OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING ABOUND — JUST ABOUT ANYTHING UNDER THE SUN

Clockwise from top left: UAH Salmon Library tour; contra dancing; art festival; wine teacher Brandi Edmonds with husband Jason at a California vineyard; vineyard tour in Albertville; a glimpse of the eclipse.
Who remembers the O.J. Simpson trial and the racial chasm it exposed in America? Who doesn’t?

It could have been the trial of our lifetimes if not, as some said, the trial of the century. O.J. Simpson (Black) was accused of murdering his ex-wife and her friend (both white) in 1994.

Aerial video of a low-speed police chase of Simpson’s white Ford Bronco was shown live on national TV. The televised trial in Los Angeles lasted almost 11 months, and courtroom characters such as Johnnie Cochran, Marcia Clark and Lance Ito gained temporary celebrity rivaling that of O.J., a football star. In the end, Simpson was acquitted, although a civil jury would later hold him liable for beatings and one of the killings.

My wife, Patrice, and daughter, Emily, drove by the courthouse during a California vacation just to see the crowds. When the jury went out for deliberations, Emily, then 11, could not wait until after school to learn the outcome. She and I colluded: When the verdict came in, I phoned the school office with a coded “not guilty” message to deliver to Emily.

The whole case was a tragedy, but one disturbing aspect was that among the people I knew, every white person, including myself, thought Simpson was guilty, but every Black person agreed with the verdict.

I don’t think all these opinions were based on racism. The reactions showed something about how a person’s race affects his or her perceptions of society — based partly on personal experience and partly on racial history as shared by peers and previous generations.

“Black people were more conflicted than was really ever shown in the media,” Camille Charles, a professor of Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, told NPR after O.J. died April 10, 2024, from cancer. “Black folks had had such a bad experience with the criminal justice system that they rooted for him as a Black man who actually had the resources to mount a proper defense.”

Jemele Hill wrote in The Atlantic that “Simpson’s death is a reminder of how far this country still has to go to heal the racial rift that his murder trial so mercilessly exposed.”

The Simpson case occurred not long after the notorious 1991 beating by Los Angeles police of Rodney King, another Black man. Trying to quell riots, King went on TV to plead: “I just want to say, you know, can we all get along?”

Our ability to get along depends in part on whether we understand why different people may see things in different lights.

We need to study history and humanity from diverse perspectives.

Inside The Insider: Glen Adams profiles Brandi Edmonds, whose classes have made OLLI members aware of the origins, varieties, nuances and tastes of wine.

John Mason discusses how human actions reverberate across generations, well beyond our lifetimes. John’s history column recounts military and political developments that got the U.S. into the Mexican War and the Civil War. Richard Brooks’ poem says that when you are riding a tiger, you had better know how to get off.

Jane McBride and Ed Bernstein summarize planned and prospective travel through 2026 in the United States and abroad.

Chris Stuhlinger lays out the schedule of summer events through July, with subjects including brewing, kayaking, baseball, lab research, arts and railroads. Leah Black highlights member interest groups, which keep going even during class breaks, and Chris previews events of the Hiking & Biking MIG.

Clay Williams writes that OLLI, its staff and its costs are growing as we enter summer semester and prepare for the fall. Nancy Darnall says the next big event in OLLI’s 30th-anniversary celebration will be the annual meeting May 14 at Burritt on the Mountain.

Help wanted: We need photographers to shoot pictures of OLLI events and people. You have the camera: A smartphone works great. If you’d like to help for the high pay of $0, please email me at OLLInewsletter@uah.edu. Anyone can use the same address to submit articles, photos and ideas. Summer break: The Insider does not publish in June and July, so we will see you again on Aug. 1.

Steve Stewart
Editor, The OLLI Insider
In the last couple of columns, I’ve written extensively about how lifelong learning is crucial to the health and mental well-being of us seniors. Study after study has proven that thesis.

As our membership grows and more of us find ourselves participating in things we might once have never dreamed of, I have wondered what the next step of that progression might be. Well, watching the first episode of the new PBS series “A Brief History of the Future” started me thinking.

First, let me point out that it seems that beginning with Nostradamus, musings about the future of the human race and the only planet it can live on have been almost universally dystopian. And, I suppose, given the nature of our species, that’s reasonable. But what if rather than being concerned only with how much money and power we can accumulate tomorrow and the next day, we began to use our considerable talents to lay the groundwork for a future we make better for the coming generations? Or, as the PBS website terms it, “How can we become the great ancestors the future needs us to be?”

In particular, this series proposed two separate theories on achieving just that goal: Cathedral Thinking and Seventh Generation Thinking. In truth, they’re essentially the same idea. Then I was also pointed to a book on the subject, “The Man Who Planted Trees” by Jean Giono. So in a nutshell, what are these apparently novel concepts?

In an article on Wisegeek.com, author Tricia Christensen likens Cathedral Thinking to those in the Middle Ages who envisioned the construction of the great cathedrals like Notre Dame or Chartres, who understood that these would be structures forever offering beauty and sustenance to future generations yet, at the same time, understood that they would never live to see their vision come to fruition. Still, they persisted.

