Chaucer Instructor ‘Bitten’ by Medieval Bug

Profile: Mary Rogers

A year of living in Canterbury, England with her family helped to inspire OLLI instructor Mary Rogers’ interest in the literature of the Middle Ages. But it was when she was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) fellowship to study Arthurian literature that she said the “medieval bug really bit me.”

Following her NEH fellowship at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington, Rogers attended the Center for Medieval Studies at the University of Toronto for her M.S. and Ph.D. degrees. She was writing a dissertation on the role of women as judges in medieval narrative when she had to return home because of illness in the family. This prevented her from completing the dissertation, but she has maintained a keen interest in the topic and in medieval literature in general.

And now, thanks to that interest, OLLI members who share Rogers’ fascination and curiosity about early English literature can enjoy the fruits of her scholarship in her classes. Rogers was particularly pleased to offer an OLLI course on one of her favorite medieval texts, Sir Gawain & the Green Knight, to a very engaged group of students. This spring she will be teaching a course on Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, examining the group of stories which recount “the woe that is in marriage.”

Teaching has been one of Rogers’ major occupations. Following her graduation with honors in philosophy and English from the University of Toronto, Rogers, a Chicago native, moved to New Jersey where she was given a teaching assistantship at Seton Hall University (SHU) while earning a Master's degree in English there. With her Master’s, Seton Hall hired her as an adjunct Professor. After 10 years of teaching at SHU, she moved with her family to Great Barrington. She began working in the Development Office at Simon's Rock and served on the Parents Advisory Committee to the Berkshire Hills Regional School District’s Superintendent.

But she missed teaching and was delighted when the school district recruited her for substitute teaching and then encouraged her to begin teaching high school full time at Monument Mountain High School in Great Barrington.

After several years of teaching there, she and her family spent a year in England, where they lived in a renovated windmill overlooking Canterbury. And during her...
I am happy to report that OLLI continues to grow and function effectively. Our membership is at 1,212, a substantial increase over last year. As I write, the winter semester is underway, and our enrollments and class registrations are at historic highs for this term. Our class offerings continue to be of astoundingly high quality. When I discover that an acquaintance is enrolled in an OLLI class, I usually ask how it’s going. Everyone reports a positive experience, for usually at times before a term begins there is lots of work for committee members, mentors and other volunteers. And OLLI is once again offering the OLLI Volunteer Program (one morning per week) to which OLLI subscribes makes the enrollment process simple and secure. You must have a unique email address to register (i.e.: not shared with your spouse), but nearly all OLLI members already have this. If you enroll online, it saves considerable staff time, and that’s usually at times before a term begins which are already hectic for the staff. So please consider trying online enrollment for the spring term.

— Peter Bluhm

### Spring 2019 Class Schedule • Tuesday April 16 – Friday May 24

**MONDAYS in Pittsfield**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:30–12:00</td>
<td>U101 Ukraine in Geopolitical Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30–2:00</td>
<td>M102 Demystifying Death and Dying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45–2:15</td>
<td>M103 Today’s Headlines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30–4:30</td>
<td>M104 Abstract Art in America 1910–1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45–4:15</td>
<td>M105 The CIA: The Good, The Bad and the Ugly</td>
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**TUESDAYS in Great Barrington & Pittsfield**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30–11:00</td>
<td>T101 The Scopes Monkey Trial: Then and Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15–12:45</td>
<td>T102 Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45–3:15</td>
<td>T103 Canterbury Tales: Chaucer’s 14th Century Storytelling Contest</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:30–5:00</td>
<td>T104 The Oedipus Cycle: The Three Theban Plays by Sophocles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00–5:30</td>
<td>T105 Getting Hooked on Fly Fishing</td>
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**WEDNESDAYS in Williamstown & Pittsfield**

