



Newsletter

AT BERKSHIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

FALL 2009

PARTNERS WITH WILLIAMS COLLEGE, BARD COLLEGE AT SIMON'S ROCK & MASSACHUSETTS COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

Exciting Fall 2009 Semester

The Curriculum Committee has put together a superb semester for the fall. Twenty-two courses will be held throughout Berkshire County. Courses begin September 14 and continue through November 2. Two courses will be held in the evening, and two will be given in videoconferencing (VC) classroom-to-classroom format. One class will be offered by lottery due to limited space and its popularity. Please see the Fall 2009 Catalog for complete details, or visit our website at www.BerkshireOLLI.org.

MONDAY

BCC Pittsfield & Great Barrington

Another Look: Revisiting Works You May Have Read in High School –

Janel Halpern

Comparative Legal Systems and the Quest for Truth – Carl Goodman

Extreme Weather (VC) – Joe Kravitz

A Look at America's Birth, 1775 to 1788 (VC) – Stacy Wallach

TUESDAY

Bard College at Simon's Rock, Great Barrington & BCC Pittsfield

A Survey of American Literature: Part V – James Kraft

The Berkshire Cottages: Symbols of the Gilded Age – Carole Owens

Unforgettable Performances of Verdi Operas – Peter Podol

Finding Meaning, Values and Community in Poetry (Evening) – R. Ronnow

WEDNESDAY

The Clark and Williams College, Williamstown

Bennington Museum, Vermont; Housatonic Valley Association, South Lee

Get to Know the Housatonic Watershed – Sam Lefenfeld

The Poetry of Emily Dickinson – Lea Newman

Shakespeare and the Law – Philip McKnight

Two American Masters of the Brush: Homer and Sargent – Jock Brooks

Muslims in Europe: Immigration, Integration, Assimilation –

M. Bernhardtsson, H. Druxes, K. Pieprzak, L. Rouhi, C. Waters

Mesoamerican Civilizations – Antonia Foias

Frontiers of Science – Larry Kaplan, Anne Skinner, Ari Solomon

THURSDAY

Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield

American Institute for Economic Research, Great Barrington

A Late Literary Luminary: John Updike – Phyllis Jaffe

Artistic Visions: From Bosch to Bacon – Walter Gibson, Hellmut Wohl

Intermediate French – Nicole Desrosiers

Outlaw Finance (Evening) – Walker Todd

FRIDAY

BCC Pittsfield

The Art of Cooking: Italian Cuisine (Lottery) – Howard Arkans

Has Wall Street Committed Suicide? – Larry Greenapple

Today's Headlines – James Cotter



Lecturers:
Joe Kravitz and
Carole Owens

Photo Contest Winner – FALL

Nate Doctrow, a member of OLLI and the Berkshire Museum Camera Club, submitted the winning photo entitled "Pontoosuc Lake View" which appears on the cover of the Fall 2009 Catalog.

OLLI Photo Contest

PRIZE: The winning photo will be on the cover of the Winter 2010 catalog, and the winner will receive a 1-year free membership to OLLI.

THEME: Berkshire area winter scene

SPECS: Digital format (jpeg, tiff, bmp), 3.2 mega-pixels or greater

DEADLINE: September 14, 2009

SUBMIT: E-mail attach photos to Bob.Desrosiers@Gmail.com

Visit www.BerkshireOLLI.org for further details.

President's Message

This has been an eventful year for OLLI at BCC. We have received a \$1 million endowment from The Bernard Osher Foundation which helps us to insure our future. Membership continues to grow and next year we hope to be eligible to apply to the Osher Foundation for another \$1 million endowment.

The number of courses continues to expand. In the fall, we had record numbers attending our various offerings. We have added seminars and hands-on courses to supplement the outstanding lecture series. Last spring, we offered two evening as well as a full array of daytime courses.

During the Memorial Day weekend, the first OLLI Art Show was held in the Wells Gallery of the Lenox Library. Over 35 OLLI artists exhibited their works. Hundreds of people visited the show and were impressed

by the quality of the art. It was a successful start to a new OLLI function.