Similarly, the Seventh Generation Principle, an indigenous concept, tells us to think how one’s words and actions today might affect those coming seven generations from now while also remembering the seven generations who came before. Author Dale Carson puts it this way:

Anytime we do something that will affect nature, we ask ourselves, how will this affect seven generations? The earth is our mother, the sky is our father, and everything in between is our brothers and sisters. Everybody deserves respect and the right to be listened to.

This has been the philosophy of indigenous people across the globe for time immemorial. Those people worked to protect and enhance the world around them for the future generations. Maybe they had it right.

And Jean Giono’s story is a parable of a shepherd living the foothills of the French Alps who quietly took on the task of planting 100 acorns a day to reforest his desolated region. Not even two world wars kept the shepherd from continuing this solitary work. Gradually, this gentle, persistent man’s work sees the region transformed; life and hope return; and the world is renewed. Is that a legacy that we, too, could leave?

(continued on the next page)
FROM THE PRESIDENT

CATHEDRALS, GENERATIONS AND OLLI, CONT

So how do these concepts apply to us at OLLI?

When we came to OLLI, our intent was to find something to do to expand and enhance our lives. To meet new friends. To have new experiences. And that, as we’ve discovered, provides a tremendous benefit to our health and well-being. So what do we do with those improvements?

We can internalize our new being and make it “all about me,” or we can use our enhanced understanding to “plant one hundred acorns a day” so that they may “affect seven generations,” “forever offering beauty and sustenance to [those] future generations.” Personally, I choose the latter.

Look around you next time you come to campus. What do you see? You see our future in the guise of all those young men and women attending the university — and all their contemporaries they stand in for — who need both a positive framework and informed guidance as to what their futures can look like.

We are their key. We can, if we choose, build beautiful and everlasting cathedrals for them to enjoy. And I think that in so doing, we will also ease some of the dystopia in our own lives, because the simple act of giving allows us to enjoy a better tomorrow, too.

What’s stopping us?

And with that, I’ll bid you adieu. Till next time …

John Mason
President, OLLI at UAH Board of Directors

OLLI LIFE

EINSTEIN’S 1905 PAPERS AND PHYSICS TODAY

Dr. Jim Beaupre, an OLLI member with a Ph.D. in theoretical physics, presented a bonus April 5 about four revolutionary papers that Albert Einstein (1879-1955) published in 1905. Beaupre discussed Einstein’s contributions in the context of their time and told how they remain relevant.

A personal interpretation

In 1905, all the key puzzle pieces were on the table. So were misconceptions, red herrings and tradition

Einstein’s Genius:
To find the key pieces and create a logical structure that resolved the issues

Einstein’s Superpower:
* To go against the current with his logic in spite of criticism and tradition
* To persevere in solving problems

The equivalence of mass and energy is a direct consequence of special relativity

Einstein showed that an atom loses mass (hsv^2) when it emits a photon of light. Thus the equivalence of mass and energy.

Energy determines Mass

E = mc^2

Before

After

“Does the inertia of a body depend upon its energy content?”, Albert Einstein, September 21, 1955

(Photos by Glen Adams and Sue Chatham; slides by Jim Beaupre)
Wow! And the celebration just gets better. Thanks to Jane McBride, Artist Studio MIG, and all the many OLLI volunteers plus the UAH Art Department for the OLLI Art Festival. Who knew all this talent meets under the roof at Wilson Hall?

To the many OLLI artists, thank you for your generosity of time, talent and effort to make this event wonderful.

Over the years, OLLI members remind me and surprise me with the range of knowledge and talent they graciously share. The photography, the drawings and paintings, the quilts, and the three-dimensional works are astonishing. Thank you all for making our anniversary celebration unique and 100 percent us.

Next on the schedule of the 30th-anniversary events is our annual meeting. At Baron Bluff on the grounds of Burritt on the Mountain, OLLI members are invited to share an evening of music with dinner and a cash bar. Meet your new board members and officers, as well as UAH representatives.

We are optimistic that we will see a spectacular sunset while we mingle with our friends and meet new people. The date is May 14. Watch your eNews and The OLLI Insider for details regarding time, menu, cost and registration.

Over the past year, your 30th Anniversary Committee has worked to provide a memorable series of events and activities to commemorate 30 years of lifelong learning at UAH. Along the way, we hope you learned more about our program, our history, our organization, and the people who make it happen.

If you want to expand your own participation in OLLI, volunteer. There are opportunities that require commitments ranging from a single event for a couple of hours to others recurring on a regular basis. We need instructors, social committee members, event hosts, travel points of contact, office volunteers. For the events such as the holiday party and the annual meeting, we rely on volunteers to check in registrants, decorate, greet attendees, and help with setup and cleanup. The list goes on.

The committee members are Nancy Darnall (chair), Bob Darnall, Betty Koval, Linda McAllister, Jane McBride, Jerry Pang and Janet Reville. Serving as advisors are Jill Stewart, John Mason, Clay Williams, Justin Clay and David Moore.

These are just the “official” members. At OLLI at UAH, members make things happen. I am so grateful that we have the support from you all.

Nancy Barnett Darnall
Chair of 30th Anniversary Committee

Join us for food, fellowship, and fun at our OLLI Annual Meeting. This year’s event will take place on Tuesday, May 14, at Burritt on the Mountain. Festivities start at 5:30 pm. Special entertainment will be provided by musician Shane Adkins.

