

The OLLI Insider

News for OLLI members at The University of Alabama in Huntsville

February 2025



BIRDS, BOOKS, TRAVELS AND TRUCKS



Learning about cranes and how to preserve them; Patricia Lilly, an OLLI member who commutes to UAH from Birmingham, with family members at Hogwarts Castle in Florida; columnist Lee Roop with a pickup truck that he didn't want to give up; sampling the cuisine of Louisiana during a weeklong OLLI tour; the OLLI Reads Member Interest Group discussing a book about events leading up to the Civil War.

uah.edu/olli

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From the Editor



Eric Fleischauer photographed sandhill cranes (left) at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. Chris Stuhlinger made his photo of whooper swans during an OLLI tour of Iceland in September 2024.

FRIENDS WILL TELL YOU WHEN YOU'RE WRONG



Friends are ribbing me mercilessly about apparently not knowing the difference between a crane and a swan.

I asked for it. I'm like the country boy who was interviewed by *The Decatur Daily* during frantic and awkward shopping among the frilly unmentionables in Victoria's Secret on the day before Valentine's Day many years ago.

"We done it to ourselves!" he sighed, referring to men who had waited until the last minute to buy gifts for their sweethearts.

I do know that the birds that make Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge famous are cranes, not swans, if only because I live next to the refuge and drive through it frequently. However, I have never been very good at identifying birds, flowers, plants and trees by species.

In last month's *OLLI Insider*, we ran Ed Bernstein's terrific picture of a rare whooping crane surrounded by sandhill cranes in the refuge. But in my text, I called the birds "swans."

I'm going to blame my error on the fact that I'd seen a news story on TV about the ballet "Swan Lake." Or maybe it was because I was rattled by losing half my column in the computer and having to reconstruct it hastily.

Fortunately, most of you never saw the mistake because I emailed a proof to our crack *Insider* editorial board. Forester Chris Stuhlinger replied at lightning speed, politely pointing out the error.

The only thing I could say was "Thank you." Or I could have used a phrase I heard frequently among colleagues working at *The Daily's* copy desk: "Good catch!"

We all make mistakes. When we are lucky, somebody catches them before they cause harm or embarrassment.

Inside *The Insider*: Glen Adams profiles Patricia Lilly. She chose UAH's online OLLI classes over others that were available, and now she commutes from Birmingham to Huntsville for on-campus classes.

In his second monthly column, Lee Roop describes the memories and emotions evoked by the prospect of giving up his 25-year-old red pickup truck.

Clay Williams describes the work of OLLI's volunteer Board of Directors. Feb. 21 is the deadline to nominate yourself or someone else for a three-year term. Irene Garoppo invites you to submit a name for Volunteer of the Year; the nominating window opens about Feb. 21 and closes March 15.

Leah Black, chair of the Member Services Committee, reminds us of the April 1 deadline to enter the annual photo contest. Chris Stuhlinger describes coming activities sponsored by his Events Committee, including a new one: touring UAH's Shelby Center for Science & Technology.

In his column as president of the OLLI Board of Directors, John Mason writes that fresh, original experiences make us feel younger. In his history column, John describes the 1898 sinking of the battleship *Maine*, which led to war. But was the sinking really a hostile act?

Beds for children and religious persecution are topics of this month's Friday bonus lectures, described in Betty Koval's column. Writing separately for the Curriculum Committee, Betty lists its diverse disciplines (fields of study) and the people in charge of them.

Jean Krieger, Chris Stuhlinger and Steve Jones describe coming events for their member interest groups for art and for hiking and biking. We have pictures showing members of another MIG — OLLI Reads — discussing the Civil War.

Travelers to Louisiana in January sent back many outstanding pictures, some of which you will see here. David Sayre's travel column reviews past and coming travel opportunities.

Steve Stewart
Editor, The OLLI Insider

From the President

AIN'T IT FUNNY HOW TIME SLIPS AWAY ...?



Have you noticed lately how, as we age, time seems to pass faster every day? Another holiday season has come and gone almost as if in a flash (which makes me wonder why it still takes forever for me to pay off the gifts from that fleeting period, but I digress ...). Well, there's an explanation for that.

As we grow older, this curious phenomenon has nothing to do with any actual change in the measurement of time; a minute today is the same length it was 60 years ago when I thought the end of the school year would *never* arrive. But new scientific theories now indicate that this sensation actually has to do with how our brains process the experiences around us. This biochemical process changes as we age, and as it does, it leads to a feeling of increasing rapidity. Here's what they say:

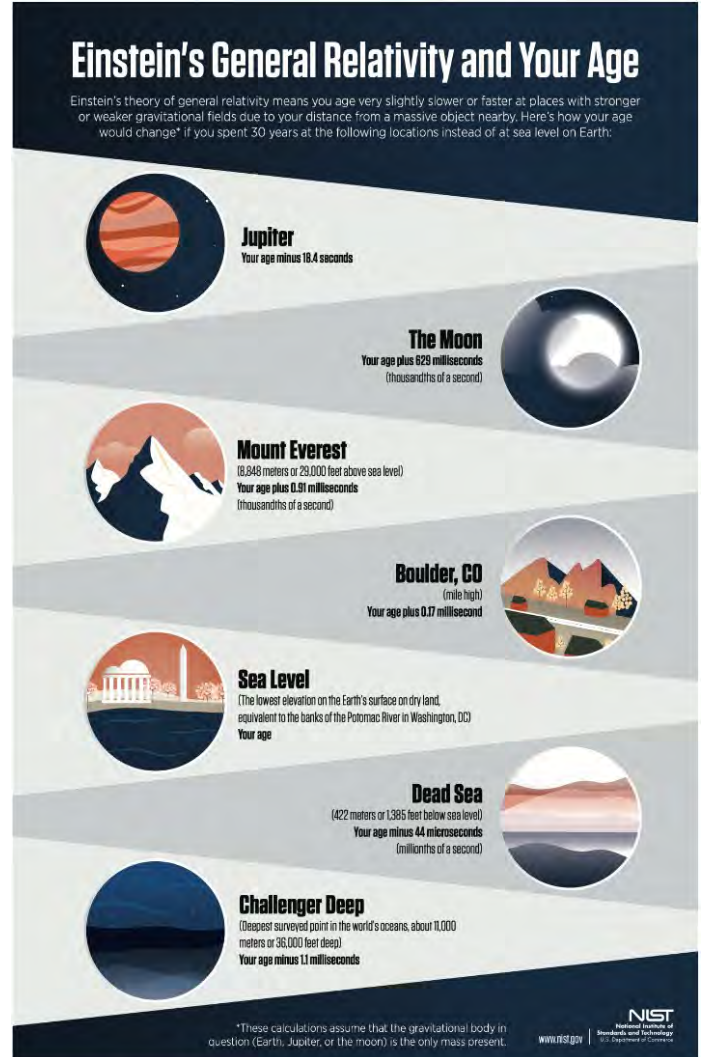
Psychologist Robert Ornstein conducted a series of experiments in the 1960s to try to explain how this all works. First, he showed subjects two diagrams — one with a complicated design and another featuring a comparatively simple pattern. Subjects were presented with each image for an identical period of time, but when asked which one had appeared for longer, most of the subjects chose the more complex diagram.