We were saddened by the untimely death of Mona Sherman, our past president and valued volunteer. In her memory, the Sherman family presented the first annual Mona Sherman Memorial Lecture. Held at The Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield, the speaker was Mika Brzezinski, MSNBC's "Morning Joe" co-host. The event was a great tribute to Mona.

We now move on to the 2009-2010 OLLI year offering more excellent and challenging courses, Special Events and Distinguished Speakers as OLLI grows and continues to fulfill the interests of its members. We solicit your input and your new ideas. Please volunteer and help us grow!



Upcoming Events and Lectures

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES

July 27 – Dr. Paul Solomon

Hancock Shaker Village
Losing 6 Million Minds: Recent Developments in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Alzheimer's Disease

Aug. 5 – Dr. Nancy Mowll Mathews
Williams College Museum of Art
Prendergast in Italy: Modernization and Modern Art

Aug. 19 – Provost Mary Marcy
Bard College at Simon's Rock
Women in the 2008 Election

SPECIAL EVENTS

Aug. 4 – Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Passion of the Moment: A Triptych of Masters

Oct. 11 – Chester Theatre Company
The Bully Pulpit; Brunch/Lecture at the Chester Railroad Station

Look for flyers with details.

OLLI Open House and Art Show

The first OLLI Open House and Art Show, held on Sunday, May 24, in the Wells Gallery of the Lenox Library, was a huge success. The day launched OLLI's 2009 Summer Semester, introduced potential new members to the organization and showcased the talents of our OLLI membership.



Alexandra Warshaw, Co-Chair Marilyn Brimberg and Arthur Brimberg

Thirty-seven OLLI members exhibited a total of sixty-seven works of art including oil paintings, watercolors, photographs, mixed media, sculptures, wood carvings, jewelry design and more. There was overwhelming praise for the artistic skill and creativity of the exhibitors. Between 300 and 400 people attended the event. The artists were pleased with the opportunity to showcase their talents to fellow OLLI members and to the community.

No successful OLLI event happens without volunteers giving generously of their time and talents. Special thanks go to Howard Shapiro and Arthur Brimberg for hours of work arranging and hanging the art, Arline



Breskin and her team for supplying the beautiful reception, Sue Arkans for staffing the information table and Holly Hamer for offering her art show expertise. An especially big thank you goes to Shirley Shapiro who co-chaired the event with me.

— Marilyn Brimberg

OLLI Open House/Art Show Co-Chair
OLLI Membership Task Force Chair

OLLI NEWSLETTER

Editor Sandra Rubin • **Associate Editor** Marilyn Margolis • **Assistant Editors** Peri Caverly, Marge Lewis

Editorial Staff Norman Avnet, Arline Breskin, Don Calman, Joanna Fribush, Judy Katz, Wilma Michaels, Barbara Seddon, Helen-Mary Shaffer, Art Sherman

OLLI at BCC Receives an Endowment



Howard Arkans, Bill Mulholland, Barbara Hochberg and Art Sherman hold the \$1 million check from the Osher Foundation

The Bernard Osher Foundation has awarded OLLI at BCC \$1 million to create an endowment to help secure OLLI's future. This money is in addition to the \$100,000 grants OLLI has received for each of the past two years. While OLLI is delighted to receive this funding and the recognition that goes with it, there are some realities we need to address as recipients of these funds.

Fiction: Ollie is "fixed for life," no more dues, fees, or member contributions needed.

Fact: This is not the case!

With each of the previous \$100,000 grants we received from Osher, we were able to expand the scope and quality of lifelong learning for one year. They were NOT to be used to replace normal operating budgets but were the impetus for implementing our goals. This included:

- increasing membership,
- broadening educational programming,
- adding new cultural and educational partnerships,
- introducing videoconferencing between various class venues and
- exploring how to extend such programming with other OLLIs.

We restructured our organization to include an Executive Director and revised our bylaws. None of these

efforts would have been possible without the Osher grants, and they are crucial to our organizational future.

