



AT THE
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WHY I TEACH FOR OLLI

By Larry Dendy

Since it started in 2009, OLLI@UGA has offered its members more than 4,500 classes on hundreds of topics taught by scores of instructors. Classes are the heart of OLLI's mission and without teachers OLLI couldn't exist. But what motivates those teachers to volunteer their time and effort to prepare and present classes? Why do they want to be OLLI teachers?

The *OLLI Times* put this question to seven teachers who collectively have presented some 70 classes dating back to OLLI's earliest years. They are: Nan McMurry, retired UGA librarian who also taught in the UGA history department; Tom Keene, emeritus Kennesaw State University professor; Shelley Zuraw, retired UGA professor of art history; Kevin Kelly, retired from UGA music school; Cliff Probst, who holds a master's degree in English fiction from Tulane and did graduate work in literature at Vanderbilt and UGA; Kavita Pandit, emerita professor at Georgia State University and former UGA professor and administrator; and Donnie Summerlin, digital projects archivist with the Digital Library of Georgia

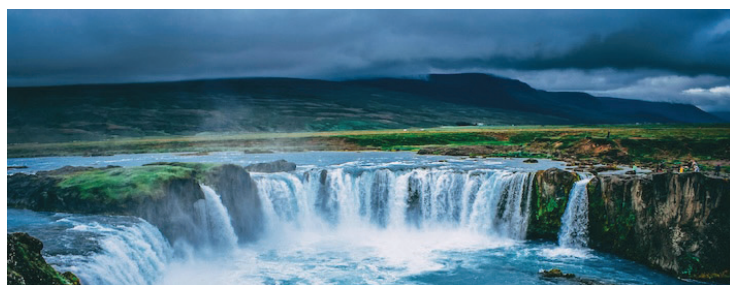
Most of the teachers are former university faculty members so it's not surprising they love teaching and relish the opportunity to continue sharing their knowledge and expertise. They agree that teaching OLLI classes can be more fun and rewarding—and less trying—than a college class.

"OLLI students just like learning, not for professional development or personal advancement but just for the fun of it," says Tom, who has taught 18 courses related to science history. "And they're near enough to my age that they get my jokes!" Shelley, who teaches about Renaissance art, adds, "Teaching OLLI classes allows me to return to the classroom without the drama of attendance, exams and papers." Cliff,

Continued on page 7

ICELAND: LAND OF FIRE AND ICE

By Bonnie Joerschke



If you're looking for a remarkable ecological escape with stunning waterfalls, volcanoes, and native wildlife, the May 2026 OLLI group tour to Iceland may be your kind of trip.

Iceland is often referred to as the land of fire and ice. Active volcanoes, large glaciers, geysers, steaming geothermal springs, spectacular waterfalls and ice caves have made this unique island a destination for settlers and adventurers for more than 1,200 years. Norwegians, Irish monks, Norsemen, and Vikings arrived in its early history. The first documented settlement occurred around 874 in Reykjavik ("Smoke Cove") which later became the capital and is now the largest city in Iceland and where our upcoming OLLI tour begins.

OLLI tour participants will fly to Reykjavik on May 13, 2026, and join tourists from other countries for a 10-day tour of lower Iceland with multiple night stays at Reykjavik, Reykholt and Vik. The tour begins on May 14 with a walking tour of Reykjavik's "Old City" featuring City Hall, the harbor, Parliament, and the cathedral built in 1796. Traveling around the Golden Circle highlights Day 3 when we will experience the Gullfoss Waterfall, geysers, and the famous Thingvellir National Park, and stand on the crest of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. Also included are lunch at a family-run dairy farm, a visit to a greenhouse to learn about pesticide-free

Continued on page 2

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

How Does OLLI@UGA Fit into OLLI Nationwide?

OLLI@UGA is part of something bigger—a bigger community of lifelong learners. We are one of 124 Osher Institutes nationwide. There is at least one in every state and three in Georgia (UGA, Emory and Kennesaw State). The OLLIs are a network, all endowed by the Osher Foundation but each one unique. Some concentrate on different aspects of programming, such as longer classes, or more travel opportunities. The Institutes in the Osher Network are as unique as the populations they serve. Indeed, a well-worn phrase within the network is “to know one OLLI is to know one OLLI.”

Joining all the Institutes together is the National Resource Center based at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Steve Thaxton, director of the center, spoke at our Annual Meeting last year. Steve and his team do a great job of providing lots of opportunities for us to discover different ways to engage with our populations.

Bernard Osher, the man behind the foundation, believes in the mission and potentiality of lifelong learning. At 80 he started learning how to play the piano; at 88 he went skydiving. Not only has he given us a large amount of money, but he is also an inspiration. The endowment

the Osher Foundation gave us provides a spending budget of five percent of the invested principal to spend each year. This means that we are not allowed to continually dip into the \$2.5 million principal just because we have the need. The spending budget covers only about one-fourth of our expenses in any particular year. The rest comes from membership fees, program fees, and donations from members. (Thank you, by the way, to all our members who helped us meet our \$20,000 goal of donations for the year).

