

# The OLLI Insider

News for OLLI members at The University of Alabama in Huntsville

January 2025



## HOLIDAYS, SHAKESPEARE AND CREATURE TEACHERS



*Dancing and conversing at the OLLI holiday party (two photos); Danye Drake (center), who teaches Shakespeare for OLLI, after her performance in Romeo and Juliet; the snake Cornbread, a creature teacher; Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge's cranes, which you can learn about and see at two OLLI events.*

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# From the Editor

## YOU KNOW WHAT? YOU COULD GOOGLE IT



For months or years, I chose “ambient water” instead of “iced water” to go with my meals in Charger Café. I didn’t know what “ambient” meant, but it sounded healthier. “Ambient” was not a word Mama used. She also did not put a “d” in “ice water.”

Recently I noticed “room temp” in fine print below “ambient” in the label on the water dispenser. Maybe it had been there all along and I had missed it (perhaps because I was emotionally distracted by the “out of order” sign on the ice cream machine).

That subtitle finally motivated me to look up “ambient.” Sure enough, it means “relating to the immediate surroundings of something: *the liquid is stored at below ambient temperature.*”

It’s no wonder that the ambient water, after I poured it over ice, tasted exactly like the ice water.

It could have been worse. TV’s Deputy Barney Fife (Don Knotts) dined at a Raleigh restaurant with Sheriff Andy Taylor (Andy Griffith). Andy ordered steak, baked potato and green beans. Barney pointed to a couple of French items on the menu: escargot and cervelles au beurre noir. Barney felt really sophisticated until the waiter murmured that he had ordered snails and brains.

I should have taken the advice in *Watch Your Language*, Theodore Bernstein’s witty and practical 1958 book about writing and editing. Bernstein was an editor of *The New York Times*. The book is a collection of comments from *Winners & Sinners* — an occasional newsletter that pointed out what *The Times* had done well and could have done better.

“You Could Look It Up” was a regular section in *Winners & Sinners*. Back then, this meant using a dictionary, a style book, an encyclopedia or some other reference work, or perhaps making a phone call. Today’s equivalent would be “You Could Google It.” Or you could ask artificial intelligence to Google it for you.

These days, there is less excuse than ever for ignorance. If we want to know something, we can usually find it online in a few seconds. If we only *think* we know something, it would be smart to search the internet until we know for sure.

Ice(d) water is better than ambient water because it is already cold. Who knew?

**Inside The Insider:** Welcome to our newest *Insider* columnist, Lee Roop — a writer familiar to readers of AL.com and *The Huntsville Times*. Lee grew up in Madison County, retired after 50 years as a journalist, and joined OLLI. He writes this month about Huntsville’s past and emerging future.



The difference between Charger Café’s iced water and ambient water is not as significant as it might seem. (Photo by Steve Stewart)

Spring course registration is underway, and Clay Williams invites us to learn more about courses during open house on Jan. 10. As he notes, now is a great time to invite newcomers to OLLI.

Writing for the Curriculum Committee, Richard Brooks encourages you to delve into new subjects as a student and to suggest future courses.

In high school, Danye Drake became fascinated with a playwright from four centuries ago who “not only still spoke to the human condition today, but also did so with such wonderful eloquence.” Now she teaches Shakespeare for OLLI. Glen Adams profiles her in this edition.

OLLI board elections are coming up. Jill Stewart encourages you to offer your services or nominate someone else.

Betty Koval and Chris Stuhlinger write about coming bonuses and events. You can listen to a bonus lecture about cranes and then see them in abundance at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. In a separate article, Chris gives the spring hiking and biking schedule.

Nancy Darnall sings the praises of getaway travel and gives multiple tips for creating itineraries and saving money. David Sayre summarizes OLLI group travel planned this year and in 2026.

Marilynn Szecholda and Leah Black remind us of the opportunities to eat and socialize that accompany many OLLI activities, as well as the annual photo contest.

In his history column, John Mason discusses the United States’ role in the world, describing President Theodore Roosevelt’s peacemaking between Japan and Russia. In his president’s column, John quotes poetry in wishing us all a happy new year. Same to you, John — and same to all of you.

**Steve Stewart**  
Editor, *The OLLI Insider*

# From the President

## A NEW YEAR'S HOPE



I was searching for a topic to start the new year off in the right direction. Not immediately finding something suitably inspiring, I instead sought a holiday poem that I could parody a la “Weird Al” Yankovic.

In so doing, I found this: a poem published in 1910 titled “The Year” by American author and poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

Far better than anything I could say, this short, rhythmical poem sums up everything we experience with the passing of each year, and it rolls off the tongue when recited. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do!

### “The Year” by Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1910)

What can be said in New Year rhymes,  
That’s not been said a thousand times?  
The new years come, the old years go,  
We know we dream, we dream we know.  
We rise up laughing with the light,  
We lie down weeping with the night.  
We hug the world until it stings,  
We curse it then and sigh for wings.  
We live, we love, we woo, we wed,  
We wreath our brides, we sheet our dead.  
We laugh, we weep, we hope, we fear,  
And that’s the burden of the year.

And if you get the opportunity, you might also enjoy another of her works, “New Year: A Dialogue” written in 1909. It’s a fantastic dialogue between “Mortal” and “The New Year,” in which the latter knocks on the door with offers of good cheer, hope, success, health and love that ultimately lure the reluctant and downcast mortal in.



Poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox  
(Photo from Library of Congress and picryl.com)

It’s a great way to revisit how the new year often revives us, even though it is just another day on the calendar.