Unlike these annual grants that were budgeted to be expended within a year, the endowment must be invested and only the income from it used. The principal will provide a stable base for the future. In the first year of the endowment, we will also be receiving a \$50,000

bridge grant to help us transition in a time of expected low interest rates. It is anticipated that our income from the endowment combined with the bridge grant will still be slightly below the \$100,000 we have been receiving from the Osher Foundation. It is therefore imperative that we continue to grow our membership

so that the increased income can provide the capital necessary to meet our needs.

There are 123 OLLIs located at colleges and universities throughout the country. Those that attain a membership of 1,000 are eligible to apply for a second \$1 million endowment from the Osher Foundation. As our membership is already over 900, we are hoping to achieve this milestone and to add to our permanent endowment thus ensuring our fiscal sustainability.

The Berkshire Community College Foundation (BCCF), the vehicle through which private contributions flow to BCC, has received the Osher Foundation's endowment gift. These funds are reserved for the exclusive support of OLLI programs and will be administered through the normal BCC financial structure with money management under the aegis of the BCCF.

— Arthur Sherman, Liaison
The Bernard Osher Foundation

Governance Committee

The Governance Committee was established last year when OLLI's new By-Laws were adopted. It is chaired by OLLI Vice President, Norma Leavey, and its membership consists of OLLI's immediate Past President, Paul Flaum, and other members of the Board. Currently those other members are Stanley Applebaum, Leonard Cohen, Susan Crampton, Dick Degenhardt, Sandra Rubin and Alexandra Warshaw.

Its responsibilities include overseeing the process of nominating Officers and Board members, filling interim Board vacancies, recommending changes in the committee structure of the Board, offering orientation for new Board members and recommending changes to the By-Laws. It focuses on developing annual and long-range plans and assuring that OLLI is in compliance with all federal and state laws as well as the related policies and procedures of Berkshire Community College.

The Committee is in the process of developing a strategic plan targeted at meeting the objectives of an expanding organization. Among the goals which the plan needs to address are increasing membership and numbers of volunteers, finding additional sources of funding, attracting quality faculty, expanding educational opportunities and enhancing technological support.

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Annual OLLI Meeting and First Mona Sherman Memorial Lecture

On May 29, a capacity audience of OLLI at BCC members and friends arrived at the historic Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield to attend OLLI's Annual Meeting and the first Mona Sherman Memorial Lecture.

Howard Arkans, President of OLLI, welcomed the audience and spoke of an eventful year. In particular, he informed the group that OLLI received a \$1 million endowment from The Bernard Osher Foundation. David Flemming, Managing Director of The Colonial, then spoke of Mona Sherman's whirlwind energy as did Barbara Hochberg, OLLI's Executive Director. Barbara also spoke of the hard work of some 170 volunteers who serve on various committees. She then introduced Bill Mulholland, BCC's Dean of LifeLong Learning and Workshop Development and OLLI's Board Liaison.

To begin the business meeting, Howard Arkans said that there were approximately 900 OLLI members. He stressed the need to increase membership to 1,000 as a prerequisite for applying for an additional \$1 million endowment from the Osher Foundation.

Norman Michaels, OLLI's Treasurer, reported on budget allocations and financial distributions. The Treasurer's Report, revisions to the by-laws and the slate of new Board of Directors members were approved.

The speaker, Mika Brzezinski, was introduced by Lisa Sharkey, Mona's daughter, whose friendship with Mika brought about her commitment to speak to OLLI in Mona's honor.

It was a warm, witty and candid Mika who, speaking about "Journalism in the Age of Obama," told her own history first—graduation from Williams College, a string of anchor and guest spots at CBS, a pause after being let go due to budget

constraints, and then a new and exciting position as co-anchor of MSNBC's "Morning Joe" newscast. "It's a challenge" she said, "to produce a daily show with a staff of only eight people; the networks have 25 to 35 on their staffs." She went on to say that the philosophy of the show, too, is different; it tries hard to avoid trivial, celebrity-driven stories in favor of hard political news augmented by knowledgeable guests. Competition is fierce not only from other morning shows but also news online. An emphasis on political news, while downplaying frills and entertainment, has helped build a loyal, devoted audience.