His second experiment used audio files featuring clicking sounds and basic household noises. Some of the recordings were more intricate, containing more clicks produced at a quicker frequency. When Ornstein asked his subjects to tell him which audio file was longer, they chose the more complex one with the greater number of sounds.

Based on these results, Ornstein concluded that people's perception of time appeared to slow down when they were presented with greater amounts of new and complex information. He posited that our brains require extra time to process unfamiliar experiences, resulting in a feeling of time essentially moving in slow motion. So how can we interpret this?

Well, when we're young, our days are filled with first-time experiences rife with complex, novel information that our brains work hard to process. These new lessons to learn, new locations to explore, and new sensations to feel are akin to seeing the more complex diagrams or hearing those more detailed audio files in Ornstein's experiments.

Now, generally speaking, time tends to blend together more and more as we age, when it isn't broken up by fresh, original experiences as frequently as in our younger years. But for my purposes here, then wouldn't it be more beneficial if we older people actively sought out stimulating activities that keep the brain active: activities that help to "slow things down"? Maybe it would be even better if we played that game with others.



OLLI experiences can reduce your age (or the age you feel). (Graphic from National Institute of Standards and Technology, U.S. Department of Commerce)

And speaking of games — along with a wide array of exciting classes, excursions, bonuses and other stuff — we have just the perfect opportunity to “slow things down” here in the new term at OLLI. So why don't you all sign up and join the experiment?

If it is done right and with enthusiasm, we just might trick our minds and our bodies into believing that we're young again, and waiting with bated breath for school to get out and summer vacation to begin.

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

John Mason
President, OLLI at UAH Board of Directors

Volunteer of the Year

THIS YEAR'S VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR IS ...



Whose name would you like to see here? There's only one way to make it happen, and that is to nominate the person you'd like to see become the 2025 Volunteer of the Year.

Here it is February of the new year, and it's almost time to nominate your favorite volunteers.

This year's award covers the period from spring 2024 through early spring 2025. We have members serving in many capacities as committee members, instructors, facilitators, board members and bonus presenters.

If you'd like to nominate someone who you feel needs recognition, now's your chance. The nominations window will open on or about Feb. 21 and will remain open until March 15. There will be a link in the weekly eNews during this time. All you have to do is click on the link and follow the instructions.

Candidates are selected based on nominations received from the OLLI membership at large. All OLLI volunteers are eligible, and you can submit as many different nominations as you'd like.

Nominees will be validated by a small committee for eligibility, and a "winner" will be recommended to the Board of Directors for final selection. The winner will be announced and presentations made during the OLLI annual meeting/ dinner. If for some reason we are unable to host an annual dinner, the winner will be announced via the weekly eNews and in the summer newsletter.

The recipient will receive a Certificate of Appreciation signed by the OLLI board president, a small trophy/ memento and a registration certificate for the following fall term. The winner's name will be placed on the volunteer plaque in the volunteer office. So, let your voices be heard. Nominate your volunteers, and have one of them recognized!

Irene Garoppo
Volunteer Support Committee Chair

This plaque in the OLLI volunteer office (151 Wilson Hall) is updated with the name of each new Volunteer of the Year.



Events Committee



Tours will include the Shelby Center for Science & Technology (top left), The Stovehouse (top right), and historic Mooresville (bottom two photos).

EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY, MARCH, EARLY APRIL



We have several events and tours scheduled for the next couple of months. Please note: A new event has been added for Feb. 21! Mark your calendars and make plans to participate. There is so much to see and learn in the greater Huntsville area.

Note that registration for the bee-keeping apiary visit is now open. The registration deadline is March 7.

Registration for other March and early April events will open later this month.

Coming events

- Friday, Feb. 7 — **HudsonAlpha DNA extraction class** (Huntsville), 10:30 a.m. to noon. We have had a great response for this class, and registration has reached the limit.
- **New Event:** Friday, Feb. 21 — **Shelby Center for Science & Technology tour** (UAH campus), 10 a.m. to noon. Tour the state-of-the-art Shelby Center, which houses UAH's biological sciences and mathematics departments. The tour, led by faculty and staff, will showcase the building's instructional and research facilities, including visits to the rooftop greenhouse, the physics labs, and the engineering technology facilities.
- Saturday, Feb. 22 — **Sleep in Heavenly Peace** (bunk beds — Huntsville), 9-11:30 a.m. Founded in Kimberly, Ohio, in 2012, Sleep in Heavenly Peace is a nonprofit providing hand-made bunk beds to children who don't have beds of their own. Not only do they deliver these beds to kiddos in need, but they also partner with organizations, churches, businesses and individuals to build them. After a brief tour, OLLI members are invited to help build the bunk beds. No carpentry skills are required.
- Friday, Feb. 28 — **Alabama Center for the Arts** (Decatur), 2-3:30 p.m. Join Kim Parker, executive director of the ACA and Calhoun Community College's dean of fine arts, for a fascinating tour of the Alabama Center for the Arts. ACA is a partnership between Calhoun and Athens State University. Learn about the various programs and classes ACA offers, including music, studio arts, computer graphics, multimedia production and theater arts.
- Saturday, March 22 — **Historic Mooresville walking tour**, 9-10:30 a.m. Learn about the interesting history of Mooresville from a knowledgeable local volunteer tour guide as we stroll through the quaint streets and visit three of the remaining old structures (stagecoach tavern, post office and brick church). Hear fascinating stories about former and current residents. The entire town is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Cost: \$10 per person; pay by cash or check at the door. Registration limit: 30 members.

Events Committee

EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY, MARCH, EARLY APRIL, CONT.