Every 18 months or so, representatives from the entire OLLI network get together to share best practices, discover new ideas, and network. At the end of April, Angela Greene and I will attend the next conference in Washington, DC. This is my fifth conference and it will be a wonderful opportunity to see how we measure up against other Institutes, especially in active membership, variety, and institutional support. Some of the ideas shared will not be applicable to us, but it is always great to get some kernels that we can bring back to enhance our own programs. I look forward to being able to discuss it more with all of you when I return.



Tim Meehan

ICELAND

Continued from page 1

produce grown with geothermal energy, and a visit to Frioheimar's stud farm, where Icelandic show horses are bred.

The next two days the tour goes up the western side of Iceland's coastline with a leisurely visit to Akranes, an old fishing village with a historic harbor, then on to Dioldartunguhver to stroll along wooden walkways among numerous hot springs and waterfalls.

On Day 5 the tour group will sail along the coastline at Stykkisholmur in the northern part of Snaelfellsnes Peninsula. Samples of fresh scallops and sea urchin roe will be served straight from the ocean while we watch for local wildlife like puffins, cormorants, and white-tailed eagles. Lunch is in a quaint fishing village with traditional wooden houses, then on to Mount

Kirkjufell, the most photographed landscape in Iceland. The next day includes a visit to the largest power station in Iceland, where geothermal renewable energy is produced, and a visit to the Lava Exhibition Center that describes the history of Iceland's volcanic eruptions.

Turning to the southernmost tip of Iceland on Day 7, the tour includes the Slogan Museum, turf-built houses, a black volcanic sand beach, caves, and basalt columns and cliffs. The day concludes with a spectacular trip to Solheimajokull Glacier, part of Iceland's fourth largest ice cap. There we will cruise by amphibian boat in the Jokulsarion Glacial Lagoon and watch for seals swimming alongside in the cold lagoon water.

On Day 9 the tour heads west back to Reykjavik, stopping along the way to visit a local studio to learn about Icelandic traditions of wool dyeing. The day ends with an opportunity to enjoy the tradition of geothermal bathing

SIG: ENJOY OPERA IN ATHENS

By Malcolm Richardson



Photo/M. Richardson

Like a number of SIGs, the Enjoy Opera in Athens SIG has been a choice for members since OLLI became an OLLI—and before. The main activity of this SIG is, well, to enjoy opera in Athens with the good company of other OLLI members. This enjoyment happens through two major activities.

One is meeting as a group to go to the HD broadcasts of New York's Metropolitan Opera, now shown at the University 16 Cinemas in Epps Bridge Centre. The "Met" broadcasts about eight Saturday matinee

performances a year, from October to June. SIG members normally gather before a broadcast for lunch at a nearby restaurant, this year at The Chop House, an easy three-minute drive to the movie theater. At the lunch, a representative from UGA's Hodgson School of Music Opera Studies Program gives a short preview of the upcoming opera.

If you haven't been to one of these events, the Met broadcasts are live, full-screen, surround-sound major productions in HD (high definition). The quality of the broadcast is a quantum leap from the old *Live at the Met* broadcasts on public television some years ago. It's surely the next best thing to being at the Met itself, and in some ways better—you can eat popcorn! Naturally there are English subtitles, and there are live interviews with the principal voices and other major contributors to the production. Often during intermissions, you are treated to live views of the work involved in changing sets for the upcoming act. There's usually a good crowd of opera lovers from around town, and some of the more popular operas (*Carmen*, *Aida*) are essentially sell-outs, so it's best to buy tickets in advance online. The SIG provides a cast list and synopsis for each opera.

The second main SIG activity is attending performances by UGA's Opera Studies Program two times each year. Most recently, the group had a pre-opera dinner at George's Low Country restaurant before attending Mozart's early opera *La finta giardiniera* at the UGA Fine Arts theater. The SIG also posts recitals and other performances on its OLLI COMM pages so that members know about the many opera-related events at the school, most of them free.

in the famous Sky Lagoon. A farewell dinner ends the tour where we bid our new friends goodbye and return to Atlanta the next day.

A deposit of \$698 per person is due by November 14, 2025, and final payment, \$5,949 (double occupancy) is due by February 12, 2026. A free information session will be presented by Lindsey Hickman from Collette Tours on June 2, 2025, from 2-3 p.m. at River's Crossing. We hope to see you there.

**More information about
the Iceland tour**



THANK YOU!

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OLLI SPONSOR: Wesley Woods Senior Living

By Martha McFerron



Wesley Woods Senior Living, a fixture in Athens since 1953, was among the first to address the expanding need for accessible, independent senior living. Created by the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church, Wesley Woods’ goal was to provide a community of connection, well-being, and promise. Seventy-two years later, we continue to create a welcoming home for older adults.

In addition to the facilities in Athens, Wesley Woods owns communities across Atlanta and in Augusta, Blairsville and Newnan and manages one in Roswell. Depending on the location, levels of care allow residents to “transition in place” while enjoying affordable, independent retirement life.