The buffet dinner is included in the ticket price of $35. There will be Cash Bar featuring wine and beer.

Tickets and info available on the OLLI website. This event is open to friends and family!
The OLLI Art Festival on March 29 — part of the 30th anniversary celebration of lifetime learning at UAH — featured an artists forum in Chan Auditorium and individuals’ art exhibits in the gallery and hallways of Wilson Hall. Jane McBride chaired the event, and Steve Johnson of WHNT News 19 asked questions to direct the panel discussion. Panelists were (from left) Katrina Weber, Jennifer Stottle Taylor and Jahni Moore.
As another semester closes, we have one event remaining — a tour of Yellowhammer Brewing on Friday, May 3. See details below.

The Brown Bear canoe/kayak paddle that was scheduled for April 20 has been postponed until June (summer term). The new date is Saturday, June 15. Details for the paddle and the other summer semester events can be viewed below. Note that registration is limited to 20.

Sandy Dabrowski and I will be Events Committee co-chairs starting with the summer term.

Since I took over as Events Committee chair more than two years ago, we have offered about 65 events to OLLI members. Our committee has strived to provide a variety of experiences to meet the interests of our membership, and we hope you have enjoyed learning, exploring and interacting during these events. I will be handing over the reins once Sandy feels comfortable, and I’m looking forward to seeing her continue the event traditions.

A special thank-you goes to Michelle Laverty, who had many great ideas for events over the past two years. She will be stepping away from the Events Committee with the close of spring semester.

And if you have suggestions for future events (we already have a fall list of events), contact me, Sandy, or committee members Jennifer Robinson, Bob Carroll, Nancy Noever or Laurie Brown.

Recap of recent events

Salmon Library tour, March 29 — OLLI members were treated by Library Director David Moore and three of his staff members to an extensive tour of the library, which houses much more than just books. Students and OLLI members can access recording studios, 3D printers, computer stations, a multimedia lab, and the archives, where large collections of historical documents and artifacts are stored.

Berta Vineyards tour, April 6 — Jules Berta showed us his 6.5-acre vineyard, which grows a variety of grapes to produce 6,000 cases of wine per year. He explained the culture of the grapevines and the wine-making process, which he and his family have transformed from a hobby into a successful commercial venture that was recognized recently as the Alabama Winery of the Year. After the tour, our group sampled wine varieties and enjoyed wood-fired pizzas.

You might be interested in this Van Gogh art exhibition coming to MidCity in May: tinyurl.com/van-gogh-hsv (from Michelle Laverty).

OLLI event for May

• Friday, May 3 — Yellowhammer Brewing tour (Campus 805, Huntsville), 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Join us for a brewery tour for OLLI members only. We’ll meet at Yellowhammer, one of the original Alabama craft breweries. Yellowhammer Brewing was opened in west Huntsville in 2010 by four men who wanted to bring good, traditional beer to Alabama. Five years later, they relocated to a larger facility at Campus 805. OLLI members will pay the $10 tour fee upon arrival — we’re all about supporting local crafts, especially local beer. In 2012, according to the Brewers Association, Alabama ranked 49th with 10 craft breweries in the state (including Yellowhammer). By 2022, Huntsville had 10 breweries of its own. OLLI member participation is limited to 20 people. This tour may have filled up by the time this newsletter is distributed.

(continued on the next page)
Summer events

Mark your calendars and watch the weekly eNews for more information about these summer events, including registration and payment details.

- **Saturday, June 15 — Brown Bear canoe/kayak paddle**, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Flint River. Choose a canoe or kayak to paddle a 5-mile section of the Flint River northeast of Huntsville. Both single and double boats are available. We will meet at Brown Bear LLC (Winchester Road at the Flint River, about 6 miles northeast of Alabama A&M University) and ride in a van north to Oscar Patterson Road, where we will begin our paddle adventure back downriver to the Brown Bear facility. Brown Bear’s address is 107-A Michael Drive, Huntsville. The cost estimate is $40 per person. The paddle is dependent on sufficient river water levels and good weather. More details will be available later. Bring a sack lunch. Be prepared to get wet (it’s possible!). Bring a waterproof bag or container for your valuables. There may be a parking charge. OLLI member participation is limited to the first 20 registrants.

- **Sunday, June 23 — Trash Pandas baseball game**, 3:30-7 p.m., Toyota Field, Madison. Watch the Trash Pandas versus the Biloxi Shuckers, with the first pitch at 4:05 p.m. Pre-registration and pre-payment are required (the deadline is May 31). A ticket costs $18, including a $2 voucher toward any purchase in the park. Watch the eNews for details about pre-payment to OLLI staff. We need at least 20 OLLI members to qualify for the ticket discount, a block of seats, and OLLI group perks (bring your family). Parking costs extra. If we do not get 20 registrations, then tickets are the regular price (it does not include a $2 voucher).

- **Friday, July 12 — HudsonAlpha tour**, 10-11:30 a.m., Cummings Research Park, Huntsville. Tour the flagship facility as we learn about HudsonAlpha’s important genomics-based research, educational outreach, and entrepreneurship activities. An optional visit to the greenhouse is available for those willing to make the half-mile trek. After the tour, enjoy lunch in the cafe (on your own). OLLI member participation is limited to the first 30 registrants.

