a difference, creative pieces by Writing & Critique course participants, some interesting facts learned in OLLI classes, and important dates as spring 2015 comes to a close, and summer semester begins.

— Emily Moore, OLLI Director

Submit ideas for future OLLI Outlook newsletter issues at osher@mail.sdsu.edu.

Wednesday, May 13:
Start of Early Registration for Summer Semester (available for Spring 2015 Members)

Wednesday, May 27:
Start of Regular Registration for Summer Semester

Monday, June 15:
Summer Classes Begin; New Member Orientation & Tour

Friday, June 26:
Free Summer Special Event “The Hidden Treasures of Korean Art & Modern Korea”

Learn more: neverstoplearning.net/oshervolunteer

(619) 594-2863
CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS

Many OLLI Members enjoy creative writing, and we are honored that several have shared some of their creative writing pieces resulting from their participation in Writing and Critique courses offered at the Osher Institute at SDSU.

Changing What I Can
by Margie Prestwood

With the added sunshine and the warm gentle breezes, green sprouts burst forth on bare limbs and a rainbow of colorful flowers began to appear everywhere. It was early spring, but my mood was still winter. I was the last remaining member of my nuclear family; I had been a widow for over ten years, and all my longtime friends were deceased, plus my son had died at a too early age. My theory had always been “when life gets overwhelming, get occupied, stay busy, and try to stay mentally and physically fit. I had lots of grandchildren and great grand kids living near, but they had their own life and more problems than I wanted to deal with. I had never been sedate, maybe unorganized, but always active. I did the monthly newsletter and wrote an article for my church, but lately my life seemed very mundane. I needed a new interest and a wider variety of acquaintances. Lo-and-behold the SDSU College of Extended Studies catalog showed up in my mailbox within the next day or two. As I scan this publication my thoughts were, “This is perfect. I can walk the mile up to the campus, attend classes, and then walk home—exercise my mind, my body, and meet new people all in one undertaking.”

I paid my dues for Osher, enrolled in a couple classes that sounded interesting, and the book club for the books I wanted to read. I tried to get in a writing class, but it was already filled. After that semester, I was hooked. The sessions were interesting, informative, and the instructors were excellent. The next year I talked to Linda, my Social Security age daughter, into being an Osher student. How many of us get to go to college with our children?

This January I signed up early enough to get a spot in the two Memoir and Life Writing classes, joined the INGly Writers group*, and this Intermediate Writing and Critique class. What a difference these classes and the other students have made in my zest for life! I have sat in a lot of writing classes over the last 40 years, but never one with Kathi Diamant’s teaching technique. It makes me evaluate my own writing style and try new ones. I have no words to properly express my gratitude to those of you who take the time to critique what I write. This is an invaluable tool for me, one that I have never had before.

I promised myself over 25 years ago that I was going to write my memoirs. Now I’m actually doing it, and I am over 13,000 words into the project. I am thankful for all of you who have participated in this journey; I hope to see all of your names in print. Kathi, my gratitude for your guidance, patience and encouragement is beyond the utterance of words. You haven’t seen the last of me.

“I am learning about my pain, my loves, and I am over 13,000 words into the project. I am thankful for all of you who have participated in this journey; I hope to see all of your names in print. Kathi, my gratitude for your guidance, patience and encouragement is beyond the utterance of words. You haven’t seen the last of me.”

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Thoughts About Writing
by Dave Fremland

I started out as a joke. “I should write a book,” I would say, “I have had so many adventures.” Nobody ever argued; in fact, without exception my friends all agreed. Then as soon as the thought came, it vanished and more years passed. With each decade there have been ups and downs, hurts and patches and more adventures, making the task even more daunting. Besides, what have I ever done that anyone else couldn’t do? I’ve only been bouncing along in the hope that one day I may find stability and peace. They have remained elusive, and my shadow of doubt has become a cage that I have always tried to break free of. This year I turned 50 and, although I thought it wouldn’t happen to me, I found myself wondering if I would ever do anything meaningful, if I would ever have an effect on anyone or leave anything behind. My health suddenly presented me with fearful issues and I became unemployed. I started a midlife crisis.

I moved back home from a life abroad where I had finally found my ultimate desire, freedom. I saw my parents aging and my nieces grown up and I felt like I didn’t want to run away anymore. It was a hard pill to swallow but it was time to make amends and figure out how to be an adult.

During the process of reconnecting with my old friends, it became evident that I should write the story. After all, I still remember everything in detail where nobody else in my life can catch a clue. Again I was encouraged and again I didn’t feel important enough, but I tried. When I read back what I wrote, it was boring and flat. “Who would want to read this anyway?” I told myself. But those around me wouldn’t let me give up.

I started again but saw nothing unusual or interesting about me or my life. Oh sure, I call myself fabulous, but it isn’t real. Then Mom and I went to a healthy living conference and an Osher catalog crossed my path. “Hmm, Introduction to Writing and Critique; that may be fun,” I thought. I started the class with great enthusiasm. “Maybe I can write my book.”

The magic began slowly at first. I liked [instructor] Kathi Diamant’s ideas. New memories started to pop up; so many memories. Some so sad, I pray they will go back into repression; some so joyous I laugh out loud. All of them pushing their way out from my heart through my fingertips and onto the paper where they will live on.

With each story told, I grow lighter. I am learning about an amazing adventure I have been on without ever noticing. I am learning about my pain, my loves, what drives me and who has shaped me. I am finding a person I wish I’d known sooner. I am figuring out forgiveness. I’ve found me.

Making a Difference

OLLI at SDSU Members are making a positive impact by sharing their experiences and talents with other students in our campus learning community.

Volunteering at ALI Conversation Groups: It’s Like Traveling Without Leaving the Country

OLLI Member, Susan Furtado, enjoys helping international students practice their language skills at the American Language Institute (ALI) Conversation Groups. ALI student Faisal Alquairani says Susan is “like my grandmother when she speaks with me, and she is polite. We talk about United States history and the difference between Arabic and American culture.”

Read more at ces.sdsu.edu/osherbiblog

Supporting SDSU

Serving as a Resource to the Next Generation via SDSU’s Aztec Mentor Program

OLLI Committee Member, Debbie Carson, shares a little bit about her work as one of the first public defenders in San Diego, why she enjoys OLLI classes, and her passion for volunteering with SDSU’s Aztec Mentor program. “Osher students who had careers, who’ve been out there in the working world, who have ideas about how to work and how to get a job, is a perfect group to tap into as a resource, and we make very good mentors.”

Read more at ces.sdsu.edu/osherbiblog

Support OLLI at SDSU

D id you know that the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at San Diego State University is a self-support organization, receiving no state funding?

Your gift can help enhance the tradition of excellence at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at SDSU.

Many people support San Diego State University by naming programs they are passionate about in their estate plans. Planned gifts can be a powerful tool to provide financial support to you and your loved ones while ensuring the continued success of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at SDSU.

Learn more at neverstoplearning.net/supportOLLI

Connect with us on Facebook, YouTube, and our CES blog or visit neverstoplearning.net/oshers