



AT THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF GEORGIA®

# OLLI TIMES

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## WE'RE HOSTING THE SUMMER OLLI REGIONAL CONFERENCE!

*By Larry Dendy*



Athens will be the center of the OLLI world next summer when staff and members of OLLIs and other lifelong learning programs around the country gather in the Classic City for the annual Southern Regional Conference for Learning in Retirement.

OLLI@UGA will host the July 27-29 conference, which is expected to draw some 150 people to the University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education and Hotel for presentations and discussions on ways to strengthen lifelong learning programs.

This will be the second time OLLI@UGA has hosted the conference. The first was in 2013, just three years after transitioning from the local Learning In Retirement program to join the national network of programs affiliated with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

"It's an honor for our OLLI to host this conference and provide this opportunity to help other lifelong

*Continued on page 7*

## OLLI GARDEN ENTHUSIASTS SHARED INTEREST GROUP

*By Peter Smagorinsky*

Hello, gardeners! The OLLI Garden Enthusiasts SIG brings together gardeners of all levels of knowledge and experience monthly to learn about plants and gardens and to have fun and enjoyment with fellow travelers.

Our meetings take place from September to May (or June) on the third Sunday of every month from about 2-3:30 p.m. We chose this day/time because people tend to be free on weekends, the fall tends to have football games on Saturdays, and many people attend church Sunday mornings and evenings. We also wanted to coordinate with the Native Plant Society, which meets at the same time on the second Sunday of every month.

My name is Peter Smagorinsky, and I'm the host of the OLLI Garden Enthusiasts SIG. I'm a retired UGA professor of language and literacy education and haven't taken a science class since high school in 1970.

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Photo: P. Smagorinsky

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Twelve years ago, Athens hosted the annual Southern Regional Conference for Learning in Retirement. From what I know, it was a great success, involving lots of volunteers from across our community. I still have the plaques in my office proclaiming Lifelong Learning Week that were presented to OLLI@UGA by both the Athens-Clarke County government and the Governor's Office.

We will host the 2026 conference in late July at the Georgia Center for Continuing Education/UGA Conference Center Hotel, taking advantage of all that UGA, the College of Education and the city of Athens have to offer to visitors. We will need volunteers to help with hospitality both in and around the conference. Let's show off how welcoming we can be!

Even though the conference has "regional" in its name, that does not mean it only attracts people from the South. Indeed, recent conferences have had attendees from Nevada and Alaska! Unlike the annual OLLI national conference, this conference is open to all who have an association with Lifelong Learning—regardless of whether that association is with an OLLI organization.

I have been to a few of these conferences since 2017 (at Eckerd College in Florida, the University of Ala-

bama-Huntsville), and two of our staff members have also attended conferences. Michelle Horton-Caricofe attended last year's meeting in Kentucky, and Jennifer Shai-kun attended this year's conference at Emory University in Atlanta.



Tim Meehan

The 150 attendees at the Emory conference included a variety of paid staff and volunteers and Jenn noted how—while the formal conference sessions were certainly interesting—it was networking with others that "provided a rich experience to witness how differently each lifelong learning program operates." The conference is a wonderful way to learn ideas we can apply to OLLI@UGA.

More information about next year's conference will follow as we continue to put together a program that helps not only OLLIs but other Lifelong Learning Institutes, both locally and across the country. I am excited that OLLI@UGA is able to host the conference and show off the many programs and activities we provide to our members. If you would like to be involved in any way, please do let me know.

## GARDENERS

*Continued from page 1*

I have learned mostly through talking with friends and nursery people, reading, making mistakes, and making more mistakes. I became a Master Gardener in Athens-Clarke County in 2023 and have learned even more. I've been building my own garden since moving to my house in 2007, [www.petersmagorinsky.net](http://www.petersmagorinsky.net).