- **Friday, July 26 — Lowe Mill tour**, 1-2:30 p.m., Huntsville. Lowe Mill has so much to offer in Huntsville: 152 working art studios, seven galleries, 200 artists and makers, a theater, and performance venues. It is the largest privately owned arts facility in the nation, with an iconic water tower. Learn how a textile mill in Alabama, built by a Massachusetts entrepreneur, became Lowe Mill Arts & Entertainment. We will tour the renovated areas of the vast facility and meet and watch some of the various artists and artistic entrepreneurs. This free tour will be approximately 90 minutes of standing and walking approximately one-half mile. OLLI member participation is limited to the first 30 registrants.

- **Saturday, July 27 — North Alabama Railroad Museum and ride**, 9 a.m. to noon, Huntsville. Abracadabra and Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo! Alakazam! It’s not a bunch of Hocus Pocus — visit the North Alabama Railroad Museum for a self-guided tour of vintage trains and a magical day on the rails. Enter the train through the “brick wall.” Marvel at the decorations throughout the coaches. Grab your wand and see the flying keys. Floating candles in the dining coach are sure to amaze even the most skeptical of wizards. Special guests will be joining us, too, so don’t miss the fun. The cost is $15 per person (pay at the door, or pay ahead online). The train leaves at 10 a.m. All aboard at 9:30. The museum will be open at 8 before the ride and until 3 after the ride. The train ride lasts approximately 1.5 hours. Tickets sell out fast, so arrive early. **NOTE:** We do not have a block of reserved seats. First come, first served. OLLI member participation is limited to the first 30 registrants.

Chris Stuhlinger
Events Committee Chair
TOUR OF UAH’S SALMON LIBRARY, MARCH 29

(Photos by Steve Stewart and Chris Stuhlinger)
BERTA VINEYARDS TOURING & TASTING, APRIL 6

(Photos by Steve Stewart and Chris Stuhlinger)
OLLI is bigger and better than ever! Our membership is nearly back to pre-COVID levels, with members taking courses in record numbers. We are offering more bonuses and special events than ever, and member interest groups (MIGs) are growing and thriving.

OLLI staff has grown to accompany these upward trends. Justin Clay started work as our marketing and design specialist last year, and his efforts have proved fruitful. Starting this month, our registration coordinator Anelisse Meyer becomes a full-time OLLI staff member, as the registration office will be 100% OLLI.

This growth necessitates an increase in fees and prices starting this fall. As we enter our fourth decade of lifelong learning, annual membership will be $40 a year. This will be the first increase since 2019. Additionally, all courses will now be $40 each. Members who take multiple courses will receive a discount.

On a positive note, the previous tuition fee, which will now be called a registration fee, will drop from $20 a semester to just $10.

One other change is that the UAH campus has gone cashless, so OLLI will no longer accept cash after Aug. 1. We still accept checks.

Our hope is that with these increases, OLLI can go several years without additional rate hikes and continue to offer you exceptional learning, social and travel opportunities.

We hope everyone had a great spring semester, but more learning opportunities are available this summer. Registration is in full swing, so act now to sign up for exciting events, courses and field trips. Space is limited, so don’t delay. Summer session begins the first week of June.

Reminder that OLLI offices will be closed for Memorial Day, May 27. Since this is the last OLLI Insider until August, we take this opportunity to wish everyone a great summer full of rest, relaxation, and plenty of OLLI excitement and joy.

Clay Williams
OLLI at UAH Program Manager

ON RIDING A TIGER (AND OTHER EXTREME BEHAVIOR)

Before it begins, consider how it ends!

Upon the tiger’s back, one rides with glee, 
Into the jungle’s heart, so wild and free. 
Yet among the shadows, a truth still waits, 
A dilemma at hand, sealed by fate.

How does one leave this fearsome beast, 
Without becoming its very next feast? 
For in dismounting lies the real skill, 
How can one walk away and live still?

By Richard H. Brooks
It is time to register for Summer 2024 courses. There are no tuition fees during the summer, only course fees. You can register for courses at [Osher.uah.edu/OLLIRegistration](http://Osher.uah.edu/OLLIRegistration).

**PLANT-BASED COOKING**  
6/3 - 6/24 • M • Noon - 1:30 PM • 4 sessions • In Person • L. Holladay • $40  

Discover the health benefits of a whole foods, plant-based diet for lifelong well-being. Develop essential kitchen skills while having fun with interactive lessons with science experiments, and learn fascinating food facts to deepen understanding. This course will help you gain confidence in meal planning and preparation to ensure balanced and nourishing meals.

**MAH JONGG FOR FUN**  
6/4 - 6/25 • Tu • 1:15 - 2:45 pm • 4 sessions • In Person • J. Tedrow • $40  

Learn to play American Mah Jongg, a fun game played with tiles. Attendees will learn "the wall," "the Charleston," "pung," "kong" and other interesting plays. All game materials will be supplied. We will play a few hands each week in class but you may practice on Fridays at the Mah Jongg MIG. Lastly you will learn a few tricks and tips to help you win and make your first mah jongg!