So whether it be through poetry or art or music or literature or just being surrounded by good friends, let’s all celebrate our life’s revival with the coming of a New Year. May your hopes and dreams abound, and may we all return in the spring filled with joy. Happy New Year!

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

**John Mason**  
**President, OLLI at UAH Board of Directors**



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](mailto:tammy.eskridge@uah.edu) to learn more.

# Executive Committee

## BOARD ELECTIONS: WE HAVE A SEAT FOR YOU



*Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.*

—John F. Kennedy

We are lifelong learners in a learning community that is still thriving after more than 30 years in existence. But we should always remember that the volunteer leaders of that community changed many times in those three decades.

OLLI continues to thrive because its members — in their season — valued their experiences here and stepped up to “put some skin in the game” to help lead its program and activities. Now it is your turn.

Just as surely as the new year follows the old one, the election cycle for *your* OLLI Board of Directors starts again this month. And with it comes *your* opportunity to consider lending your time and talents to serve an organization that enriches all our lives. So please read on to learn how this works.

OLLI is governed by a volunteer board, elected by the full membership. Board members are elected for a three-year term and may serve up to two consecutive terms, but then they must rotate off. This means that approximately one-third of our board membership changes every election cycle.

That cycle started recently with the formation of a Nominating Committee. Our Nominating Committee is co-chaired by the past president of OLLI and a representative of our host UAH department — the Louis Salmon Library. In addition, there are three other OLLI volunteer representatives, including at least one current board member and one member at large.

Beginning this month, we will seek and encourage people in our membership who have an interest in serving OLLI as board members. Nomination forms will be provided online. Individuals nominate themselves, or others may nominate an individual with the nominee’s permission. The committee will review and ensure that the candidates meet the requirements for board candidacy — primarily being an OLLI member for at least one year.

A ballot with all the candidates will be made available on the website for a three-week voting period in March. Following the election, winners will be contacted and invited to the April board meeting to meet the existing board members. They will be formally inducted at the May meeting to begin their three-year commitment.

Also at that meeting, the newly seated board will have their first important responsibility — electing the members of the



President John F. Kennedy said that leadership is necessary for learning and that everyone can contribute. (Computer-generated watercolor via Wikimedia Commons)

Executive Board. This includes a president, vice president of curriculum, vice president of administration and finance, secretary, and treasurer of the organization.

What do we expect of our board members? First, that you will plan to honor the three-year commitment to serve. Board membership demands real participation, a willingness to take on direct leadership in an area when it is needed. Therefore, we ask that they choose two of our standing committees to serve most actively, i.e., curriculum, social, events, travel, public relations, fund development, member services, etc. Committees are the real workhorses that keep OLLI vibrant and flourishing. (And even for those who are not yet ready to consider board membership, remember we still need you to volunteer on any of our standing committees!)

But why, you might ask, is this important to you? Because *you* are our reason for existence. And when you volunteer, your ideas and actions infuse new life and direction into your program. And all that’s needed for that to happen is for you to volunteer. And JFK sums it up well: “Every person can make a difference, *and* every person should try.”

Please feel free to ask any board member about any details or questions you may have. We’re saving you a chair.

**Jill Stewart**  
**Immediate Past President**  
**OLLI at UAH Board of Directors**

# Events Committee



January and February events: Bird spotting, DNA extraction, building bunk beds for children, Alabama Center for the Arts.

## A NEW SEMESTER OF EVENTS AND TOURS



Happy new year, and welcome to a new semester of events and tours!

Listed below are the events and tours scheduled for January and February, as well as a reminder of the events coming up later in the semester. Mark your calendars and make plans to participate.

Soon we'll start gathering ideas for summer events and tours. We're still looking for one or two additional members for the Events Committee. Committee members come up with ideas for events, contact venues to arrange visits, and attend their events to assist with logistics. This is a great opportunity for you to help provide meaningful and interesting learning activities for fellow OLLI members. Please consider helping out, and contact me or OLLI staff at [OLLI.info@uah.edu](mailto:OLLI.info@uah.edu).

### Events for January, February and beyond

- Friday, Jan. 31 — **Visitor center and bird spotting** (Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, Decatur), 1:30-3:30 p.m. Explore the recently renovated refuge visitor center, then visit the nearby boardwalks, blinds and observation building to spot sandhill cranes, endangered whooping cranes, Canada geese, ducks and numerous other waterfowl species. The refuge attracts thousands of migrating and wintering waterfowl each winter.
- Friday, Feb. 7 — **HudsonAlpha DNA extraction class** (Huntsville), 10:30 a.m. to noon — Join this hands-on class at the world-class HudsonAlpha research facility to learn about DNA and how to extract DNA from a strawberry. All materials will be provided. Sign up early; we expect this class to fill up quickly!

*(continued on the next page)*

# Events Committee

## A NEW SEMESTER OF EVENTS AND TOURS, CONT.

- 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 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 offered at ACA, including music, studio arts, computer graphics, multimedia production and theater arts.
- Saturday, March 22 — **Historic Mooresville walking tour**, 9-10:30 a.m.
- Friday, March 28 — **Martin Stamping and Stove Factory (aka The Stovehouse) tour** (Huntsville), 2-3 p.m.
- Friday, April 4 — **UAH Beekeeping Club apiary visit** (Huntsville), 2-4 p.m.
- Saturday, April 12 — **UAH sports: lacrosse, baseball, softball** (UAH campus), baseball to be determined, softball at 1 p.m., men's lacrosse to be determined.
- Friday, April 25 — **Indian Mound Museum tour** (Florence) 1:30-3 p.m.