- Friday, March 28 — **Martin Stamping and Stove Factory (aka The Stovehouse) tour** (Huntsville), 2-3 p.m. The guided tour of this vast complex will include the history of the building (operational since 1928), walk us through how the vision of the current owners is progressing, and provide insight to areas not open to the public. The tour is free. Registration limit: 25 members.
- Friday, April 4 — **UAH Beekeeping Club apiary visit** (Huntsville), 2-4 p.m. Following a north Alabama winter, spring warmth energizes honeybee colonies for the summer ahead. The rewards of caring for bees and for harvesting the wondrous products of their labors are joyful. This hands-on tour at a local apiary will increase a participant's understanding for the importance of bees' health, the benefits that come from responsible bee husbandry, the threat to their existence, and the increasing need for beekeepers. The tour is free. Registration limit: 25 members. Registration deadline is March 7.

Remaining spring events

- Saturday, April 12 — **UAH sports: lacrosse, baseball, softball** (UAH campus). First games begin at noon.
- Friday, April 25 — **Indian Mound Museum tour** (Florence) 1:30-3 p.m.

Chris Stuhlinger
Events Committee Chair

Coming Bonuses

BEDS FOR CHILDREN; WOMEN WHO RESIST RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION



Just a quick note to remind you of the amazing Friday bonuses we have coming up in February. They start at 11 a.m. in Wilson Hall.

- Feb. 14 — **SHP Delivers Beds & Hope to Area Kids**. Learn about the sheer number of children who have no beds and often sleep three on a couch or even on the floor, and the volunteers who build and deliver beds to these children. The stories will touch your heart.
- Feb. 28 — **Sacrificing for the Cause of Unity**. Hear Ruhi Jahanpour, a survivor and chronicler of the persecution of Baha'is. She will share the stories of the women who gave their lives for the cause of unity and peace. I have been told to bring tissues to this one.

See you there!

Betty Koval
Bonus Coordinator



February bonuses will be about providing beds for children and resisting persecution of people of the Baha'i faith.

Curriculum Committee

DISCIPLINE CHAIRS MAKE COURSES HAPPEN



Classes are in full swing for the spring term 2025. Wow! Just seeing 2025 in print boggles my mind. And yet, it is already February of the new year.

There are so many courses to choose from that I simply have trouble choosing fewer than nine or 10 each term. Hey, that is usually from 15 or so I would love to take. I like the *in-person* courses (whether on or off campus) for the camaraderie. The *Zoom* courses are handy when there are two courses that coincide and I want both. I simply watch one course on Google classroom at my convenience, and if I want to ask a question or comment, I put it in the comments. I can also Zoom when I do not want to drive over from Decatur for one course.

We have taken the after-hours courses on wine and beer; I cannot talk Bill into dancing! Then we have that other option of Zoom with Auburn University or The University Alabama in Tuscaloosa. In addition to this are the nine events and eight free bonus lectures. I mean, how can a person *not* see something they like at OLLI? This is not even counting the member interest groups, aka MIGs. There is something for everyone.

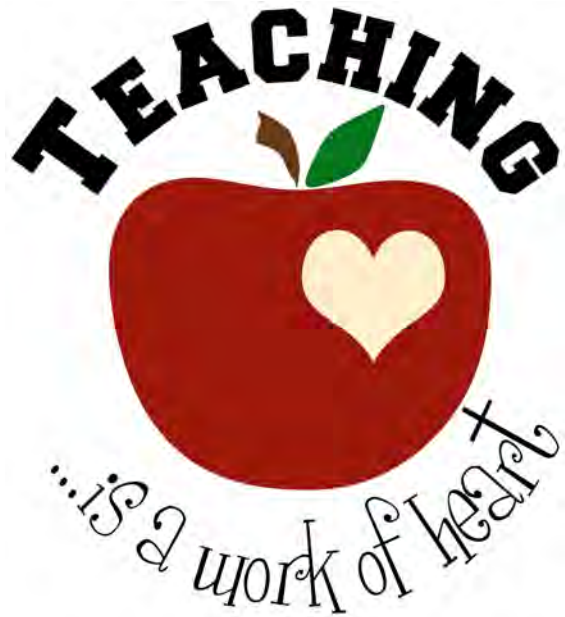
I want to tell you about the people who are behind the scenes making all this happen — well, besides our fantastic staff. Our Curriculum Committee discipline chairs have their ears and eyes open all year long just looking for people to teach and lead courses that would interest our demographic. Who knew that physics would be so popular at our age?

As the person who sets up the bonus lectures, I must thank so many for giving me great speakers to contact. Chris Stuhlinger has event tours of the most interesting places around the Huntsville area and beyond.

I want to express my sincere thanks to everyone who spends countless hours seeking out those who spend even more hours preparing for classes. I have heard many say they learn more while preparing.

The following are those discipline chairs (in no particular order):

- **Val Seaquist, ARTS AND LETTERS** — if you might enjoy discussing books along with Vanitha Singh, learning about Shakespeare from Dannye Drake, learning art history from Debbie West, or writing your life story with Val.
- **Sue Farbman, FOREIGN LANGUAGE** — I have taken Italian and French, but there are also Spanish and German courses to choose from.



OLLI organizes its curriculum under discipline chairs to cover more than a dozen diverse subject areas. Volunteers put in countless hours to plan and teach courses. (clipart-library.com)

- **Bill Confer and Richard Brooks, PSYCHOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY, THEOLOGY AND RELIGION** — I have truly been enlightened by every single course I have taken. Expand your point of view by hearing other concepts you may not have considered. Bill and Richard will make you think, along with teachers of the other courses, such as anthropology.
- **Joan May, LEISURE AND NATURE** — Have an interest in gardening, touring gardens, exercise or dance? How about cha-cha or line dancing this term? Try it. I hear this is a fun way to exercise!
- **Birgit Stensby, HISTORY, CIVICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE** — I am constantly amazed at the sheer volume of subjects Birgit manages to make available. I am beginning to wonder whether she sleeps. There are simply too many to list, but what a variety of topics! Many courses have a following of the membership and request the same instructors over and over. I genuinely believe we have the best OLLI of all 124.

(continued on the next page)

Curriculum Committee

DISCIPLINE CHAIRS MAKE COURSES HAPPEN, CONT.