**MYSTERIOUS CREATURES OF THE SOUTHEAST**  
7/16 - 7/23 • Tu • 10:30 am - Noon • 2 sessions • In Person • R. Matthews • $30  

Get ready for an adventure as we dive into the mysteries and tall tales of the Southeastern US! In this course, we'll be digging into the lore about local cryptids and monster myths. From spooky swamp tales to chilling mountain legends, we'll explore the strangest creatures that the Southeast has to offer.

**MAKING REVOLUTIONARY WAR UNIFORMS**  
7/24 - 7/31 • W • 10:30 am - Noon • 2 sessions • In Person • K. Anderson • $30  

Learn the steps to creating both the colorful Continental Uniform and the functional wilderness clothing that became the Militia. We will explore the techniques, shortcuts and modern adaptations that retain authenticity via use of premade examples.

**Save 20%**  
*When you register for 4 or more term courses at once.*
FIND YOURSELF A MEMBER INTEREST GROUP

Well, classes have pretty much come to an end for this term and the Friday bonuses and great bonus snacks are over, too, until fall term begins. There are still a great variety of classes and activities planned for the summer term, though. And the member interest groups will be active during the summer months. There is always so much going on at OLLI at UAH.

The annual photo contest entries have been sent to the judges, and the finalists will be announced at the OLLI annual dinner on May 14. Quite a number of photos were entered, and it will be exciting to see which ones win.

Please take advantage of continuing with the MIGs or, if you haven’t been a part of them yet, join one and get started.

- The Tai Chi MIG will continue meeting on Friday mornings from 9 to 10 a.m. This is a wonderful, gentle way to maintain fitness and improve balance. The members are a friendly, welcoming group, and it is a lot of fun. You can also get a head start before signing up for tai chi classes in the fall.

- The Bridge MIG meets Friday afternoon, and they would love to have some new members. They meet in the OLLI lounge. Coffee is available, and sometimes even snacks.

- The Artist Studio MIG also meets on Friday afternoon in Room 152 and welcomes all who love to create some kind of art or craft. Just bring whatever materials you enjoy working with, and have a quiet place to create and share ideas with others. If you were able to attend the Art Event in March, you were probably impressed with the quantity and quality of art created by OLLI members.

- There is an active Hiking & Biking MIG that meets to enjoy the wonderful hiking trails available in the area. Please call and find out when they are meeting and how to join. This is a great way to keep fit and enjoy the fresh air and natural beauty around Huntsville.

- The Mah Jongg MIG meets on Friday afternoon, too. It is a fascinating game with intricate tiles, and it looks like a lot of fun. Games are a great way to keep our minds active and flexible while having social interaction with others.

- The Dining Out MIG usually takes a break until the next term, but is a great way to sample area restaurants with other OLLI members.

There are a couple of new MIGS in the works. Please check the eNews for more information.

Don’t forget that we also have an extensive Great Courses DVD collection, and you can check these out to enjoy at home. The DVD library is located in the OLLI volunteer office. Ask to get access to it.

Leah Black
Member Services Committee Chair
Our Hiking & Biking Member Interest Group membership numbers keep growing. It’s great to see so much interest in MIG activities. Activities include hikes, nature walks and bike rides in the greater Huntsville area, and maybe even beyond Huntsville.

To join this MIG and receive details about upcoming activities, sign up at the link below and agree to the blanket release/waiver form. You must have a valid OLLI membership to participate in MIG activities.

Join the MIG: [forms.gle/6M5BoaWX9Z4TLugE9](https://forms.gle/6M5BoaWX9Z4TLugE9).

We have one more spring semester MIG activity scheduled for early May — a nature walk at Goldsmith-Schiffman Wildlife Sanctuary in the Hampton Cove area of Huntsville (see description below; note the afternoon time).

Many thanks to all MIG members (more than 60) who responded to our recent survey. We received good information and suggestions for planning future MIG activities. We want to accommodate as many interests as reasonably possible and also offer alternate scheduling for members who prefer activity times other than Saturday mornings.

Below is a listing of planned MIG activities for this summer. With more than 100 members now in the MIG, we hope that more of you will find an activity that interests you. These outings are perfect opportunities to be physically active, enjoy the outdoors, explore and learn about your environment, and interact with your fellow OLLI and MIG members!

Next MIG activity

- **Saturday, May 4 — Nature walk at Goldsmith-Schiffman Wildlife Sanctuary**, 1 to 3 p.m. (east entrance off U.S. 431). Enjoy an educational saunter along the banks of the Flint River as we explore a variety of habitats in this city-managed natural area. This sanctuary is also an important part of the North Alabama Birding Trail. Sorry, no pets allowed. The entrance to the parking area is off U.S. 431 south just past Hays Preserve and before the Flint River Bridge.

Summer term MIG activities

- **Sunday, June 2, 3 to 5 p.m. — Hike at Monte Sano State Park**, South Plateau Loop Trail, mostly flat.
- **Friday, June 21, 6 to 8 p.m. — Sunset hike at Blevins Gap Varnedoe Trail**, mostly flat. Good views of South Huntsville.
- **Saturday, June 29, 10 a.m. to noon — Nature walk at Indian Creek Greenway**, paved path along Indian Creek. Look for birds.
- **Saturday, July 13, 10 a.m. to noon — Bike ride on Redstone Arsenal greenway**. Paved path, mostly flat with some up and down, requires arsenal access pass.
- **Friday, Aug. 2, 6:30 to 8 p.m. — Nature walk to Sauta Cave National Wildlife Refuge**. Witness more than 200,000 bats emerging from the cave at dusk.