*Chris Stuhlinger*  
**Events Committee Chair**

## Member Interest Groups

### HICKORY COVE NATURE HIKE, NOV. 23



(Photos by Chris Stuhlinger)

# Curriculum Committee

## LONGER LIFE BEGINS IN THE CLASSROOM



According to surveys, learning slows the pace of biological aging and delays the onset of age-related diseases. Staying healthy applies not only to formal education but also to continuing education throughout life.

The longest continuous survey on human happiness (Harvard's Study of Adult Development) adds that positive relationships are another major contributor to health and longevity. These include family and friends, as well as fellowship in programs like OLLI.

*Learning and fellowship* are the core of what OLLI offers!

Invigorating, challenging education is the task assigned to the Curriculum Committee. It is one of a number of committees we have working hard to enhance the OLLI experience. The Curriculum Committee begins long before a catalog of new classes is presented to OLLI members. Months in advance, creative experts on many topics are recruited to present inspiring and challenging courses.

As each of you begins perusing the spring catalog of courses, I challenge you to look beyond your preferred topics. Include new and exciting topics for your planned courses. You will not only find new areas of understanding, but you will also develop new relationships in class.



Learning slows biological aging and staves off disease. You can take OLLI courses both to learn and to develop relationships — which also contribute to long life. (Illustration by Susan Lucille Davis)

Additionally, share with members of the Curriculum Committee when you hear a speaker or a topic presented in other venues that would be meaningful to share with the OLLI community. Your suggestions will be passed to curriculum discipline chairs, who will invite the recommended speaker for a coffee interview to explore incorporating their expertise in an upcoming class.

Remember to invite friends to join you in this journey of exploration and learning with life-affirming fellowship.

**Richard Brooks**  
for the Curriculum Committee

## Coming Bonuses

### BONUSES TO KICK OFF ANOTHER TERM



Hey, my OLLI friends!

Once again, we are beginning a New Year and a new term. I cannot believe how fast this happens. I just wanted to remind you of the two bonuses for January. Mark your calendars.

- On Jan. 17, we will have an extra, unplanned bonus about **saving the cranes** by Olivia Burkholz of the International Crane Foundation. (Festival of the Cranes 2025 will be held in Decatur on Jan. 10-12.)
- On Jan. 31, Scott Shaw will tell us about the **north Alabama caves**. I am looking forward to exploring from my seat the many caves of north Alabama. I recently met a man and his wife who rappel into these caves. I had such an interesting conversation with them.

See you in class and at the bonuses!

**Betty Koval**  
Bonus Coordinator



The bonus topic on Jan. 17 will be saving the cranes, and the Events Committee will sponsor a visit Jan. 31 to Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. Edward Bernstein shot this photo at the refuge during an OLLI tour on Feb. 4, 2022. It shows a white whooping crane (rare and endangered) among gray sandhill cranes.

## WELCOME BACK TO SPRING!



Happy new year! I hope everyone enjoyed their holiday season and is ready to start a new year and semester with OLLI.

Registration for spring 2025 is underway, and many courses are already filling up. Don't hesitate to sign up now. Receive a 20% discount when you sign up for four or more courses.

Here is your chance to register again for traditional and popular courses such as Beer Class, Elder Law, Tai Chi, and Intro to Bollywood. We also have several new offerings, such as Petticoat Power, Inside the Alabama State House, Mary Queen of Scots, The Poetry and Prose of World War I, Jesus the Philosopher, Einstein's Special and General Relativities, and a whole lot more.

The best way to get the complete scoop on the upcoming spring semester is to attend our open house on Friday, Jan. 10, in Wilson Hall from 10 a.m. to noon. Meet instructors, learn about member interest groups (MIGs) and travel opportunities, and register for various courses and events. Pick up a 2024-25 parking permit if you did not get one in the fall. Plus, enjoy delicious treats and catch back up with your OLLI family and friends.

We have missed everyone over the break, so we hope to see you there. Classes on campus start the week of Jan. 27.

Another opportunity I want to highlight is Google Classroom training on Friday, Jan. 24, at 10:15 a.m. in 152 Wilson Hall. Learn how this free application allows the sharing of information and enhances the classroom experience. This session will be beneficial for instructors and members alike.

With spring registration underway, this is the perfect time to spread the news about OLLI. The beginning of the semester is the best time to join, as new members can take advantage of all the new offerings in courses, events, bonuses and travel opportunities. Feel free to come by our



Read the spring Course Guide to learn about courses, member interest groups, events, bonuses and other opportunities. You can find it at [uah.edu/olli](http://uah.edu/olli); paper copies are available on the first floor of Wilson Hall.

offices in Wilson Hall to pick up some catalogs to give to neighbors and friends.

A reminder: OLLI offices and UAH will be closed Monday, Jan. 20, in observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

**Clay Williams**  
**OLLI at UAH Program Manager**

## NO MORE NEARPEER

OLLI at UAH has decided to end its partnership with Nearpeer, a community engagement application that we began using earlier this year. The application simply did not work as well as we hoped and was too expensive for us to continue. We were excited to begin offering a tool that would better help our members engage with one another and will remain on the lookout for other measures that help build our OLLI community. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the OLLI office.

**By Clay Williams**



# Course Spotlight

It is time to register for Spring 2025 courses. You can register for courses at [uah.edu/olli/term-registration](http://uah.edu/olli/term-registration).