- **Bob Carroll, SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS** — Bob has a way to make science fun, and his courses are always highly recommended by those who take them. Interested in Einstein's special and general relativities? I never knew there was a difference. Jim Beaupre does.
- **Steve Jones, NATURAL RESOURCES** — Nature courses fit perfectly for a naturalist like Steve. Learn about our national, state, and local parks you may want to venture to.
- **Barbara Hitchings, SKILLS AND HOBBIES** — I attempted to learn to draw. It stressed me more than relaxed me, but my classmates are incredibly talented. I did learn to knit and even do a couple of stitches I did not think I could do. You can learn bridge from a wonderfully patient Bob Darnall and work puzzles too. I might even try drawing again from Nona Rogers!
- **Clay Williams, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, TRAVEL, OLLI ALABAMA SHARES** — Clay manages all three of these, and he always has some course trying to keep us as current as possible by learning more about the technology we carry in our hands. Whether it be the phone, the laptop or communicating via Zoom — there is a course for you to become better-informed. The OLLI Alabama Shares courses (the ones that come from Auburn and Tuscaloosa) are simply icing on our OLLI cake.

We have two disciplines needing chairs. This is where you might like to volunteer to help. They are **FINANCE AND ECONOMICS** and **HEALTH AND FITNESS**. This has not stopped us from having courses on elder law, retirement financial strategies, brain dance, tai chi, pilates, yoga, strength building and qigong. Try a course, and see what you learn. Better yet, help keep these courses coming by planning for the next term.

I realize I could not mention every course, but by now all of you have picked your courses at least for the first part of the term. You may find a course or two after spring break you would like to fit into your schedule. It is never too late to register unless the term is over. Go ahead. Find a course you even think you would like to explore; I promise I have never regretted taking a course at OLLI, even one I had no talent in.

Even better, I have enjoyed getting authors to either Zoom in or come in person to discuss their books and lives with us in the Fireside Chat with Authors course. I took a term off, but I will return.

Never stop learning!

Betty Koval
Lifelong Learner and No. 1 OLLI fan (there is quite the competition for this slot)
For the Curriculum Committee

IT'S TIME!

Nominate yourself or somebody else to serve on OLLI's Board of Directors

Volunteer board members direct curriculum, events, social activities and policy. They serve 3-year terms. We need your help and your ideas. Help out, and have fun! Feb. 21 is the deadline for nominations.

Go to tinyurl.com/olli-board-nomination-25 to obtain the nomination form.



OLLI NEEDS YOU!



As OLLI settles into the spring semester, we hope everyone is enjoying their courses and special events and tours. Putting together programs each semester takes work from a lot of people. From UAH staff to our wonderful OLLI members and volunteers, it really does “take a village” to get it all done. Thanks to all who assist.

This is the perfect opportunity to remind everyone that OLLI is a member-driven organization. It is the membership that determines courses, programs and events, working with UAH staff to make it all come together. UAH staff simply cannot do all the work ourselves. It is an accurate statement that our OLLI is only as good as the members themselves make it.

That being said, it is time for nominations for the OLLI Board of Directors. We need dedicated, hard-working individuals who want to help OLLI maintain its high standards well into the future.

There are several ways board members help. These include serving in curriculum to devise courses, helping out with social events, planning special events and tours, and helping with the *OLLI Insider* newsletter and other public relations matters. This is just a sampling of what board members do.

But it's not all work and no play. In my three years here at OLLI, I have witnessed board members have such a good time as they planned events and simply enjoyed the social interaction with one another. I have seen friendships established that will last a lifetime. There is such truth to the statement that OLLI isn't an organization, it's a family.

So, have you been a member a few years and have you enjoyed your OLLI experience? It's now time to step up to the plate and add your skills and talents to making OLLI at UAH the best lifelong learning organization in town.



The spring Course Guide will tell you what courses may still be available. It also contains a photo and list of current board members (some of whom will rotate off the board this year) on Page 22. Find the Course Guide at uah.edu/olli.

Use this link for nominations: tinyurl.com/olli-board-nomination-25. The deadline to nominate yourself (or others) is Feb. 21. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask staff or any of the current board members.

And finally, a quick reminder that registration for spring 2025 continues. There are plenty of courses that don't even start until March, so peruse that catalog one more time and register today.

Hope to see you soon — on the board.

Clay Williams
OLLI at UAH Program Manager

Souper Bowl Luncheon Friday, Feb. 14, noon Wilson Hall — OLLI Lounge

Calling all soup connoisseurs to join us after the February 14th bonus, "SHP Delivers Beds & Hope to Area Kids," for a **Souper Bowl Luncheon**. We'll have homemade soups to sample made by OLLI's great cooks. So, register for the bonus at tinyurl.com/souper-bowl-25, and sign up to bring your favorite soups in a crock pot. Or, just come and enjoy a wide variety of soups! If it's not a family secret, bring a recipe to share.



Course Spotlight

It is time to register for Spring 2025 courses. You can register for courses at uah.edu/olli/term-registration.



PASSION FOR PUZZLES

2/10 - 3/24 • M • 3:15 - 4:45 pm • 6 sessions • In Person • B. Darnall • \$40

Explore techniques for problem-solving with wacky words, nimble numbers, curious conundrums, and heaps of hands-on 2-D and 3-D spatial-relations puzzles (but no crosswords, Sudoku, or jigsaw puzzles). We'll laugh as we learn to combine lucid logic with happy hunches to probe perplexing patterns and search for satisfying solutions.



4TH QUARTER DECISIONS: LIFE MATTERS THAT MATTER

2/25 - 4/8 • Tu • 10:30 - Noon • 6 sessions • Live Virtual • R. Brooks • \$40

Doctors, home healthcare counselors, funeral directors, lawyers, and other experts will present necessary information on matters that matter. This course goes beyond “estate planning” to address the many different decisions required in the last quarter of life.



LOOKING FOR LIFE IN OUR SOLAR SYSTEM

3/19 - 4/9 • W • 1:15 - 2:45 pm • 4 sessions • Live Virtual • K. Rex • \$40

Is there life in our solar system other than on Earth? In this course, we will review all observations that have given us data to speculate at which solar system locations life may be found. We will also review future space missions that are both funded and in the planning stages that will help answer this question.



BREATH-CENTERED YOGA

2/13 - 3/6 • Th • 5:15 - 6:15 pm • 4 sessions • In Person • R. Frank • \$40

A yoga class suitable for beginners and experienced practitioners alike that will focus on connecting breath with movement as well as finding postures suitable for everyone's unique needs. All props are provided, but members are encouraged to bring their own yoga mat, blanket or towel. Wear comfortable clothing.

Save 20%

When you register for 4 or more term courses at once.