See you on the trail!

*Chris Stuhlinger and Steve Jones*
Several OLLI members are signed onto the "Ireland in Depth" tour with Grand Circle Travel to experience two weeks in Ireland in July. Enjoy looking over the itinerary, and imagine yourself in the center of Irish history and culture with expert guides and perfect accommodations. Spaces are available; see tinyurl.com/olli-ireland-in-depth.

Nanda Journeys is partnered with OLLI at UAH for a 10-day, eight-night private journey through Iceland (including travel days) in September, as an OLLI exclusive adventure. There are 28 travelers registered on this exciting trip, with two spaces still available. You can see details at tinyurl.com/olli-iceland-fire-lights.

New travel opportunities in 2025

- **Two Worlds of Peru: The Inca Highlands & the Amazon**, Friday, Feb. 28, to Friday, March 14, 2025. One journey, one country, two amazing worlds. Embark on a private riverboat voyage into the Peruvian Amazon — one of the most biodiverse regions on earth — to discover its incredible natural beauty, intriguing wildlife and tribal villages. Experience a unique and colorful combination of ancient ruins, lively cities, and local craft and culture. Then immerse yourself in the heart of Peru as you journey high into the Andes and deep into the Amazon. Explore Cusco, Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley to learn how the Incas lived, farmed, communicated, worshipped, and ruled. Investigate this exciting adventure at tinyurl.com/olli-peru. Contact Bob Darnall at olli.info@uah.edu if you have questions.

- **Signature City Pittsburgh**, Sunday, May 25, to Friday, May 30, 2025; with OLLI at UAH-planned options for pre- and post- extensions. Learn how Pittsburgh grew from its humble origins to the great city of today, discovering neoclassical architecture, renowned museums, unique cuisine and the stunning Duquesne Incline. Experience Pittsburgh’s revitalized urban landscape and bustling local economy, and find out what makes it “America’s Most Livable City.” A city once known for its rough edges is now revered for its world-class museums, rich historical narrative and spirited cultural scene. Follow the paths of history as you stroll through the Botanical Gardens and examine brushstrokes from Italian Renaissance Masterpieces. See details at tinyurl.com/olli-pittsburgh. Please contact Michelle Laverty for more information at olli.info@uah.edu.

Travel Committee planning for 2025 and 2026 is ongoing!

Pam Blackwell is pursuing opportunities for travel to New Mexico, visiting Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Taos during the weeks following Thanksgiving and before high holiday season 2025. She’s searching for the best company to partner with OLLI at UAH.

Similarly, Betty Koval is researching options with major travel companies that offer small-ship travel in the Adriatic Sea with ports of call in Croatia and neighboring countries. For OLLI travelers, the best time will likely be in August or September 2026.

Myriad suggestions have been submitted to the OLLI Travel Committee for regional trips, including New Orleans and Acadiana; Dauphin Island and Mobile Bay area; and historic and cultural tours of Arkansas or Kentucky. Shorter weekend and overnight outings are also possibilities for consideration. Other domestic travel suggestions include coastal and/or river trips in the Pacific Northwest.

Opportunities for foreign travel abound, and suggestions from members range from South Africa and Morocco to Portugal, Italy, France and Germany. The Travel Committee encourages interested members to join in the planning and to bring any one trip from possibility to availability.

Contact Jane McBride or other members of the OLLI Travel Committee at olli.info@uah.edu if you are willing and able to help coordinate a trip to your favorite destination.

Ready, set, go!

*Jane McBride and Ed Bernstein*
Brandi grew up outside Auburn, where her father, Bob Brasher, worked in the grocery business. When she was in the third grade, her mother, Joyce, went back to school to earn a nursing degree and then worked for years in home health care.

Growing up, Brandi enjoyed cheering, science Olympiads, hanging out with friends and especially music. In the fifth grade, she got the chance to attend Space Camp.

"I fell in love with everything space," said Brandi, "and wanted to be an astronaut when I grew up."

Brandi went to Jacksonville State University to study chemistry. There she met Jason Edmonds, and they later married. She transferred to UAH to finish her degree.

"During my time at UAH, I was recommended for a job at the crystallization lab at Marshall Space Flight Center," said Brandi. "I graduated on a Saturday and started my new job on Monday. It was an amazing time working at the 'Crystal Palace.'"

Brandi’s parents, in the meantime, had started Home Instead Senior Care in Huntsville. The loneliness of the lab eventually led Brandi to quit and go to work for her parents.

"This taught me so many things, from marketing to human resources," said Brandi. "During my time there, I did almost every job, especially marketing."

In 2007 Brandi entered a dark period in her life: "I was stricken with irretractable migraines that debilitated me for the next seven years. Migraines took away my ability to work, be present at life events, enjoy my family, and be around other people for long periods. These years were filled with doctors’ visits, hospital stays, IV therapies and alternative therapies."