We've arranged our monthly SIG outings around the interests of our members, 20-25 of whom attend our gatherings. Several ideas have come from members. Some examples of field trips (all local) in the past year or so:

Great local gardens: We've visited the Vince and Barbara Dooley home and its extensive and well-tended gardens; the home garden of UGA horticulture superstar Allan Armitage, who attends most of our events; the

amazing Giberson family gardens; the UGA Latin American Ethnobotanical Garden with tour by Paul Duncan; the UGA Trial Gardens with tour by Allan Armitage; and my own home garden, with my home also hosting an Armitage slide tour of great English gardens.

Local plant places: Sometimes we'll go to a local nursery and learn about its plants. Trips have included Piccadilly Farm, the Foxglove Plantbar (for indoor plants, terrariums, etc.), Classic City Flowers, and Grower's Outlet in Loganville.

Visiting professionals: Will Hanner of Landcare.com

We've closed out the last two years with a May or June plant-and-seed swap event that is mostly social, although all go home with a few plants to brighten their gardens.

*We welcome any OLLI members who want to join in the fun!*



# UP CLOSE: HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

By Carolyn Schneider



Where do I start? St. Patrick's Day, Beerganza, Picnic in the Park, Mardi Gras Madness, Haunted October Fest, Holiday Luncheon, the Annual Meeting, and OLLI Fest are some of the past social events designed by the Hospitality Committee with the goal that each event results in laughter, visiting old friends, and making new friends, and usually there's food! Hence the name.

If an event is highly successful, we repeat it. Mardi Gras Madness is such an event. In 2026, OLLI Fest will be held in January, and a return to a St. Paddy's Day luncheon is set for March.

## **How do we come up with these great ideas?**

We hang on to the good ones. Hospitality members come up with new ideas. OLLI members bring us ideas. We strive to engage and entertain all members. We discuss aspects of what it would take to make an idea work, ensuring the goals are met before adding the event to our calendar.

**Who does all the work?** Putting on each of these events is a large task, but no one person does all the work. We make certain of that. The Hospitality Committee chooses the title and tentative date for the event. A list of tasks is created: find a venue, get pricing, discuss promotion with the Marketing and Communications Committee and help with set up (if needed). Once the tasks are listed, Hospitality Committee members volunteer for a task. Each social event needs a point person to ensure task completion. A member from the



committee volunteers steps up to be the point person. That person then works closely with the co-chairs. The OLLI@UGA office staff and the Marketing and Communications Committee provide Hospitality with much-appreciated help for all our events. We don't do it alone.

**How do we keep track of all the details?** OLLI COMM has a chat feature that allows our committee members to contact each other privately.

Who provides the fun? WE DO!





**Dots & Dragons Mahjong SIG**  
(C. Palmer)



**OLLI Mini**  
(G. Wh)



**Poker SIG**  
(P. Dixen)

**We are**  
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**Get on Board SIG**  
(P. Dixen)







**Art Gallery**  
(Whiting)



**Solo Aging Class**  
(P. Dixon)



**New Member Orientation**  
(J. Shaikun)



**OLLI Fest**  
(G. Whiting)



**Generations Expo**  
(P. Dixon)



**Introduction to Persia Class**  
(J. Shaikun)



OLLI SPONSOR:  
Total Joint Specialists

By Martha McFerron

Total Joint Specialists improves the quality of life for those who suffer from pain associated with hip and knee arthritis. TJS offers state-of-the-art treatments and procedures. Unlike other orthopedic surgery clinics, Total Joint Specialists centers on a simple idea: “Do one thing and do it really well.” TJS is the only exclusively dedicated hip and knee replacement practice in Georgia.

The original clinic was formed in 2018 as Arthritis and Joint Specialists by a group of orthopedic surgeons in the Atlanta area focused exclusively on hip and knee surgery. In 2022 the name of the practice was condensed to Total Joint Specialists. Additional locations are now established in 17 Georgia cities, including Alpharetta, Athens, Braselton, Buford, Canton, Cherokee, Crabapple, Cumming, East Cobb, Ellijay, Greensboro, Johns Creek, Lawrenceville, Midtown Atlanta, Northeast Georgia Diagnostic Clinic in Gainesville, Sandy Springs and Snellville.