Can such a news outlet be successful in the "Age of Obama"? Obama, after all, has been called the "Internet President." Newspapers are closing; news magazine subscriptions have dropped; advertising sales, which pay for the shows, are diminishing. However, she maintains, if news programs are "scrappy" the way the current administration seems to be, and "nimble" as well; if reporters admit their affiliations instead of

skirting around their interests and biases and if such programs keep in touch with and involve their audiences via the internet, perhaps news programs such as "Morning Joe" can indeed succeed.

Ms. Brzezinski's talk generated many questions. She answered them in detail, seriously and thoughtfully, using her experience and illustrative anecdotes to enrich the answers.

As the inaugural speaker for this memorial lecture series, Mika Brzezinski will be a hard act to follow. Mona would have been delighted!

— Marge Lewis, Assistant Editor



Mika Brzezinski

OLLI at BCC Board of Directors

President, Howard Arkans
Vice President, Norma Leavey
Secretary/Newsletter, Sandra Rubin
Treasurer, Norman Michaels
Immediate Past President, Paul Flaum

Directors

Stanley Applebaum
Arline Breskin, *Special Events*
Marilyn Brimberg, *Membership*
Leonard Cohen, *Legal Advisor*
Susan Crampton
Bonnie Desrosiers, *Catalog*
Robert Desrosiers, *Information Systems*
Joseph Gerard, *Media*
Wilma Michaels
Art Sherman, *Osher Foundation Liaison*
Carole Siegel
Lora Tobias, *Distinguished Speakers*
Alexandra Warshaw

Past Presidents

Mona Sherman*, Paul Flaum,
Art Sherman, Norman Avnet,
Ann Dulye, Leonard Stolzberg,
Tom Easton

Executive Director, Barbara Hochberg
BCC Liaison, Bill Mulholland

*deceased

Discount at Independent Bookstores!!

Support the following local independent bookstores who are giving OLLI members a 10% discount:

The Bookloft in Great Barrington
Barrington Plaza, Rt. 7

The Bookstore in Lenox
11 Housatonic Street

Chapters in Pittsfield
78 North Street

Papyri Books in North Adams
45 Eagle Street

All you need to do to get the discount is show your OLLI membership card. This discount cannot be combined with any other discount.

Getting to Know George Smith



I have noticed a lot of interest in George Smith. Usually it is in the form of a question. “Who is that man in every OLLI course, you know, the one who fiddles with all the AV equipment?” That man is George Smith.

When George retired as an engineer from the Ordnance Department at General Electric, he took his first semester of OLLI courses. His technical expertise was quickly discovered, and he became OLLI’s “uber” volunteer. He now attends many OLLI courses to set up projectors, computers and sound systems for our esteemed lecturers.

In addition to his volunteer work at OLLI, George audits many courses at Williams College. He is also a volunteer for the ‘62 Center for Theatre and Dance at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, and he helps with the gardens at Shakespeare and Company. Not without a sense of humor, he belongs to a Tuesday morning “play group” that bikes in the summer, hikes in the fall and spring and snowshoes and skis in the winter. George certainly enjoys himself in the Berkshires.

George was born in Freeport, Texas, and married Claire, a southern girl. Because of his work as an engineer, he and Claire have lived all over the country. Claire is a retired special services administrator at MCLA who also takes OLLI courses.

In addition to all his other activities, George holds two paying jobs. He spends the summer season as a gardener/interpreter, a “weeding and greeting” job for Hancock Shaker Village and is on call as a media specialist for theater presentations at The Clark.

We are lucky to have him at OLLI. Don’t forget to say hello to him the next time you see him fiddling with some AV equipment at your course.

— Marilyn Margolis, Associate Editor

★★★Worth The Journey!

In the Michelin Guides, three stars indicate that a particular site is “worth the journey.” OLLI’s Special Events are certainly that. We travel in European buses equipped with restrooms, DVD players, reclining seats, and we offer gourmet snacks prepared by OLLI’s chefs. All adventures are enriched by talks and/or films as preparation for the event.