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Then in 2013 her father, while praying for a cure in the middle of the night, found information on the internet about a neurostimulator developed by the Reed Migraine Center in Dallas. Brandi had one implanted and went from 22 visits to the emergency room in one year to zero.

“After waking up from what seemed like a long slumber, I immersed myself in my daughter Mary Ella’s activities as well as Bible study at Southwood Presbyterian [Church],” said Brandi. “That was all fulfilling until Mary Ella, after turning 16, fired me from waiting outside the theater!”

Therefore, when Annette Birchfield, owner of The Wine Cellar, offered to hire Brandi, she readily accepted. After COVID, Brandi and her husband purchased the business from Annette.

“The Wine Cellar is truly a place like ‘Cheers’ where ‘everyone knows your name.’ I immediately fell in love with the vibe and the patrons. Some of them have been coming since The Cellar was started in 2002. They welcomed me right away. But then I had to learn about wine! And what better way than to open up a bottle and taste?”

With the help of Annette, wine representatives, long-term patrons, and many YouTube videos, Brandi educated herself. And there is so much to know.

“We have over 500 wines,” said Brandi. “Each wine expresses its own flavors and personality. We want to dispel the myth that you only go to a wine shop if you like a French Bordeaux from a specific sub-appellation. We want to help the novice drinker expand their flavor profile. We want him to break out of the big box store rut and drink outside the box with us. To help, we offer a free flavor profile session for all new customers.”

Brandi became involved with OLLI through Sherry Sobul, a Wine Cellar patron and OLLI member, who encouraged her to teach a class on wine.

“I have a love for sharing wines,” said Brandi, “so I was happy to participate.”

Each week, students sample six wines and discuss the regions from which the wines originate, often with guest speakers. “We want students to feel like they have taken a journey with us,” said Brandi.

One semester, students sampled wines from Portugal, Spain, France and Italy. This past semester, wines were from California up through Washington state. For the coming summer semester, wines will be from less-known regions: Australia, New Zealand, Chile and Argentina.

One bonus is that Wine Cellar students, including OLLI’s, get a discount on the wines discussed. Brandi’s husband, Jason, works at The Wine Cellar. Daughter Mary Ella is studying data analytics at The University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Thanks, Brandi, for all you do for OLLI. And cheers!

By Glen Adams

A MORNING HIKE TO BETHEL SPRING FALLS

The Hiking & Biking Member Interest Group hiked up Keel Mountain in Bethel Spring Nature Preserve on the pleasant, sunny morning of April 13 to view Bethel Spring Falls, one of Madison County’s largest waterfalls. Recent rains provided plenty of flow over the falls.

(Photos by Chris Stuhlinger)
President James K. Polk’s Cabinet seated in the State Dining Room in June 1846; the United States’ declaration of war against Mexico during that same year. The daguerreotype of the Cabinet is the earliest interior image known of the White House. It captures details of the room as well as the features of the group who managed the war. The one objector was George Bancroft, secretary of the Navy — the man on the right, in the white vest — who would resign that month in protest. (Images from Wikimedia Commons, the James K. Polk Memorial, senate.gov and the National Archives)

May: Nation-building:
The Senate votes for war with Mexico

On May 12, 1846, after the House of Representatives had already adopted its war resolution by a lopsided margin, the United States Senate voted 40-2 to go to war with Mexico. Despite this seemingly overwhelming support, the vote masked both a great uneasiness and the deep partisan divisions over this war. So what were the issues? We already know the results.

The issue, as it turns out, was one that had been gnawing at the nascent nation from its very beginning.

The idea of “manifest destiny,” coined by John L. O’Sullivan in the July-August 1845 issue of The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, became a rallying cry as well as a rationale for American foreign policy. But in actuality, it had long been a part of the American experience.

The impatient English who colonized North America in the 1600s and 1700s immediately gazed westward and instantly considered ways to venture into the wilderness, tame it, and make it their own.

After the American Revolution, a steady, wealth-producing yet labor-intensive economic factor known as the cotton kingdom grew steadily in the South. In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson’s Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the country with a stroke of a pen. Expansionists’ eagerness to acquire Spanish Florida was part of the drive for the War of 1812, and many historians argue that American desires to annex Canada were also an important part of that equation.

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Andrew Jackson’s invasion of Florida in 1818 and the subsequent Transcontinental (Adams-Onis) Treaty settled a Southern border question that had been vexing the region for a generation, and, because Spain also renounced its claim to the Oregon Country, established an American claim to the Pacific Northwest.

The most consequential territorial expansion in the country’s history occurred during the 1820s. Spreading American settlements often caused additional unrest along the country’s Western borders, generally worsening relations with neighbors and setting off a cycle of instability that encouraged additional annexations. The situation also affected the political stability of the U.S. government. For during this same period, the aforementioned rise of King Cotton was producing a traditionalist and increasingly pro-slavery Southern wing in Congress.

From the time of the Constitutional Compromise in 1787, the issue of slavery had been divisive. Some, like Connecticut Sen. Oliver Ellsworth, were optimistic that “slavery, in time, will not be a speck in our country.” Others, like Pennsylvanian James Wilson, thought the Constitution’s power to prohibit the slave trade would lay “the foundation for banishing slavery out of this country.” And many weren’t keen on even having their names attached to a document that mentioned slavery outright.