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:30–12:00</td>
<td>W101 The Iliad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30–12:00</td>
<td>W102 Two American Masters of the Brush: Winslow Homer and John Singer Sargent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30–4:00</td>
<td>W103 Outsider Art (NOTE NEW TIME)</td>
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**THURSDAYS in Lenox & Pittsfield**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00–9:30</td>
<td>F101 The Speed of Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30–12:00</td>
<td>F102 Two American Masters of the Brush: Winslow Homer and John Singer Sargent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30–5:00</td>
<td>W106 Uncle Joe Stalin: Not Your Average Joe</td>
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**FRIDAYS in Pittsfield**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00–11:30</td>
<td>F101 Computer Programming and Projects for Total Beginners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30–12:00</td>
<td>F102 Berkshire Performing Arts Previews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00–2:30</td>
<td>F103 Our Healthcare System: What You Need to Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30–5:00</td>
<td>F104 Objects and Their Stories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pilot Program continued from page 1

in areas such as transportation, home repairs, technical assistance and call-in or visitor programs for those who live alone and have health-related issues.

While many other Villages programs offer social and educational opportunities for their members, the Berkshire Villages program will be the first to engage with our OLLI at BCC, connecting Villages members to our classes, trips, events and shared interest groups, among other activities. “People who become members of Villages in the Berkshires will be encouraged to become members of OLLI as well,” if they are not already, said Shapiro.

After some exploration, OLLI at BCC and Villages in the Berkshires learned that no other villages in the country had formed a partnership with the OLLI in their community. “And, so, after discussion with both national organizations, the partnership here in the Berkshires will be a model and a pilot for this type of relationship,” said Shapiro.

Under the partnership agreement, if members of “Villages in the Berkshires” become OLLI members, they will have access to classes, events and opportunities for socialization. The agreement also provides Villages access to OLLI membership, and OLLI volunteers may assist in providing services to “Villages’” members.

Benefits work both ways. OLLI at BCC members will benefit under the partnership in a variety of ways, such as with transportation opportunities offered by Villages in the Berkshires to classes and programs.

Shapiro noted there are several ways to participate. “First, we are interested in OLLI members who wish to become part of the Villages in the Berkshires as household members (single or multi-member households). But equally important, we are looking for people who wish to volunteer in providing the various services offered by Villages to its members.”

For more information contact Shapiro at 413-212-9948 or email hlshipr@roadrunner.com. A Villages website will soon be completed, Shapiro said.

Jim Acosta Will Give Mona Sherman Lecture

The Mona Sherman Memorial Lecture Series enters its second decade with the appearance of CNN’s Chief White House Correspondent Jim Acosta at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center in Great Barrington on Friday, May 24, 2019. He will speak following the OLLI annual meeting.

A seasoned reporter who has covered four administrations, Acosta and his network are frequent targets of President Trump’s campaign to brand journalists as “enemies of the people” and purveyors of “fake news.” A fiery exchange between Acosta and Trump prompted a White House staffer to grab a microphone from the reporter and led to the charge that Acosta had “put his hands on” the young woman. The administration yanked his press pass. In a stunning rebuke, a federal judge reinstated it.

In his forthcoming book, The Enemy of the People: A Dangerous Time to Tell the Truth in America, Acosta takes the reader inside the briefing room and onto Air Force One. He reveals the near-constant conflict reporters face in trying to hold the Trump administration accountable for its actions and words, and the threat to America’s democracy posed by Trump’s hostility toward facts. Despite the challenge, Acosta said, “We must continue to do our jobs and report the news. The truth is worth the fight.” His book will be released on June 11, 2019, by Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.

The Mona Sherman Memorial Lecture Series honors the memory of former OLLI President, Mona Sherman, who passed away in 2008. Mona Sherman’s husband Arthur and his family established the memorial lecture series as a remembrance of his wife and as a gift to OLLI members and the community at large as a way to generate interest in the organization. Their daughter Lisa Sharkey, a former TV news producer and now a senior creative vice president at HarperCollins, has been instrumental in arranging speakers.

For information about registering for the May 24 lecture, watch your email or check the OLLI website. The event is free for OLLI members.