People of OLLI



Patricia and Clyde Lilly at Lake Louise in Canada in 2024; (from left) Patricia, Christina, Clyde, Robert, Robert's wife, Becky, and granddaughter Sophia at Greystone Golf and Country Club in Hoover in 2015; and Patricia, Christina, Sophia and Becky at Hogwarts Castle at the Wizarding World of Harry Potter, Universal Orlando, in 2023.

OLLI IS WORTH THE 100-MILE COMMUTE

When Patricia Lilly hears other OLLI members groan about having to drive from Decatur or Athens, she must sigh and say to herself, "If they only knew."

Each week Patricia drives all the way from Birmingham to attend her OLLI classes, a drive of 1 3/4 hours on a good day. Patricia is the subject of this month's *Insider* profile.

Patricia was born a Navy brat in San Diego, but moved to Virginia when she was just 8 weeks old.

"I'm the middle child and only girl of five children," said Patricia. "My parents spaced their children oddly. There were two boys born, then a break of 10 years. Then me, then a six-year break, then two more boys."

Patricia's father taught speed reading at the Pentagon and was a master chief fire control technician in the Atlantic fleet, so in her early life they bounced between Alexandria, Virginia, and Virginia Beach. Her father retired when she was 8, and her parents returned to their roots in north Alabama to farm.

"My parents ended up buying four different farms in three different school districts," said Patricia. "I think the military habit of frequent moves stayed

with them. All told, I attended five different schools. The moves played havoc with scheduling, so I ended up graduating a year early. I was not quite 17 when I went off to college."

Patricia went to Samford University in Birmingham.

"I started out with a math scholarship, but got bored with math," said Patricia. "I ended up with a double major in history and Spanish and a minor in English literature. I was the salutatorian of my class. My goal was to attend graduate school in archaeology ... but life intervened."

Patricia married her first husband at the end of her sophomore year, and their first son was born that year. Their second son was born three months after she graduated.

"I stayed home with the kids for two years, then started teaching Spanish and history at a private school," said Patricia. "After two years, I joined my dad's construction business and served as an office manager for three years.

"During that time, my husband was a staff accountant at a Birmingham company. We divorced after eight years of marriage, and I was hired by a local computer company. They trained me,

and I ended up managing their development group. I worked there for 14 years and I met my wonderful husband, Clyde Lilly, there. He was a software engineer."

Patricia started her own medical billing company with a partner, but decided after two years she didn't like being an entrepreneur. She went to work for another software company as a development manager and stayed there 20 years until retirement at the end of 2020.

Patricia spent that last year before retirement researching which OLLI group to join.

"This was COVID time, so I was reading catalogs, looking for breadth in online courses," said Patricia. "I had narrowed my choices down to UAH, Furman and Auburn. But I truly believe OLLI UAH has the strongest program around!"

"My first term as a member, I felt like I was making friends with the folks I met online. It was a lifeline for me during COVID. I attended several classes and came to just about all the bingo/trivia sessions.

(continued on the next page)

Member Services Committee

CHEER CONTINUES AT OLLI AFTER THE HOLIDAYS



Hopefully you have looked over the new catalog and have been able to sign up for some of the wonderful courses listed.

Even if you are still checking them out, please come by for all the other fun things to do. It will be really great to get together with other OLLI friends. There is always coffee available in the lounge (152D Wilson Hall), and you can

usually find someone to chat with.

Don't forget to check out the many events and bonus classes and enjoy the bountiful snacks before and after the bonuses. This is a great time to socialize and meet people.

There is also a lot of information posted in the lounge on future bonuses, classes and events, as well as information on interesting activities taking place in Huntsville. Grab a book or magazine or puzzle from the book exchange area. Feel free to return it or even add one of your own.

Remember that the photo contest deadline is April 1. There is still time to take that winning picture. Look online (tinyurl.com/olli-photo-contest-25) for more information about the contest. The topic this time is "Contrast."



Snacking and socializing in the OLLI lounge before the cranes bonus Jan. 17. (Photo by Marsha Langlois)

Check on the OLLI member interest groups for more fun ways to get involved with others, and you are always welcome to join an OLLI committee. Member Services would love some more members.

Leah Black
Member Services Committee Chair

People of OLLI

OLLI IS WORTH THE 100-MILE COMMUTE, CONT.

"After COVID subsided, I decided to start driving up to Huntsville to attend a few of my classes in person. That allowed me to meet even more members. Everyone has been so friendly, and I love spending time with my fellow lifelong learners! And now I am permanently hooked!"

Now, about that commute. It's not quite as bad as you might imagine. Patricia's brother lives on Redstone Arsenal. Patricia takes Thursday afternoon classes, spends the night with her brother, and then sticks around

Friday for the bonuses. She confesses to spending the travel time singing badly to the radio.

Patricia had two boys with her first husband and a daughter with her second. Her oldest son, Philip Gilbert, struggled with addiction problems and died 10 years ago. Her second son, Robert Gilbert, is a software engineer and is married to a nurse practitioner. They have two children, Sophia and Alex, and live in Fairhope. The grandchildren each spend a week each summer with Patricia at "Camp GaGa."

Patricia's daughter, Christina Lilly, has an undergraduate degree in art history from the College of Charleston and a Master of Fine Arts in book arts from The University of Alabama. She recently moved to Birmingham, where she is the arts education coordinator for Space One Eleven, an arts nonprofit.

Thanks, Patricia, for all you do for OLLI. And take care on those long drives.

By Glen Adams

Travel Committee

TRAVEL WITH OLLI IN THE U.S. AND ABROAD



Now that 2024 is concluded, we are starting our travel adventures for 2025.

We are continuing our planning for the rest of 2025, 2026, and over the horizon to 2027. (Yes, we are even considering a little something extra for travel yet this year. Stay tuned for developing information!)