## THINKING PHILOSOPHICALLY TODAY: WHY, HOW, AND WHAT?

1/27 - 2/17 • M • 1:15 - 2:45 pm • 4 sessions • In Person • R. Goebel • \$40

Thinking about thinking philosophically today helps us to refine our self-awareness, knowledge acquisition, and moral values, giving us hope, self-confidence, and meaning. Through a review of important philosophers, literary texts, and musical examples, this course will examine pertinent questions relevant to our daily lives. No prior familiarity with the subject matter is expected.



## GENTLE, MINDFUL YOGA

1/28 - 3/4 • Tu • 8:30 - 9:30 am • 6 sessions • In Person • P. Tejes • \$40

Learn yoga poses and gentle movements to promote healthy aging in the physical body restoring flexibility, balance, and joint mobility. Yoga breathwork and meditation techniques will support relaxation and improve mental focus. Please wear comfortable clothing that will not restrict movements. Please bring your own yoga mat or towel.



## HISTORY OF CRYPTOLOGY

1/28 - 3/25 • Tu • 1:15 - 2:45 pm • 8 sessions • In Person • S. Witt • \$40

This course examines the spectacular ingenuity of cryptographers in a historical context that began in Mesopotamia 5,000 years ago and continues to the present day. Students will learn to make and break codes and ciphers as we examine cryptography's evolution from the scribes of Mesopotamia, through Egyptian, Greek and Roman cultures, and through the Black Chambers of the Renaissance and major wars to its ubiquitous status in our everyday lives today.



## BASIC SPANISH CONVERSATION

1/30 - 3/27 • Th • 10:30 am - Noon • 8 sessions • In Person • Y. Nuckels • \$40

Looking for ways to boost your Spanish conversation? Learn words, phrases, sentences and grammar that will improve your ability. Course includes a review of material such as numbers and names of weeks and months.

**Save 20%**

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

# Huntsville Then and Now

## FAVORITE TRADITIONS AND NEW DISCOVERIES



Happy holidays to you and yours. I'm so glad to be here marking another season of food, family and friends and celebrating our favorite traditions and new discoveries. In Huntsville, we're lucky to have a lot of both.

We love the season's lights and parties and hosted our own party a few days ago with a warm fire at the center. That fire was made

possible by several Huntsville kinds of things: modern and traditional, movable and shiny. It wasn't a rocket this time but a round metal firepit burning wood gathered, dried and split by a family that's been doing that in the same place for decades.

When writing this, I was already thinking about the new year's opportunities — but that was getting ahead of myself, an ongoing challenge. I needed to focus on where I hid my wife's Christmas present.

Christmas downtown was especially exciting this year. I hope you haven't missed the vintage traditions — shall we call them vintage? — like the Tinsel Trail of decorated trees in Big Spring Park. There were some creative trees in that forest.

Join me in getting excited about downtown Huntsville's renaissance with new restaurants and fun bars. Then drive by the massive new apartment complexes going up nearby. Those apartments mean the restaurants have a better chance of survival — if the food is good. But note to self: Make Valentine's 2026 dinner reservation sooner than later.

I am not an official Huntsville native but the next best thing. Born in the Tennessee mountains in 1953, I moved to the Rocket City when I was 3 years old and my father got a job at Redstone Arsenal.

The Five Points area where we lived first is changing faster than an online influencer, and each decade brings something special. One example is more wine in one store than we had in a dozen green-front state liquor stores back then. It's true. The state ran the liquor stores, they were painted green, and you stood in line to buy your favorite beverage



It's a new year in the Rocket City.  
(Art from pixabay.com)

from men behind a counter. It was ridiculous in so many ways, but the people-watching was excellent. I always left wishing I could go to whatever parties they were going to. And if they were just going home — wow, what a Friday night.

It's better now. We have more of the restaurants we always wanted — Purveyor, Domaine South, Baker & Able, etc. — and we have outdoor tables to enjoy the passing, purple-cupped parade. Outdoor tables were banned for decades on the premise that drinking in public was bad, period. Today's purple cups allow you (now) to carry a glass of wine from place to place within a certain designated downtown area. Pro tip: Don't try drinking behind the wheel.

The hundreds of new people in those apartments will help fill the square for future holidays. I'm not complaining, just laughing at life in growing cities. Things get better and more challenging simultaneously and rarely the way we imagined.

That's pretty great.

**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.*

# People of OLLI



Danye Drake; family members Roger, Cole, Reed and Niki Hunkapillar, and Shannon and James Drake; Danye with friends Terry and Carol Twyman after Danye's performance as the nurse in Huntsville Ballet Company's *Romeo and Juliet*.

## DANNYE DRAKE SHARES SHAKESPEARE'S ELOQUENCE AND RELEVANCE WITH OLLI

If OLLI members know that “Out, out damned spot” is not a line from a detergent commercial, but instead a line from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, they either have memories that reach back to high school or, more likely, took Danye Drake’s class on *Macbeth* last semester.

Danye has spent her OLLI career teaching about the Bard. She is this month’s *Insider* profile.

But first let’s get her name out of the way.

“My parents named me after my mother and my great-grandfather, Daniel Johnson,” said Danye. “They decided not to go with the feminine Danielle because a current movie star had that name. Instead, they gave me the name Mary Dannelle, a name I never really liked. I have been called Danye my entire life, but I sign checks and legal documents ‘Mary.’ It can be very confusing.”