— Katherine Zdeb

SAVE THE DATE

Friday, May 24, 2019

OLLI Annual Meeting and
Mona Sherman Memorial Lecturer
Jim Acosta, CNN White House Correspondent
Peter Bluhm’s Steady Hand Elevates OLLI

Editor’s note

When an organization runs as smoothly as OLLI at BCC, it’s easy to overlook the hard work of so many volunteers and the efforts of our executive director, Megan Whilden, who together with dedicated members ensures the value of activities and courses we offer. But perhaps most underappreciated is the service of OLLI’s president, Peter Bluhm, whose term will expire at the end of this year.

Bluhm’s tour at the helm of OLLI will be lauded many times before he turns the gavel over to his successor later this year, but a few key accomplishments are worth highlighting before our annual meeting in May.

For starters, under his watch membership has been growing steadily, now hovering around 1,200. Bluhm’s leadership led to the development of a new, bold strategic plan whose development was guided by board member Carl Shuster. While president, Bluhm supported the Berkshires Villages program which allows elders to age in place. (We have more information about Villages in a longer article on another page of this edition).

Yet another recent highlight is Bluhm’s launching of a new overseas travel adventure—a trip to Oxford and Stratford-Upon-Avon in England for a week of Shakespeare plays and touring.

And it’s worth pointing out Bluhm’s constant push for transparency in OLLI’s complex finances—leading to his creation of an active investment committee under the guidance of OLLI’s finance committee chairman Lenny Tabs. The committee and Bluhm’s insistence on detailed reporting about our finances have helped members understand more clearly where our revenues come from, how our expenses are handled and how our $2 million endowment is managed.

These, of course, are just a few highlights of his tenure, but all members can be grateful to Peter Bluhm for his commitment to OLLI’s success.

In this edition you’ll read a number of interesting stories, including our announcement of a new “Mid-Summer Encore” semester offering courses especially to OLLI members who escape the frigid Berkshires in winter. Get a head start on OLLI special events and learn a little about the event planners who make them happen in Barbara Lane’s story on special events, and learn about an exciting instructor, Mary Rogers, who will teach a course on Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales in an article by Sandi Rubin. An article by Katherine Zdeb on our upcoming annual meeting in May will tell you a little about CNN journalist Jim Acosta, this year’s Mona Sherman lecturer.

Howard Shapiro provides an overview of a pilot program which will bring OLLI activities to Berkshire residents who choose to grow older at home. This partnership between OLLI and the “Villages” program begins in April. Another Katherine Zdeb piece reports on the OLLI Leadership Academy which gets underway in June. And if you didn’t already know, a year-long celebration of OLLI’s 25th anniversary has begun. Joanna Fribush reviews a little of OLLI’s history in her article on OLLI’s 25th anniversary.

— Chris Guidette

Enroll Online – It Couldn’t Be Easier

The spring semester is almost here and you’ll want to enroll in many of the exciting courses available to OLLI members. If you don’t already, use the online enrollment format. It’s easy for you and it gives our hard-working office staff less paperwork and more time to support our programs in other ways. Here’s how:

1. Go to berkshireolli.org
2. Click on “Classes.”
3. Click on “How to Register for Spring 2019 Classes.”
4. Then simply enroll and pay by credit card.

Do it once and you’ll never register by mail or phone again.

(Chaucer continued from page 1)
Volunteer Leadership Academy
Takes OLLI Experience to Next Level

OLLI is looking for a few good men and women. A dozen or so will do. Theirs is the opportunity to be educated and engaged in the 2019 OLLI Volunteer Leadership Academy, a potential launching pad for increased involvement in the organization. The academy takes place June 10, 17 and 24 at Berkshire Community College.

Three half-day sessions cover OLLI’s history and structure, strengths and challenges, plus marketing, fundraising and other volunteering opportunities. Applications are accepted until May 11.

Though strong by certain measures—membership numbers and a $2 million endowment—in 2012 the board looked over its shoulder and worried. Art Sherman on the Governance Committee sounded the alarm: Where was the next generation of OLLI leaders?