Located at 801 Riverhill Drive in Athens, Lanier Gardens and Talmage Terrace are both pet friendly. Lanier is designed for seniors aged 62 and older. For those who qualify, housing and rental assistance are available from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Lanier residents enjoy one-bedroom rental apartments, one meal daily, a wellness program, scheduled transportation, on-site beauty shop, and access to The Plaza Personal Care Center at Talmage Terrace. Utilities including wi-fi are covered by the monthly fee, but cable and phone are not. There is a waitlist for Lanier Gardens. Talmage Terrace is an Athens Life Plan Community for aging adults providing one and two-bedroom apartment

homes. Amenities include weekly housekeeping and linen services, transportation to scheduled appointments and places of interest along with activity rooms for cards and games, fitness center, library, computer lab, hair salon, and activities ranging from social, educational and recreational to spiritual and cultural events. Meals are served in the dining room restaurant style. The Plaza Personal Care Center customizes each resident’s needs in a respectful, dignified manner.

In Atlanta, Wesley Woods Towers is owned by Emory University and managed by Wesley Woods Senior Living. Among the amenities are monthly physician visits from the Wesley Woods Domiciliary Care Outpatient Center. Affordable housing communities in Atlanta include Asbury Harris Epworth Towers and Branan Towers.

The largest WW community is St. John Towers in Augusta, offering both residential and assisted living apartments. It is also an affordable housing community. In Blairsville there’s Simpson Estates with independent living cottages plus Branan Lodge at Wesley Mountain Village, an affordable housing apartment community. Wesley Woods of Newnan offers apartments and cottages, assisted living, memory care and skilled nursing suites.

For information visit www.wesleywoods.org, call 404-779-6231 or email info@wesleywoods.org.

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WHY I TEACH

Continued from page 1

who has taught nine classes, mostly about novels and films, agrees: “OLLI classes are a great opportunity for me to research and prepare material that interests me and then present it in a way that will interest others. It’s the best part of teaching without the problems of undergraduates and grades.”

The teachers are already experts in their subjects and developing an OLLI class allows them to continue exploring those topics. Kevin, who has taught seven classes on music and musicians, says students “often bring up questions or tangents that put our discussion in a new light or context and make me rethink aspects of the topic.” For Tom, preparing OLLI classes “forces me to bear down and organize vague ideas I have about a topic. Then students ask for clarifications and offer observations that bring me to a better understanding of the topic.”

Active participation by OLLI students is a major reason the teachers enjoy their classes. “The students have a wealth of their own knowledge and experience to contribute and they are never shy about participating,” says Nan, who has taught more than 23 classes on topics related to medical history. “We use class time to read, analyze and discuss historical primary sources and they ask questions as we go along, which is just what I want to happen.” Kevin says his students “often bring up questions that put our discussion in a new light or context and make me re-think certain aspects of the subject.” Donnie, who has taught nine classes on 1960s culture and music, adds that “Class attendees are always enthusiastic and gracious participants and it makes teaching a rewarding experience.”

Kavita, who taught her first class this semester on “The Power of Deep Listening,” says the best part of the class was getting students to actually try deep listening. “It was most impactful when they practiced deep listening skills with someone else in the class. It’s quite amazing for them to realize how intimate a conversation with someone they don’t know can be if the listener truly suspends judgement and becomes deeply curious about what the other is saying.”

The teachers agree that one of the best things about OLLI classes is the appreciation they receive from students. Kevin says students have told him a class is “eye-opening,” and many return for other classes he

teaches. Nan says many students in her classes sign up when she offers a new class, creating “more of a community getting back together again rather than a bunch of random strangers.” All the teachers agree student feedback helps them improve both class content and their presentations. For Shelley, gratitude for her class was best expressed by a student who told her, “This class was so much better than I expected it to be.”

Whatever their reasons for teaching, these instructors agree OLLI classes are enjoyable and rewarding and they look forward to continuing their teaching adventures with OLLI students.



Purchase Your OLLI Merchandise!

Clothing:

Polos, bomber jackets, and short- and long-sleeved shirts

Accessories:

Totes, leatherette journal, insulated tumbler



THANK YOU TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS ISSUE:

*Larry Dendy
Bonnie Joerschke
Martha McFerron
Tim Meehan
Malcolm Richardson*



OLLI@UGA
River's Crossing
850 College Station Rd.
Athens, Georgia 30602

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ATHENS, GA
PERMIT #11



Mary Frances Early
College of Education
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA



River's Crossing
850 College Station Road
Athens, GA 30602-4811
Telephone: 706-542-7715



EMAIL: olli@uga.edu



INSTAGRAM: [olliatuga](https://www.instagram.com/olliatuga)



FACEBOOK: [olliatuga](https://www.facebook.com/olliatuga)



WEBSITE: www.olli.uga.edu

Executive Director.....	Tim Meehan
President.....	Carol Coman
Co-editors, OLLI Times.....	Malcolm Richardson
	Larry Dendy
Designer, OLLI Times.....	Tracy Coley