Danye was born in the later years of World War II to Walter and Mary Carolyn James. Her father was an Air Force captain and pilot. She spent her early years in Memphis until her father left the Air Force and went to seminary to become a minister. After graduation, he began a career that took him from

church to church in Tennessee and Alabama.

“My mother, a trained classical pianist, became the perpetual church organist and choir director while also teaching piano,” recalled Danye. “I was always the new kid in town. Being the preacher’s kid didn’t help matters.”

When Danye graduated from high school in Stevenson, Alabama, her family moved to Tampa, Florida. She attended Bethel College in Tennessee. During her sophomore year, her family was living in Livingston, Tennessee. When she graduated, they had moved to Huntsville, where her parents lived the rest of their lives.

Danye worked her way through college.

“During my college years, I worked summers as a waitress,” said Danye. “During each school year, I worked in the college cafeteria. These jobs taught me much about human nature. Not all of it was good, but this chapter in my life served as a valuable learning experience — I always tip the wait staff.

“As I prepared to enter college, it was made clear to me that female employment was primarily limited to certain fields: secretary, librarian, nurse or

teacher. I didn’t like office work and was squeamish about blood. Although I loved libraries, I decided upon teaching because I wanted to work with young people. Turns out, I chose a career I came to love.”

So, Danye began a 30-year career teaching English in the Huntsville school system.

A month before she started her career, she married Tom Drake, also a preacher’s kid. Tom also began a teaching career here and eventually became a principal, serving several middle and high schools.

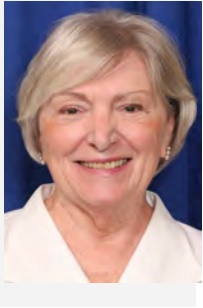
They had a daughter, Nicole, and a son, James.

Growing up, Danye had dreamed of being a dancer, but there was never the money nor the opportunity for lessons. When Nicole expressed an interest, Danye immediately enrolled her in the Huntsville Ballet School. Nicole went on to earn a fine arts degree in dance and has been the director of the dance program for the Huntsville City Schools Fine Arts Magnet Program for 32 years. She and her husband, Roger Hunkapillar, have two sons, Cole and Reed.

*(continued on the next page)*

# Social Committee

## OPEN HOUSE, SOUPER BOWL ARE COMING UP



OLLI's fall term ended with a special event, the holiday party. Members enjoyed a delicious banquet-style dinner, dancing to DJ Ted Cannon's music and meeting friends. It was a great time, with lots of new members in attendance. Thanks to everyone for their support of this fun event.

Open house will be here before you know it. Jan. 10 marks the day to come and meet the teachers and learn about spring term classes. Join us from 10 to noon, and stop in the lounge (152D Wilson Hall) to sample an array of treats provided by the Social Committee.

Looking ahead to February, the Souper Bowl will return. Members sign up to bring crockpots filled with favorite soups. Check the eNews for date and time.

Also look for the return of Early Bird breakfasts on the morning with the most members attending classes. Check your eNews for details.

**Marilynn Szecholda**  
Social Committee Chair

Dec. 3, 2024, holiday party; the OLLI lounge during fall open house on Aug. 16, 2024.  
(Photos by Steve Stewart and Patricia Haag)



## People of OLLI

### DANNYE DRAKE SHARES SHAKESPEARE'S ELOQUENCE AND RELEVANCE WITH OLLI, CONT.

Son James and wife Shannon also live in Huntsville, where he is the engineering manager for Hanwha Cimarron and a cattle farmer.

Theater has been an important part of DANNYE'S life. She has served on the board of Huntsville Ballet for many years and was its props master for over 30 years. She has also performed with Fantasy Playhouse and Theatre Huntsville. She has even performed character parts in two Huntsville Ballet Company productions.

And let's not forget her love of Shakespeare.

"When we read *Julius Caesar* in high school, I fell in love with Shakespeare," said DANNYE. "I reveled in the beauty of his language and marveled at the humanity and variety of his characters.

I was fascinated by the way a man who wrote over 400 years ago not only still spoke to the human condition today, but also did so with such wonderful eloquence."

2001 brought DANNYE to a crossroads.

"My father had died, my sister lived in another state, and my mother was ill," said DANNYE. "Because having to be a full-time caretaker for my mom left no time for teaching, I retired. After my mother's death in 2003, I found myself in a strange place. I had lost both parents; I was no longer employed; my children had left the nest; and my 38-year marriage had just ended. Having lost everything by which I had defined myself, I began to look for ways to rebuild my life."

That is when DANNYE discovered OLLI.

"I took my first class and discovered an exciting world of learning and activities, as well as terrific and interesting people," said DANNYE. "I have been part of OLLI ever since. I was recently elected to the OLLI board, but I became an instructor by chance many years ago. I was taking a course in Shakespeare, and midway through, the instructor became ill. She asked me to finish the classes. After that I was asked to teach a class of my own. The rest is — well — mostly Shakespeare!"

DANNYE will be teaching *Othello* during the spring semester.

Thanks, DANNYE, for all you do for OLLI.

**By Glen Adams**

# Travel Committee

## ON THE ROAD, IN THE AIR — 2025 AND LATER



Now that 2024 is concluded and we have celebrated all of the great things of that year, it is time to turn our eyes to the next adventures we need to pursue.

We are continuing our planning for the rest of 2025, 2026, and over the horizon to 2027.