“We were going through a leadership crisis,” said former OLLI president, Sandi Rubin. “We couldn’t get anyone to be vice president because they didn’t want to become president.

Action was needed. Soon Howard Shapiro and the late Larry Robbins combined their respective expertise in non-profit management and teaching to develop the first Volunteer Leadership Academy. Their success can be seen in people and ideas. For example, the notion of sending an annual appeal letter emerged from a work-group, Shapiro said. He added that probably 80 percent of academy graduates now sit on the board or chair committees.

Assuming a new role isn’t a mandate for attendees; it just seems to flow naturally from the experience. Monica Sinclair found that to be true. When joining OLLI three years ago, she volunteered for the Membership Committee because she likes to bake. She’s committee co-chair now, post-her academy experience. And the scope of OLLI, its role in the Osher network and its value to BCC, impressed her.

That person-to-person connection is essential according to Chelly Sterman, coordinator of this year’s program. An academy alumna herself, and subsequently board member, she emphasizes interaction, not just instruction. In small work groups people can “bounce ideas against other ideas, which helps form a bond over shared experience,” she said.

Ready to take your membership to the next level? Applications for the 2019 Leadership Academy are accepted until May 11. For information on how to apply, contact the OLLI office at 413-236-2192 or email Megan Whilden at mwhilden@berkshirecc.edu. And best, it’s free.

— Katherine Zdeb

Members of the OLLI Volunteer Leadership Academy class of 2015 with speakers
Left to right: Bill Latimer, Sandra Rubin, Lance Sterman, Lenny Tabs, Maxine Bookless, co-founder Howard Shapiro, Nancy Vale, former Williams College President Adam Falk, Carl Shuster, Chelly Sterman, Lois Lenehan, Ed Neumuth, and Stuart Edelman

PHOTO BY MEGAN WHILDEN

25th Anniversary
of BILL and OLLI

The history of OLLI begins with BILL. Twenty-five years ago Tom and Judy Easton inspired a group of Berkshire friends to form a steering committee with the goal of offering college level courses, with no grades or exams, to retired, older people. The Eastons contacted Hank Payne, president of Williams College, and Barbara Viniar, president of Berkshire Community College, for faculty and administrative support in this endeavor. Easton recalled: “Both were extremely supportive and encouraged us to go forward. Nancy McIntire and Alexandra Warshaw became our liaisons to the colleges.”

Thus, in the summer of 1994 the Berkshire Institute for Lifetime Learning was born. In the fall, Tom Easton led a convocation at BCC to introduce BILL to the community, and with a membership of 270, classes began in the spring of 1995.

As BILL’s membership and classes grew, leaders began to search for ways to expand its programs and maintain its long-term financial security. Arthur and Mona Sherman and other leaders became interested in the Osher Foundation of San Francisco. This Foundation, with multi-million dollar resources, founded by Bernard Osher in 1977, supports similar adult lifelong learning programs across the country.

In 2004 the “determined Shermans” and board members started to pursue the idea of obtaining funding from the Osher Foundation and in 2007 they succeeded! We became OLLI at BCC. The requirements for grantees included becoming an official part of a sponsoring school, to which BCC agreed, using the Osher name and logo symbol, and having a membership of 500. The reward was an initial grant of $100,000 with the possibility of further grants based on membership growth and program development. In 2009 we received a $1 million endowment; in 2017, when our membership

(continued on page 6)
OLLI Events Are Special

OLLI’s hard-working curriculum volunteers earn our applause for all the stimulating and enlightening courses they produce from a seemingly bottomless well of scholars, experts, artists and colorful personalities—and deservedly so. But OLLI members can also be grateful to the equally hard-working volunteers who arrange the many special events that transport us to new and interesting places.

Arlene Breskin, chair of OLLI’s special events committee, heads up a group of event planners who organize trips from Hyde Park, NY to Boston’s Kennedy Library, to the Bronx Zoo, to Jacobs Pillow, London, and more.