Our annual events include Jacob’s Pillow in June and the New York City Ballet at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center in July. In October, we’ll see the play *The Bully Pulpit* at the Chester Theater preceded by brunch in the Antique Railroad Station where Paul Flaum will talk about Teddy Roosevelt. An excursion to Emily Dickinson’s home in Amherst plus an afternoon at the Mead Gallery at Amherst College is planned as a part of the fall’s Emily Dickinson course. Spring 2010 finds us traveling to New York to visit the new American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Arts.

Are you a Florida snowbird? Watch the newsletter and your e-mail for both a West and an East Coast winter event.

If you have an idea for a Special Event, please contact me at Lee190@aol.com or Carol Sabot at csabot@gmail.com. We look forward to welcoming you on our Special Event adventures. They are worthy of three stars!

— Arline Breskin
Special Events Chair

Faculty Appreciation Dinner

The Faculty Appreciation Dinner held on Wednesday, May 20, at BCC was a success! Over 90 lecturers, members and guests attended. BCC’s President Paul Raverta spoke about the \$1 million endowment received from OLLI at BCC to the BCC Foundation.



Above: Jennifer Kay with lecturers Stacy Wallach and Elske Smith



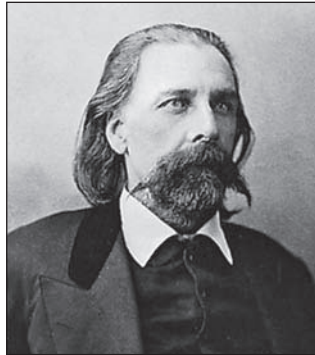
Left: Norman Michaels, Treasurer and Ilse Browner, member



Josh Billings

Josh Billings, familiar to us as the name of the annual fall triathlon RunAground race, is the pen-name of Henry Wheeler Shaw, who was born in Lanesboro in 1818. In his day, he was as well known as Mark Twain as a humorist, writer and lecturer. His style, which made him famous, was characterized by misspelled words based on phonetics, incorrect grammar, malformed sentences and slang (a popular fad of the 19th century), but criticized in later times. The informal motto of the RunAground is “To stay is to win” taken from one of his favorite maxims, “Tu sta is tu win.”

Shaw’s family background is quite impressive. His father, a Congressman from 1817-1821, was known as a witty, brilliant lawyer and politician; his grandfather also had been a Congressman. Educated at the Lanesboro School and Academy at Lenox, Henry entered Hamilton College at age fifteen. However, his boyish tendency



toward pranks and jokes abruptly ended that experience; he was expelled in his sophomore year for climbing a lightning rod and stealing the clapper from the college chapel.

After this embarrassment, he set out to travel west and earned his way by doing all kinds of jobs from office to farm work to auctioneering. One of his friends along the way was Josh Carew, whose name he later took as part of his pen name. Billings is thought to have come from his uncle Deakon Uriah Billings. In 1845 he returned to Lanesboro and married his boyhood sweetheart, Zilpha Bradford. The couple had two children and after a few years moved to Poughkeepsie, NY, where he became a realtor, an auctioneer and a writer. All of his wandering and work at odd jobs gave him insight into human nature—its flaws and virtues, which he wrote about so extensively.

He adopted a pen name to protect his auctioneering business as he

wrote, “I never knew an auctioneer to lie, unless it was absolutely necessary.” His “affurisms” and essays were printed in *The New Ashford Eagle*, the Poughkeepsie paper and the *New York Weekly* after he moved to New York City. President Lincoln read Billings’ work to his cabinet and said, “Next to William Shakespeare, Josh Billings is the greatest judge of human nature the world has ever seen.” Mark Twain and Artemus Ward were among his contemporary friends.

Examples of his wit and style include: “Man was created a little lower than the angels and has bin gittin a little lower ever since”; “Truth is the onla thing I kno of that kant be improved upon”; and the *Farmer’s Allminax*, a spoof on the popular *Farmer’s Almanac*, which sold 90,000 copies and earned him \$30,000.

Josh Billings died suddenly while on a trip to California in 1885. He is buried in the Lanesboro Cemetery; the tombstone shows Josh Billings in bold letters on the side and Henry Wheeler Shaw on the top.

He also wrote, “The grate art in writing well, is tew kno when tew stop.”

— Joanna Fribush, Editorial Staff

Return Service Requested