### A recap for 2025

- **On the Road: Cuisine & Culture in Acadiana Louisiana** — Jan. 13-20. Registration for this trip has closed. Any questions, please contact Claudia Pols.
- **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 pre- and post-extensions. This trip is full. All issues for this trip have been resolved. This trip will tell a great story of the rise of American manufacturing and the impact of a key industrial city. Find out what makes it "America's Most Livable City." See details at [tinyurl.com/olli-pittsburgh2025](https://tinyurl.com/olli-pittsburgh2025). Please contact Michelle Lavery or David Sayre for more information.
- **Two Worlds of Peru: The Inca Highlands & the Amazon** — This trip (June 13-27) is now full. We are looking forward to hearing 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](https://tinyurl.com/olli-costa-rica2025) or contact Chris Stuhlinger.



Costa Rica in August and September is one of OLLI's travel opportunities for this year.

### For 2026

- Steve Goodman has agreed to lead a wonderful **Cruise Along the Dalmatian Coast** — April 15-May 1, 2026 (note change in start date). 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](mailto:olli.info@uah.edu).

All who wander are not lost!

**David Sayre**  
*Travel Committee Chair*

# Member Interest Groups



February nature walks will be held at Beaverdam Boardwalk (top, shown during a previous OLLI hike) and Tupelo Swamp Trail. (Photos from Chris Stuhlinger)

## JOIN US FOR SPRING SEMESTER MIG ACTIVITIES

The new year brings us a new semester and a new list of hiking and biking opportunities! Join us for a hike, a nature walk or a bike ride, and enjoy the great outdoors with your fellow MIG and OLLI members.

Some of our planned activities are repeats from several years ago. They give our new members, and those of you who could not participate before, a chance to experience these trails.

For a somewhat different kind of MIG activity, we are grateful to Marsha and John Langlois for inviting us to their Paint Rock Valley farm in March. See details below.

If you have not yet joined this MIG 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 MIG activities.

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

### Recaps of recent event

**Hickory Cove Nature Preserve**, Nov. 23 — Our group enjoyed a beautiful morning hike on the Legacy Loop Trail at Hickory Cove.

### MIG activities for February and beyond

- Sunday, Feb. 2, 2-3:30 p.m. — **Nature walk at Beaverdam Boardwalk** (near the Huntsville airport), Visit a section of one of Alabama's largest tupelo swamps.

- Saturday, Feb. 15, 10:30 a.m.-noon — **Nature walk at Tupelo Swamp Trail** (Hays Preserve). See two state champion trees: a water tupelo and a shellbark hickory.
- Saturday, March 1, 10 a.m.-noon — **Hike at Terry Trail** (Chapman Mountain Nature Preserve). Look for birds at the bird blind, and learn how to identify the large hardwood trees along this educational trail.
- Sunday, March 23, 1-4 p.m. — **Nature walk at the Langlois farm** (Paint Rock River Valley). 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.
- Saturday, April 5, 10 a.m.-noon — **Bike ride at Aldridge Creek Greenway** (south Huntsville). Ride to Ditto Landing.
- Sunday, April 13, 1-3 p.m. — **Hike at Green Mountain Nature Preserve North**. Visit the "Halloween Forest" to see a grove of uncommon smoketrees.
- Saturday, May 3, 10 a.m.-noon — **Hike at Wells Memorial Trail** (Monte Sano State Park). See the towering hardwood trees growing in this cove forest.

See you on the trail!

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

# This Moment in History

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

**January: "Peace is generally a good in itself, but it is never the highest good unless it comes as the handmaid of righteousness"**

This month's article has to do with two countries' desires for global domination (can you guess which countries?). But what gives it appeal for this column is how a third country, then considered a backwoods nation-state, stepped in to put a stop to it. At least for a time — a relatively short time.

So here are the players.

By the early 17th century, Russia had expanded eastward to gain control over all of Siberia, but its attempts to move southward were consistently blocked by China. Russia had made as many inroads in Western Europe and against Turkey during the 18th century as she could, but was unable to press her interests in East Asia. Realizing the need for outlets to the sea, she ultimately resorted to force to get them.

By the 1850s, Russian towns and settlements were appearing along the left bank of the Amur River, a 1,100-mile natural border between Russia and China. The Chinese government made repeated protests but, because of its ongoing conflicts with Great Britain and France and its own internal turmoils, was unable to resist Russian pressure. Finally, in 1858, China gave Russia all the territory north of the Amur, together with the maritime region east from the mouth of the Amur to the boundary of Korea, including the site where Vladivostok was soon to be founded.

But now, Russian expansionist policy began setting off warning bells in Europe, leading to Great Britain's thwarting a Russian attempt to establish a naval base on the island of Tsushima, lying between Korea and Japan, in 1861. For the next 30 years, Russia was content to consolidate its gains.

The other player, Japan, saw its transformation from an isolationist feudal state into a vigorous modern power



"Russo-Japanese War" by Toyohara Chikanobu; President Theodore Roosevelt at his desk in 1906; King Haakon and former President Roosevelt in Christiania, Norway, in a royal carriage in 1910. (Images from Smithsonian Institution [Robert O. Muller Collection], Wikimedia Commons and picryl.com)

begin in 1868 with the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate and the restoration of the Meiji emperor. Within a quarter of a century, Japan was ready to assert itself against China, which had entered the latter half of the 19th century fighting a losing battle against European encroachment and weakened by internal corruption.

Japan's first move into Korea, a state over which China had long claimed suzerainty, ultimately led to war between the two in 1894. This display of Japanese power and its decisive victory over China threatened to close the door on Russia in East Asia, and so made conflict between Russia and Japan inevitable.