A few major events stand out. “The 2013 group trip to Cuba with 16 OLLI members was the best special event the committee has put on,” said Breskin. “We had two amazing tour guides that tailored the trip to our interests in Cuban art, music and dance,” she said.

“The funniest event started out as a near disaster,” she recalled. Five days before 162 OLLI members were about to board three busses to depart for a ballet at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, an OLLI refrigerator in Breskin’s garage conked out, leaving her with 162 bottles of water and no way of keeping them cool. So, with a tip from her daughter, Erica, Breskin checked Craig’s List and found a refrigerator for sale by someone who just happened to live across the street. Problem solved – no warm water for thirsty OLLI theater goers.

Breskin’s committee has put together an impressive lineup of events for this year, OLLI’s 25th anniversary. Here are some of the confirmed outings:

- Wednesday, May 29: bus trip to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, featuring Frida Kahlo and Toulouse-Lautrec exhibits
- Thursday, June 20: an evening at Jacobs Pillow featuring Ballet BC
- Thursday, July 11: Chester Theater Company luncheon and matinee
- Tuesday, Aug. 13, New Skete Monasteries, featuring dog breeding & cheesecake factory
- Sunday, Oct. 13, Barrington Stage Theatre Brunch.

More events are in the planning stage and will be announced shortly.

Besides Chair Arlene Breskin, OLLI’s Special Event Committee comprises Joan Brotman; Helene Calman; Bonnie Desrosiers; Phyllis Epstein; Marilyn Flaum; Rose Foster; Barbara Greenbaum; Barbara Hartman; Judy Keshner; Barbara Liebert; Lesley Oransky; Lenore Ruben; Carol Sabot; Turbi Smilow; Ellen Tabs; Carolyn Vandervort and Pat White.

— Chris Guidette & Barbara Lane

OLLI is Offering Additional Summer Semester

OLLI is offering something new—a “Mid-Summer Encore”—the brainchild of OLLI members Lenny Tabs and Steve Tobin. Our traditional OLLI summer term ends in June before the Tanglewood season starts. However, we have offered comparatively little to potential OLLI members who are in the Berkshires only for the summer cultural season.

This year OLLI will offer the usual June term, and the Mid-Summer Encore semester will follow in July and August. We are planning four courses, including the ever-popular Today’s Headlines. We will also offer Science Conversations, as well as a music course and a set of weekly hikes in the Berkshires. Keep your eyes peeled for more details as summer approaches.

— Peter Bluhm

(25th Anniversary continued from page 5)

OLLI’s hard-working curriculum volunteers earn our applause for all the stimulating and enlightening courses they produce from a seemingly bottomless well of scholars, experts, artists and colorful personalities—and deservedly so. But OLLI members can also be grateful to the equally hard-working volunteers who arrange the many special events that transport us to new and interesting places.

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary of lifelong learning through BILL and OLLI, our membership is over 1,200, and the Osher endowment enables us to go forward with new programs and classes. Barbara Lane and her committee are planning a festive Gala Celebration on September 12, 2019. Save the date, details to follow. May we go from strength to strength!

— Joanna Fribush
Nearly 200 OLLI members generously devote time and talent to ensure our organization delivers the highest quality lifelong learning opportunities, whether in the classroom, in special events, or in our catalogs and news publications and much more. We acknowledge our volunteers with deepest gratitude. OLLI is a member run organization offering you many opportunities to enrich your experience, not only by participating in many offerings, but by volunteering to serve on our committees.