The TJS surgeons are among the most experienced in the United States, having as a group performed more than 100,000 hip and knee procedures. Each surgeon has specialized training and a practice limited strictly to hip and knee replacement. TJS prides itself on superior outcomes and safety.

Non-operative treatments, cutting-edge surgical techniques, and recovery protocol set the standard in hip



services. TJS uses a personalized approach to enhance each patient’s quality of life. It is essential to have surgery performed by a specialist trained in hip replacement.

Varying types of interventions tailored to knee health range from advanced procedures to personalized treatments. The goal of TJS is to guide each patient toward a life of mobility and comfort with a more resilient, stronger knee. Options include partial and total replacement. Total Joint Specialists makes sure each patient knows exactly what to expect in preparation for hip or knee surgery. Recovery timelines, post-operative care details, and pain management strategies are discussed in depth.

The surgery center in the Athens area is located at 1272 Virgil Langford Road, Suite 103, in Watkinsville. Office hours are 7:30 a.m. -4:30 p.m., Monday-Thursday, and 7:30 a.m. -2p.m. on Friday. For an appointment, complete the online form at [www.totaljointspecialists.com](http://www.totaljointspecialists.com) or call 470-450-6279.

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for your continued support.**

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## REGIONAL CONFERENCE

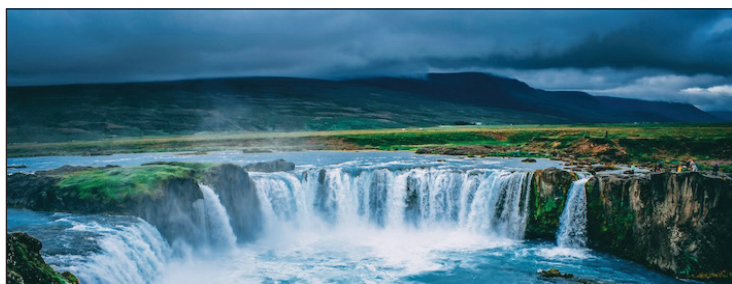
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learning organizations improve their programs,” said Tim Meehan, executive director of OLLI@UGA. “And of course it’s a wonderful opportunity to spotlight our delightful city and the beautiful UGA campus.”

Tim explained that there are 125 OLLIs around the country along with numerous lifelong learning programs not affiliated with the Osher Institute. But only the OLLIs in eight southern states hold a regional conference each year. Apart from the annual OLLI national conference, the southern conference is the only opportunity for staff and members of OLLIs and lifelong learning programs to get together, and it attracts participants from as far away as California and Alaska.

Conference sessions will be designed to help improve programming and operations for all lifelong learning programs and will focus on ways to strengthen curricula, governance, marketing, travel/study, fundraising and membership recruitment. Attendees will also have opportunities to enjoy Athens’s famous music and dining as well as other visitor attractions.

The decision to bring the conference to Athens was made at this year’s OLLI national conference in April. Planning is just beginning, and a local committee will be formed to plan and oversee the many details nec-



## TRAVEL TO ICELAND: Glaciers, Geysers and the Golden Circle May 13-22, 2026

**More information about  
the tour & registration**



essary to put on the conference. Tim urged OLLI@UGA members to help. “We’ll need many volunteers for all the tasks required to stage the conference and we’re counting on our members to help make this a beneficial and memorable experience for everyone who attends.”

## UPCOMING LUNCH & LEARNS

**SIGN UP:**



- Sept. 16**    **Georgia’s Electric Power Monopoly: What You Need to Know**  
Presented by: Patty Durand
- Oct. 7**      **A Legacy in the Sawdust: Musings of a Woodworker**  
Presented by: Abraham Tesser
- Oct. 21**    **Public Service and Outreach at the University of Georgia**  
Presented by: Matthew Bishop
- Nov. 4**     **Popular Music of the 1950s: How it Changed and Why**  
Presented by: Roy Martin
- Nov. 18**   **The Future of American Democracy: A Historical Perspective**  
Presented by: Todd Groce
- Dec. 2**     **Weather and Climate Research – The “So What’s?”**  
Presented by: James Marshall Shepherd

## THANK YOU TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS IN THIS ISSUE:

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