After 10 years of diplomatic wrangling and shows of force, that war finally broke out on the night of Feb. 8-9, 1904, when, without a declaration of

war (hmmm — a burgeoning tenet of foreign policy?), the main Japanese fleet, under the command of Adm. Togo Heihachiro, took the Russian squadron at Port Arthur by surprise, inflicting serious losses and imposing a blockade on the harbor.

Through the Battle of Mukden in February 1905, both sides waged a bloody conflict, leaving Japan exhausted financially and fearing a long, drawn-out war of attrition. The Japanese hoped that the unrest in Russia would compel its government to discuss terms, and, after Japan's stunning naval victory at Tsushima, those hopes proved justified.

And that brings us to the rest of the story.

*(continued on the next page)*

# Member Services Committee

## CHEER CONTINUES AT OLLI AFTER THE HOLIDAYS



Hopefully, the holiday season has been busy and joyful for all of you. Now it is time to think of getting back to all the fun and learning at OLLI.

Be sure to check out the new catalog with all the information about courses and activities. Remember that OLLI has an open house on Jan. 10 where you can meet the instructors, check on the member interest groups, sign up for courses, and enjoy yummy snacks, too.

You can get information at open house about the Friday bonus events, too. These are one of the extra perks of being an OLLI member. You get to enjoy hearty snacks before each bonus, as well as after, and can spend time chatting with other OLLI members.

The OLLI lounge is open most days, with coffee and fixings available. There also are books and puzzles for sharing. Feel free to take one or bring one to share. Please let us know if you have suggestions to make things even better.



Enjoy food and friendships in the OLLI lounge, shown here on Nov. 15 before a bonus presentation. The lounge is 152D Wilson Hall. (Photo by Steve Stewart)

Don't forget the OLLI photo contest. You can enter photos at any time until the deadline on April 1. Please see the information at [tinyurl.com/olli-photo-contest-25](http://tinyurl.com/olli-photo-contest-25).

**Leah Black**  
Member Services Committee Chair

## This Moment in History

### DID YOU KNOW ...?, CONT.

The Japanese, wishing to maintain their advantage, asked U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt to help negotiate peace. Japan's actions, though, had given her the reputation of being a "yellow danger" to Americans. Therefore, before agreeing to negotiate, Roosevelt, who feared Japan sought to amass too much power, stipulated that Japan promise not to invade China or threaten U.S. interests in Asia. The Japanese consented, and in the fall of 1905, Russia and Japan met for negotiations in the USA.

Those talks, skillfully led by Roosevelt, were successful, and one year later, he became the first head of state to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

The decision to award the peace prize to Roosevelt was controversial because of his seizing control of the Philippines and using military power to secure U.S. control over Cuba and Panama. The Nobel Committee's advisers critically referred to Roosevelt as an imperialist before he received the peace prize, and *The New York*

*Times* even called him "the most war-like citizen of these United States." Swedish newspapers wrote that Alfred Nobel was turning over in his grave, accusing the committee of selecting Roosevelt to help Norway gain the USA as a powerful ally. As the committee chairman was also Norway's minister of foreign affairs, that may well have been true.

Roosevelt was unable to go to Norway to accept his Nobel Peace Prize in 1906. He wouldn't actually receive it until 1910, when, after leaving the presidency and traveling through the rest of Europe and Africa, he finally reached Oslo to present his Nobel Lecture.

In his 1992 biography of Roosevelt, *A Life*, Nathan Miller wrote this about the effect peace mediations had made on the president: "He [Roosevelt] not only won the Nobel Peace Prize but understood that the United States could neither shield itself against involvement in global affairs, nor police the world alone."

What should we have learned from this?

Japan's desire for power led directly to America's intervention in World War II. The costs they incurred as a result have affected them to this day.

Russia, on the other hand, continues to intimidate the countries of the world in a never-ending search for dominance facilitated by nuclear saber-rattling.

And America? Well, we are about to begin the descent into another period of global isolationism that Roosevelt understood could not be, but that we never seem to understand. It would seem we could use another lesson in history.

As Roosevelt said in his Nobel speech, "Peace is generally a good in itself, but it is never the highest good unless it comes as the handmaid of righteousness; and it becomes a very evil thing if it serves merely as a mask for cowardice and sloth, or as an instrument to further the ends of despotism or anarchy."

**By John Mason**





## HIGHLANDS, HOLLERS AND CREATURE TEACHERS



(Photos by Jill Stewart)

The fall semester course in Appalachian Folklore & Arts in Alabama State Parks included a session (top row) on “Highlands and Hollers,” which focused on Celtic influences on Appalachian culture. In the upper right photo are (left to right) presenters Scottie Jackson, AnnaRuth Davis, Brittany Muncher and Lauren Massey, followed by the two course teachers, Renee Raney and Steve Jones. The presenters are members of Alabama State Parks’ education and interpretation division. “Creature teachers” included Fera, a red-tailed hawk, and Cornbread, a golden corn snake.

# OLLI Life

## IN THE RHYTHM AT OLLI HOLIDAY PARTY, DEC. 3



(Photos from Justin Clay, Jill Stewart, Lynda Tenhundfeld and Steve Stewart)

## DINING AND MINGLING AT HOLIDAY PARTY



(Photos from Justin Clay, Charlie Ross and Steve Stewart)

## A FEW DAYS' TRAVEL WILL REJUVENATE YOU



During term breaks, many of us are left with spare time. Whether this happens at winter term break, spring break, or summer, there are options for travel.