Jean Adelson  
Ev Bastow  
Nancy Belouin  
Lynda Bianchi  
Peter Bluhm  
Robert Bogomolny  
Maxine Bookless  
Bob Braddock  
Arlene Breskin  
Rachel Brier  
Jock Brooks  
Joan Brotman  
Maureen Brower  
Bernadette Brusco  
Margaret Cahill  
Deborah Caine  
Helene Calman  
Claudia Cass  
David Cass  
Alice Caton  
Shelley Chanler  
Jocelyn Chapman  
John Cornman  
Ellen Croibier  
Judy Cromwell  
Adele Cukor  
Susan Dana  
Bonnie Desrosiers  
Robert Desrosiers  
John Dickson  
Kit Dobelle  
Nathan Doctrow  
Sheila Donath  
Ann Dorfman  
Patricia Duckworth  
Kathleen Duquette-Penna  
Brenda Durrin  
Richard Evans  
Stacy Evans  
Carolyn Fabricant  
Bill Fields  
Andrew Fisher  
Karel Fisher  
Marilyn Flaum  
Paul Flaum  
Steffi Fletcher  
Rose Foster  
Jacqueline Fowler  
Joanna Fribush  
Magda Gabor-Hotchkiss  
Susan Geller  
Ann Galt  
John Galt  
Joe Gerard  
Sheldon Goldberg  
Florence Goodman  
Susan Gorham  
Barbara Greenbaum  
Christopher Guidette  
Clyde Haberman  
Hope Hagler  
Linda Halpern  
Carol Hamblin  
Kerry Hamilton  
Brian Harrison  
Barbara Hartman  
George Haus  
Joanne Hayes  
Tom Hodgson  
Bruce Jacobs  
Phyllis Jaffe  
Gordon Josephson  
Judith Katz  
Judy Keshner  
Katherine Kidd  
Steve Klepetar  
Wendy Klepetar  
Rosanna Koelle  
Thomas Koelle  
Barbara Lane  
Augusta Leibowitz  
Lois Lenehan  
Ben Liptzin  
Barbara Mahony  
Amy Mann  
Jeffrey Mann  
Michael Margolis  
Richard Matturro  
Lee McClelland  
Erin McNamara  
Enid Michelman  
Ann Morgan  
Leon Nesis  
Edwin Neumuth  
Virginia O’Leary  
Lesley Oransky  
Paula Patterson  
Helen Louise Plager  
Edith Pye  
Wendy Robbins  
Richard Rosenfeld  
Colleen Rossi  
Alan Rubin  
Lenore Rubin  
Sandy Rubin  
Carol Sabot  
Jane Salatta  
Linda Sambel  
Alice Schiller  
Myrna Schneiderman  
Rose Scotch  
Anthony Segal  
Elizabeth Selkowitz  
Helen-Mary Shaffer  
Harold Shair  
Arline Shalan  
Liz Shalit  
Howard Shapiro  
Shirley Shapiro  
Arthur Sherman  
Carl Shuster  
Claudia Shuster  
Carole Siegel  
Monica Sinclair  
Will Singleton  
Nan Sisselman  
Paul Smilow  
Turbi Smilow  
Dorothy Smith  
Elske Smith  
Lonnie Solomon  
Naomi Spatz  
Kenneth Stark  
Chelly Sterman  
Lance Sterman  
Ronald Stewart  
Larry Strauss  
Kirk Swiss  
John Tinger  
Steven Tobin  
Ann Trabulsi  
Nancy Travis  
Barbara Turner Hart  
Joan Ury  
Nancy Vale  
Carolyn Vandervort  
Barbara Viniar  
David Vogel  
Jean Walden  
Barbara Waldinger  
Stacy Wallach  
Nancy Walters  
Mary Warford  
Malvina Wasserman  
Terry Weaver  
Fran Weinberg  
Diane Weinstein  
Patricia White  
Fran Wolk  
Joel Wolk  
Bob Youdelman  
Karen Youdelman  
Katherine Zdeb

**OLLI UPDATE**

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OLLI Mentoring Holiday Party

OLLI’s Mentoring for Success initiative pairs OLLI members with Berkshire Community College students to mentor and support. Both mentors and mentees came together for a festive holiday party in December at the college.

Clockwise from top left: BCC student mentee Dana Willette, OLLI mentors Richard Rosenfeld, Alan Rubin and Lance Sterman, Mentoring Committee co-chair Claudia Shuster, OLLI mentor Nathan Doctrow, OLLI mentee Don Ross and others at the dessert buffet.