A recap of our 2025 travels

- **On the Road: Cuisine & Culture in Acadiana Louisiana** — Jan. 13-20. This trip is over. We will update the website and the March newsletter with our travel joys and adventures.
- **Shiloh National Military Park and Corinth Battlefield Unit** — March 10-11. This trip is led by Phil Graham, who has put together a wonderful trip for American history enthusiasts. What a wonderful learning experience it will be to visit places where such difficult events in our country's history occurred! Go to a place where history was made and reflect on its impact on our country's development.
- **Signature City Pittsburgh** — Sunday, May 25, to Friday, May 30, with OLLI at UAH-planned options for extensions before and after. This trip is full. This trip will tell a great story of the rise of American manufacturing and the impact of a key industrial city.
- **Two Worlds of Peru: The Inca Highlands & the Amazon** — This trip (June 13-27) is now full. We are looking forward to hearing about all the adventures and seeing all the happy faces from the pictures.
- **Discover Costa Rica** — Aug. 30-Sept. 7. Explore the diverse rainforests, wildlife, culture and history of this small Central American country during a nine-day/eight-night adventure curated by Nanda Journeys. Visit a volcano, stay at a self-sustainable ranch, tour local farms, walk through the rainforest, meet the locals, see a Pacific beach, and more. For a detailed itinerary and trip registration information, see tinyurl.com/olli-costa-rica2025 or contact Chris



OLLI travelers on Jan. 16 at the Louisiana State Capitol in Baton Rouge. See more photos from this trip on the following two pages. (Photo from Linda McAllister and Sherry Sobul)

Stuhlinger. **Please note:** Nanda Journeys will host an informational Zoom session/webinar on Feb. 14 at 2:30 p.m. Alabama time for the Costa Rica trip. This orientation will include information about the itinerary, travel costs, trip registration and more, as well as the opportunity for attendees to ask questions. The session is open to all OLLI members. You can join us in person in 212 Wilson Hall or remotely. Please register for the Zoom session at this link: forms.gle/YRVdAGYutgwubbn96.

For 2026

- Steve Goodman is leading a wonderful **Cruise Along the Dalmatian Coast** — April 15-May 1, 2026. This trip will include Croatia (Zadar, Zagreb, Plitvice Lakes, Split, Dubrovnik), Montenegro (Kotor), Albania (Saranda, Butrint), and Greece (Corfu, Delphi, Athens). This trip is with Overseas Adventure Travel (part of Grand Circle Travel), with whom we have had great experiences previously. Contact Steve Goodman for details.

And in addition to all of these, we are looking forward to some special treats and new locations to explore. We invite any and all of you to provide input and people who would like to take a little stretch to help pull together a wonderful OLLI-UAH adventure.

Contact David Sayre, other members of the OLLI Travel Committee, or coordinators for the various trips at olli.info@uah.edu.

All who wander are not lost!

David Sayre
Travel Committee Chair

Let's talk!

Costa Rica information

All OLLI members are invited to attend by Zoom or in person (212 Wilson Hall)
Friday, Feb. 14, 2:30 p.m.

Learn about OLLI's trip, scheduled Aug. 30-Sept. 7.

How to register: Click on the link below, enter your name and email address, and indicate in-person or remote attendance. See you there!

forms.gle/YRVdAGYutgwubbn96



Travel Committee

THE FLAVORS AND SOUNDS OF LOUISIANA

Sumptuous food and music were among the attractions for OLLI members participating in “On the Road: Cuisine and Culture in Acadiana Louisiana” on Jan. 13-20.

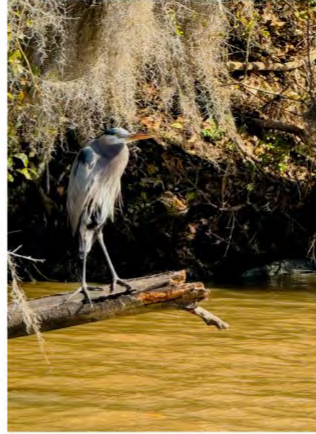


(Photos from Sherry Sobul and Linda McAllister)

Travel Committee

SAMPLING LOUISIANA HISTORY AND SUNSHINE

OLLI's tour included a visit to the state Capitol in Baton Rouge, where Gov. Jimmie Davis rode his palomino mare, Sunshine, up the steps on his second inauguration day in 1960. Davis was a singer known for the hit song "You Are My Sunshine."



(Photos from Sherry Sobul, Linda McAllister and Lyndel Brauningner)

Member Interest Groups



Beaverdam Boardwalk (top left), Tupelo Swamp with its state champion water tupelo tree (top right), Terry Trail (bottom left), and John and Marsha Langlois with their waterfall and Virginia bluebells (bottom center and right).

HIKING AND BIKING IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH

Listed below are several opportunities for you to get outside, be active, learn about the natural environment, and mingle with fellow OLLI members.

If you have not yet joined this member interest group and want to 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 join the MIG and participate in its activities.

Join the MIG: forms.gle/6M5BoaWX9Z4TLugE9

Coming MIG activities

- Sunday, Feb. 2 — **Nature walk at Beaverdam Boardwalk** (near the Huntsville airport), 2-3:30 p.m. Visit a section of one of Alabama's largest tupelo swamps.
- Saturday, Feb. 15 — **Nature walk at Tupelo Swamp Trail** (Hays Preserve), 10:30 a.m. to noon. See two state champion trees — a water tupelo and a shellbark hickory.
- Saturday, March 1 — **Hike at Terry Trail** (Chapman Mountain Nature Preserve), 10 a.m. to noon. Look for birds at the bird blind, and learn how to identify the large hardwood trees along this educational trail.

- Sunday, March 23 — **Nature walk at the Langlois farm** (Paint Rock Valley), 1-4 p.m. OLLI members John and Marsha Langlois have invited MIG members to see the Virginia bluebells in bloom at their farm near Estillfork. They also have a beautiful waterfall and stream near their house. And we'll learn about what it takes to raise chickens. Carpooling is suggested (details later).

Remaining MIG activities

- Saturday, April 5 — **Bike ride at Aldridge Creek Greenway** (south Huntsville), 10 a.m. to noon.
- Sunday, April 13 — **Nature hike at Green Mountain Nature Preserve North**, 1-3 p.m.
- Saturday, May 3 — **Hike at Wells Memorial Trail** (Monte Sano State Park), 10 am. to noon.

See you on the trail!

Chris Stuhlinger and Steve Jones
Co-Leaders, Hiking & Biking MIG

Member Interest Groups

DISCUSSING THE CIVIL WAR AND FORT SUMTER

The OLLI Reads Member Interest Group met Jan. 9 to discuss its latest selection, “The Demon of Unrest: A Saga of Hubris, Heartbreak, and Heroism at the Dawn of the Civil War” by Erik Larson. The nonfiction book follows developments between Abraham Lincoln’s election as U.S. president in late 1860 and the start of the war in April 1861. Much of the book focuses on Fort Sumter in South Carolina.



(Photos by Steve Stewart)

Member Interest Groups

ARTIST STUDIO MEMBER INTEREST GROUP

NEXT ART HISTORY PRESENTATION: AMERICAN ART FROM 1920s TO 1940s

On Friday, Feb. 28, attend an art history presentation and group discussion on American art from the 1920s to the 1940s. We will start at 1 p.m. in 152 Wilson Hall.