During the winter break, Bob and I traveled to Chicago. Chicago is an easy flight from Huntsville; United Airlines has a direct flight at least once a day for a fairly reasonable price if one plans

ahead. I'll write specifics about Chicago below.

From Huntsville, there are multiple destinations that are mere hours away by car: Nashville, Memphis, Knoxville, and Chattanooga, Tennessee; Atlanta and Helen, Georgia. Others are accessible by plane or car: Chicago, Illinois; New Orleans, Louisiana; Detroit, Michigan; Las Vegas, Nevada; Los Angeles, California; Dallas/Fort Worth and Houston, Texas; Washington, D.C.; Charlotte, North Carolina; Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky; Cincinnati and Cleveland, Ohio; Orlando, Tampa and Miami, Florida; and Birmingham and Mobile, Alabama. Of course, there are many more.

These destinations may be by plane or automobile, but all are accessible within six hours of Huntsville.

Decide on a destination. Do you want to fly or drive? Consult various air options — Priceline, Kayak or specific airline sites — or look at Google Maps to determine whether you want to fly or drive. Perhaps you have a credit card with offers to give you some hotel, air or restaurant credits: American Express, Visa, Discover or MasterCard. Perhaps you have a relationship with Booking.com or Hotels.com. Maybe you have experience with Airbnb or Vrbo.

Among the offers we recently discovered were booking two or three nights with one night free and reduced air mile redemption on certain days of the week. Also, gas prices have dropped.

Once you have decided on your destination, dive deeper. Many cities, including Atlanta, Nashville, Chicago and Memphis, offer a multi-day pass to allow you to visit multiple local destinations (zoos, museums, attractions) at less cost. For example, Atlanta offers an Atlanta CityPass that allows onetime admission to five attractions, including the Georgia Aquarium, the World of Coca-Cola, and Zoo Atlanta plus two of the following: Fernbank Museum, College Football Hall of Fame, and/or the National Center for Civil and Human Rights. The adult price is \$94; a child costs \$74. To break that down, admission to the Georgia Aquarium starts at \$39.99 for the cheapest dates, senior tickets to the World of Coca-Cola start at \$19, senior tickets at Zoo Atlanta begin at \$18.95, senior tickets at Fernbank Museum are \$24.95, the College Football Hall of Fame tickets are \$35, and the Civil Rights Museum tickets are \$17.99.



Nancy and Bob Darnall visited Chicago during the holiday break between OLLI courses.

Similar options exist for many cities.

In the fall of 2023, we had planned to take a short trip to Chicago, but life interrupted. We pivoted and took that trip Dec. 6-10, 2024. Using some frequent flyer miles from United, we booked Huntsville to Chicago round trip. The cash fees were around \$12. We used American Express for the hotel, which gave us a third (or fourth) night free with some cash rebates. Booking.com, Travelocity, Kayak, Trivago, etc. may have some great offers.

Food in Chicago costs whatever you choose but is pricey. You can have breakfast from \$10 at Starbucks or McDonald's to \$45 at the pricier hotels. If you find a hotel deal that includes breakfast, that may be your better option. Dinners can also range from \$15 to over \$100 per person, but you can choose. Ask Yelp.com for restaurants near your hotel, and choose by price, cuisine, location, or a combination.

Chicago has several hop-on, hop-off bus tours that can help you get around the city and stop at different attractions. A day pass on the L is \$10.

If you opt for other cities, do a search on day passes, sights to see and local tours. Memphis is a lovely city in the cooler months. Go to Beale Street, eat ribs at the Rendezvous, go over to Mud Island. Chattanooga has a great river cruise in the fall for color. Nashville has the pink buses with singer/songwriter tour guides.

Oh, and we are retired! Once classes are done, we don't have to wait for the weekend to travel. Check out the local and nonstop destinations. Asheville, the Smoky Mountains, Birmingham, Selma, Monroeville and New Orleans are open year round.

*(continued on the next page)*

# The Last Word

## PUBLIC LIBRARY'S FESTIVAL OF TREES



John Mason, OLLI board president, and Jill Stewart, chair of the Public Relations Committee, decorate OLLI's holiday tree at the North Huntsville Public Library. It is part of the library's annual Festival of Trees, a celebration running from late November to early January and showcasing community groups. Participating gave OLLI an opportunity to share its mission with library visitors.

(Photo from Jill Stewart)

## People of OLLI

### A FEW DAYS' TRAVEL WILL REJUVENATE YOU, CONT.

Nashville, Chattanooga and Birmingham offer great one-day options. Go to Birmingham to the Civil Rights Institute and Kelly Green; take a lunch break at the Pizitz Food Hall, where you have your choice of several cuisines. In Chattanooga, tour the Tennessee Aquarium and the International Towing and Recovery Museum, see Ruby Falls, and eat at Corky's Barbecue or Bridgeman's Chophouse, or go to the The Dinner Detective for dinner and a suspenseful plan. Of course, Nashville has the Ryman Auditorium, the Grand Ole Opry (get advance tickets), the Maxwell House Hotel and Restaurant, the Bluebird Café, etc.

Trust me: a one- to five-day break with a short trip will rejuvenate you. Take your partner, best friend or family, or do a solo tour. Talk to your neighbors on the plane, in the café, in line for the next attraction. It's a fabulous way to take a short break away from daily life and find new interests or learn more about your continuing curiosities.

Remember that travel is a night away or months away. And, when you get home, you have new memories and a new appreciation for home.

*By Nancy Darnall*