Nevertheless, three clauses relating to slavery did make it into the final draft of the Constitution, all after varied amounts of debate and compromise during the Constitutional Convention in 1787: Article I, Section 2, Clause 3 (aka the Three-fifths Compromise); Article I, Section 9, Clause 1; and Article IV, Section 2, Clause 3. These clauses may have seemed innocuous on the surface, but in fact, the South was pushing for its enslaved individuals to be counted fully, so as to have more impact in Congress, thus protecting and growing its “peculiar institution.”

So since representation in Congress meant more power, and since the Southern bloc was intent on maintaining the institution of slavery, any territorial expansions had to allow for the expansion of that institution to maintain a balance. One congressional act after another appeared during the first half of the 19th century to account for that balance.

Now, in 1846, President James K. Polk accused Mexican troops of having attacked Americans on U.S. soil, north of the Rio Grande, as a pretense for another land grab. But Mexico claimed this land as its own and accused the American military of having invaded its sovereign territory. And, adding fuel to the fire, Texas Sen. Sam Houston argued that because Texas had been warring with Mexico for a decade over their disputed border, once the United States had annexed Texas in 1845, it had so too inherited the conflict.

Northern Whigs feared that war with Mexico would result in the United States gaining new territories in the Southwest, which would encourage the expansion of slavery. At the same time, South Carolina Democratic Sen. John C. Calhoun worried that reopening the divisive issue of slavery in the territories would encourage more anti-slavery agitation. In the end, Northern Whigs would offer an amendment to limit America’s role solely to “repelling the invasion.” That amendment failed by a vote of 20-26, revealing the real split within the Senate, and then most of the Whigs switched their votes to favor the declaration of war. Sen. Calhoun abstained.

Victory in the Mexican War gave the United States a vast new territory stretching from California to New Mexico. As Calhoun had feared, the question of slavery in these territories quickly developed into a festering wedge between the North and South.

During the summer of 1846, Pennsylvania Rep. David Wilmot proposed a proviso to an appropriations bill, decreeing that slavery should never be permitted in any territory won from Mexico. The Wilmot Proviso ignited a heated political debate that further divided political coalitions and intensified a growing sectionalism.

When the Whig Party collapsed over the issue of slavery in the 1850s, it was replaced by a new Republican Party, a coalition dedicated to blocking the spread of slavery into the nation’s Western territories. Most Northern Whigs eventually joined the anti-slavery Republican Party, and most Southern Whigs joined the nativist American Party and later the Constitutional Union Party. This split would go a long way in electing a Republican president in 1860.

And that is how Manifest Destiny led to the American Civil War.

By John Mason
Jane Ewing, a producer and caller of contra dancing, introduced it to OLLI members during a bonus in Wilson Hall on April 19. "I don’t want to watch somebody else dance," she said — "I want to do it." She was joined by fellow members of the North Alabama Country Dance Society, including Bryan Walls, Linda Maier and Mike Roberts. Wikipedia says a contra dance is a social event that one can attend without a partner. The North Alabama Country Dance Society can be found on Facebook. It holds dances on the second and fourth Saturdays of each month at Faith Presbyterian Church in Huntsville.
Neerpear is a community engagement app recently expanding into lifelong learning programs nationwide. It is a closed-app experience for OLLI at UAH members, so you don’t have to worry about advertisements, scams, or people trying to acquire & sell your information.

The goal is to make it easier for OLLI members (especially those who might not be extroverts) to connect over shared interests and help strengthen our community even more! We’ll be working on minor tweaks as more members join and would love volunteers to facilitate Nearpeer Groups. (Groups focus on specific topics. OLLI members provide the content and guide discussions.)

You can use Nearpeer on your computer, phone, or tablet...whatever is easier for you. We’ll have training sessions throughout the semesters covering the basics, and you can always come by the office if you have a question. Here are just a few examples of things you can do with Nearpeer.

- Want to chat with OLLI members who were in a class you took last semester? Look them up and say hello.
- Want to find people who are interested in both The Lord of the Rings and Nature Photography? You can search for them.
- Want to start a group and talk about weird history stuff? We can do that.
- Want to share info about an awesome hike you took over the weekend? Do it.
- Want to organize a trip with your OLLI friends? Work it out over chat and make it happen.

The sign-up link is available on the “Nearpeer for OLLI” tab of the OLLI website. We hope you’ll give this new benefit a try and help to keep making our OLLI family even stronger!
OLLI MEMBERS CAPTURE SOLAR ECLIPSE PHOTOS

Texas
Friends gathered at a ranch about 15 miles west of Salado, Texas, to view the total solar eclipse April 8. NASA’s map above shows the path of totality, which included Salado. Jeff Delmas took the photos at left at 1:05:08 and 2:09:46 p.m.

Arkansas
David Styers captured these eclipse images from Hot Springs, Arkansas, at 1:46 and 1:51 p.m. Hot Springs also experienced the total eclipse.

Alabama
The eclipse was only partial in Alabama. Bob Carroll shot these photos at 1:16 and 1:44 p.m. at Joe Wheeler State Park at Rogersville.