Politically, the 1920s were a period of isolationism to define American art outside of European influences. Early in the 20th century, Charles Demuth, Charles Sheeler, Elsie Driggs and Ralston Crawford began to work in a new style called precisionism similar to European cubism, using symbols of American modern life: urban landscapes, factories and the Machine Age.

In New York, Alfred Stieglitz opened the Intimate and American Place galleries, displaying American artists such as Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin and Georgia O'Keeffe. The Fourteenth Street School included artists like Isabel Bishop and Reginald Marsh. The Ashcan School included artists like Robert Henri, William Glackens and Arthur B. Davies.

In 1929 the stock market crashed, causing prosperity and hopefulness to end. Consequently, American art during the 1920s to 1940s was characterized by American regionalism, which focused on realistic depictions of rural life, the working class and ordinary American scenes from artists like Grant Wood, Thomas Benton and Andrew Wyeth. Many artists used their artwork to address social issues and the realities of the Great Depression in an art movement called social realism.

Edward Hopper became a prominent artist capturing the loneliness of modern life. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided funding for artists, leading to a surge in public art projects like murals and printmaking. Folk art emerged as a form of primitive American art.

Please stop by any fourth Friday of the month when the Artist Studio Member Interest Group provides an art history presentation and group discussion that are free for everyone.

Approaching Storm
Thomas Benton



Unemployment
Ben Shahn

Classic Landscape
Charles Sheeler



Cow's Skull
Georgia O'Keeffe



Nighthawks
Edward Hopper

Text and photos from Jean Krieger, leader of the Artist Studio MIG

Huntsville Then and Now

AN OLD PICKUP TRUCK IS HARD TO PART WITH



*Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
Till it's gone?*

Thank you, Joni Mitchell, for lyrics that always speak to me. Don't it always seem to go, indeed.

This latest loss hurt more than I expected. I wasn't watching a big yellow taxi take my love away and mean no disrespect to more serious losses. Of

which there are many. But a flatbed truck was taking my little red Chevrolet pickup out of the driveway for what I thought would be last rites, not repairs.

The truck is 25 years old and has been with me through them all. I've hauled everything from firewood to bicycles in its bed, including a rapid, unplanned move when it held basically everything I owned.

But I hadn't kept the truck rolling, and even my neighbor, a good shade-tree mechanic, couldn't get it started.

Somewhere, I was sure, a Chevy hit team is always looking for guys like me who mistreat classic trucks. And I could feel the ghost of my father, Howard "Take Care of Your Things" Roop, every time I passed the truck.

Seeing the little red truck on the big tow truck was also oddly like seeing the last cracker on a party platter. There was a lot of empty space because not only is my truck smaller than today's pickups; tow trucks have also changed. Instead of lifting your vehicle's front or back end and rolling it to the garage on two wheels, drivers now have giant flatbeds that tilt to the ground for pickup and delivery. Almost anything will fit on top of them once secured.

I can see another bonus of this design. The crews could freeze the bed for pickup ice hockey or use it to land emergency helicopters.

No criticism intended if you own one of the modern trucks these rigs are built to haul. Often, it's better to have size and not need it than to need size and not have it. That's why modern cellphones are as big as lunch trays, I guess.

I do wonder how these new pickups and tow trucks handle Alabama roads built 50 years ago for trucks like mine. Passing someone coming toward you at night on what was an Alabama farm road is not for the easily distracted.

The good news is I got to drive our red truck home from the garage shortly before I submitted this column. My guilt proved only partially justified. It turned out some free-range



Lee Roop's truck is 25 years old and has been with him through them all.

urban animal chewed through a hidden wire even my mechanic neighbor couldn't be expected to spot. Maybe that was a warning that I'm not feeding the local animals enough.

It also helps to know a local garage that's been around long enough that it can find and replace that wire at a price that won't threaten your vacation account. Growing up here has its advantages.

The little red truck runs great now, and I'm at least starting the engine regularly to let it run for a few minutes. A new year's resolution is to drive it for increasingly long rides whether I need to or not. It's good for the truck, and the startup exhaust might clear out a hungry animal or two from the undercarriage.

I am seriously considering one modern upgrade: a new radio that can play today's streaming channels. My phone and some earplugs could probably handle that, but the truck deserves a new commitment. I do know I don't need 122 channels. Just the one where Joni sings.

By Lee Roop

Lee Roop is a resident of Huntsville who grew up Madison County and never left. He's a graduate of UAH and a retired Huntsville Times and AL.com reporter, editor and columnist.

This Moment in History



A U.S. Navy diving crew at work on the wreck of the battleship *Maine* in 1898, seen from aft looking forward;
Capt. Charles D. Sigsbee, commander of the *Maine*.
(Images from Naval History and Heritage Command and Library of Congress)

DID YOU KNOW ...? AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT HISTORY

February: When the tail wags the dog

At 9.40 on the night of Feb. 15, 1898, the United States battleship *Maine* was riding quietly at anchor in Havana harbor when a sudden explosion, apparently caused by a mine, tore her bottom out and sank her.

The ship's crew consisted of 355 men: 26 officers, 290 enlisted sailors and 39 marines. Of these, 260 were killed by the explosion or drowned: Two officers and 252 enlisted sailors or marines died immediately, and six more died later of their wounds. (The officers' quarters were toward the vessel's stern, which is why so few of them were casualties; the enlisted quarters, however, were forward, just above where the explosion took place.)

In the morning, only twisted parts of the huge warship's superstructure could be seen protruding above the water, while small boats moved about examining the damage. The *Maine* had been showing the flag in Cuba, where the Spanish regime was resisting an armed uprising by nationalist guerrillas.

Alexander Hamilton laid out one of the earliest reasons for the United States Navy's existence in Federalist No. 11 as being "able to incline the balance of European competitions in this part of the world as our interest may dictate." President James Madison further defined the role in his annual address to Congress on Dec. 2, 1823, now known as the Monroe Doctrine. By the 1890s, America had kept that promise of enforcing noninterference.

But in 1895, the Spanish-controlled island of Cuba was engulfed by revolution that, given those two doctrines, made it increasingly difficult for us to remain neutral. When William McKinley took office as president in 1897, he sent an ultimatum to Spain demanding that it either make peace soon or he would intervene. When Spain refused, he ordered the Navy to "show the flag" by sending the *Maine* to Havana.

After her arrival, the battleship sat at her mooring for three weeks before the explosion occurred. The news of that explosion traveled fast. As soon as he could get to shore that night, her captain, Charles Sigsbee, sent a telegram to Washington that was delivered to President McKinley at 1 a.m. Sigsbee cautioned that "public opinion should be suspended until further report."

But the sensationalist newspapers owned by William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer were not about to let a story that would sell thousands of newspapers go untold! And so, the headline of Hearst's *New York Journal* on Feb. 17 read, "The Warship Maine Was Split In Two By An Enemy's Secret Infernal Machine!" With that, American jingoism exploded.

Spain, of course, said that it didn't have anything to do with this horrible accident. In fact, the Spanish theorized that the explosion had been caused by a fire in a coal bunker separated from the forward ammunition magazine by only a thin bulkhead.

(continued on the next page)

This Moment in History

DID YOU KNOW ...? AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT HISTORY, CONT.

And naturally, President McKinley sent every asset the Navy had to Havana to investigate. While some of those investigators supported Spain's conclusion, the outcome was preordained: Everything about the ship and the United States Navy was perfect; this had to be a work of treachery. (OK, maybe it was not expressed that bluntly, but we all know how the services close ranks in times of questionable behavior.)

A Naval Court of Inquiry was formed, and the possibility that they might not have come up with the "right" conclusion is the rest of this month's story.

A young assistant secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, saw this whole tragedy as an opportune time to get Congress to increase funding for the construction of more modern ships. On Feb. 18, he wrote a letter to his boss justifying his plan. Then, on Feb. 28, in an attempt to squelch any dissent, he wrote a letter to Capt. Charles O'Neil, the chief of the Navy's Ordnance Bureau, scolding him for allowing one of his top experts, Philip Alger, to voice support for Spain's theory.

Now, because he had been personally involved investigating a series of coal bunker accidents, Roosevelt knew as well as anybody that the coal bunker theory had merits. But he also knew that the Navy would never find fault with itself, and, believing war with Spain was inevitable, he decided that his best position was to do what he could to protect the Navy's public position from being clouded.

On March 28, the Navy's Court of Inquiry placed the blame for the sinking of the *Maine* on an explosive device, although they were careful to caution that there was no evidence as to who might have laid such a device. It didn't matter. On April 11, McKinley formally asked Congress for

permission to intervene, and on April 19, Congress passed a declaration of war.

In 1911, the Navy refloated the *Maine*, allowing an inspection of the hull in a way that had previously been impossible when she was submerged. Again, they stuck with the mine theory, although with a bit less certainty.

And that's the way things stood until 1976, when at the urging of Adm. Hyman Rickover, another investigation finally concurred with Spain's initial conclusion. The explosion certainly started with a fire in the coal bunkers. As a result, future battleships would be designed with separations of their magazines from other parts of the ship to insulate explosives from potential ignition sources.

As it turns out, both the British battleship *Hood* and the *Titanic* are now theorized to have sunk for similar reasons, but those are stories for another time.

The sinking of the *Maine* is a classic example of the tail wagging the dog: governments using unproven "facts" to instigate foreign adventures. The Germans used a manufactured incident to invade Poland in 1939. The Bush administration employed one when it decided to invade Iraq "to safeguard the United States against the conjoined threat of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and links to terrorist groups." Russia in Ukraine; Israel in Syria; the list is never-ending.

Maybe it's time to demand more of our governments when committing our troops to war is concerned. Perhaps *they* should be the dog, and *we the people* the tail.

By John Mason

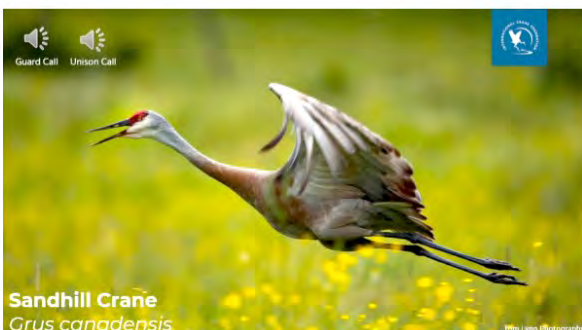


Your will is a powerful tool in planning for yourself, your loved ones, and your community. It's easier than you think to create a legacy of support for the future of OLLI.

Contact tammy.eskridge@uah.edu to learn more.

ENJOYING AND PRESERVING ALABAMA'S CRANES

Olivia Burkholz, the Alabama outreach program assistant for the International Crane Foundation, presented a bonus Jan. 17 about cranes. It included the history of Alabama's cranes, the science behind their reintroduction, continued efforts to protect cranes, and how to be a crane ambassador.



(Photos by Marsha Langlois; slides from Olivia Burkholz)

The Last Word

FREE GENEALOGY EVENT ONLINE MARCH 6-8

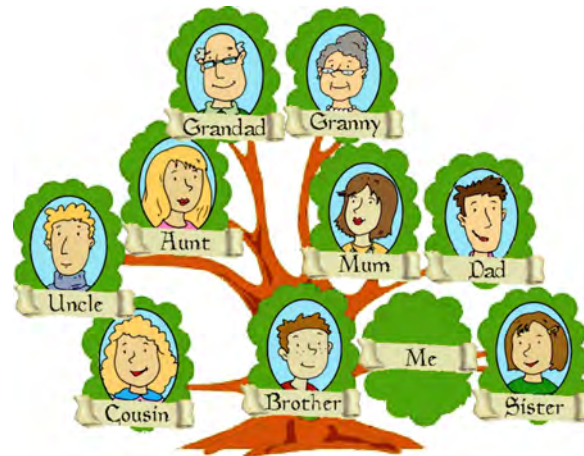
OLLI members interested in genealogy may want to register for an event early next month that is free to online participants.

RootsTech is FamilySearch's popular global online family history event, enhanced by a vibrant in-person experience in Salt Lake City on March 6-8. Potentially millions of participants will enjoy hundreds of classes, localized experiences, and interaction with presenters, exhibitors, and other virtual and in-person attendees through an e-chat feature online and in the mobile app.

The most recent OLLI intermediate genealogy class has already registered for this event. For previous genealogy students and those who will take genealogy this year, I highly recommend signing up as soon as possible, selecting your classes and your schedule. These classes are free online. Those who attend in person will be required to pay.

Go to familysearch.org/en/rootstech. The local point of contact is Cliff Lanham, who can be reached through olli.info@uah.edu.

By **Cliff Lanham**



Learn about your family tree.
(clipart-library.com)



A NEW YEAR TOGETHER

OLLI members got together for a "new year's resolution party" on Jan. 2 at The Nook on Bob Wallace Avenue Southwest. (Photos by Jill Stewart)