

# The OLLI INSIDER

September 2025

News for OLLI members at The University of Alabama in Huntsville



## FROM PASTURES TO CAMPUS AND BEYOND



Lara Rae Holladay, who works in the UAH Department of Biological Sciences, preached to cows as a girl and now teaches OLLI classes, such as the one at top right. In the two left photos, greeters and Sara Harper, assistant professor of kinesiology, interact with members at the Aug. 8 open house; at least 278 attended, and OLLI gained at least 47 members. At right, the Hiking & Biking Member Interest Group takes a walk in Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Decatur. OLLI members look for treasures at Unclaimed Baggage in Scottsboro, billed as “the nation’s only retailer of lost luggage.”



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# From the Editor

## BACK TO SCHOOL AND 'OFF TO SEE THE WIZARD'



Twenty years ago, I went back to school. I remember the date — Aug. 29, 2005 — because it was when Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans and headed inland. Katrina was not as fateful for me as for many, but it caused afternoon classes to be called off as I was starting on my master's degree at The University of Alabama.

I was 55. At the University of Georgia decades earlier, I had majored in student newspaper and minored in academics. My undergraduate grades were OK, but I gave short shrift to courses and did not fully benefit from them. One result was that I associated college with stress. Not that the newspaper lacked rewards: While working there, I met Patrice and got good job opportunities.

By 2005, I wanted to learn more about the internet and other modern influences on the newspaper industry. The thought of teaching college classes did not enter my head until a faculty friend, Dr. Bill Keller, invited me to teach lab classes for him while I attended grad school. I was still working full time at *The Decatur Daily*, so it all seemed like a recipe for more stress.

Before long, I was singing "I'm off to see the Wizard" as I wheeled out of Decatur for two days a week in Tuscaloosa. I thoroughly enjoyed grad school, met enduring friends, and graduated in 2007 (along with '60s Crimson Tide football star Joe Namath, who had also come back to school). Soon I started a new career, teaching journalism at Troy University.

After retirement, college campuses still beckoned. I googled lifelong learning at UAH and wound up at OLLI. Again I have made dear friends and learned things. It's even more fun than grad school because there is no required homework, no grades and no tests. I even get to fiddle with my computer and iPhone camera while practicing a little journalism.

**Inside The Insider:** Lara Rae Holladay teaches OLLI courses about plant-based cooking, sprouting and medicinal teas. She learned some teaching skills by preaching to cows. Lara herself wrote this month's *Insider* profile in response to questions from Glen Adams.

Clay Williams titled his column "What it's really all about." Well, it's about OLLI as a social community. Marilyn Szecholda shares plans for a new-member social on Sept. 9. She says her Social Committee will serve lunch on the one day per week when most members have fall classes.



It turns out that lifelong learning is fun and rewarding.  
(Art by Meta Artificial Intelligence)

Phil Graham, president of the OLLI Board of Directors, writes about civility. Whether you agree with someone or not, you need not be disagreeable.

Lee Roop reflects on past international travels while preparing to tour Eastern Europe. David Sayre recaps coming OLLI travel, both in the United States and abroad.

Betty Koval describes bonus lectures this month on raising horses and managing stress. Chris Stuhlinger tells about events scheduled in September, October and beyond. Chris and Steve Jones write about the Hiking & Biking Member Interest Group, and the OLLI Reads MIG invites you to two book discussions.

This is the time of year when people think about tax-deductible donations. Nancy Darnall describes how such donations help OLLI thrive and how you can make such donations.

Mark Tenhundfeld and John Mason introduce a series titled "Constitutional Corner," with Mark writing the first article. Mark says that "We the People" come first in the United States, and not only in the text of the Constitution.

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



# The Trailhead



## CIVILITY IS A CHOICE

A couple of weeks ago while rummaging for a naval history book that I knew I had but couldn't find, I came across another treasure. It's a small book, about 50 pages, one that I recall was required reading for my fifth-grade civics class.

The classic first line in George Washington's *Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation* sets forth:

**"Every action done in company ought to be done with some sign of respect to those that are present."**

This first of 110 separate instructions that Washington, as early as 1745, had written for himself were self-imposed rules for comportment and etiquette. Seeing this book again threw me back to a time when "civility" was a matter of parental guidance. My dad's voice telling me, "Respect your elders" — now that I'm an elder — continues to resonate.

During my military career, I became fully aware of Article 133 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice addressing "conduct unbecoming" to an officer and a gentleman. Without further explanation of the idiom, I remain fully cognizant of what constitutes unbecoming conduct.

While remaining disappointed with the oftentimes use of crass discourses, unrestrained bullying and dyspeptic observations luridly splashing upon the canvas of social media, I find that there are too many other examples from our revered institutions to our schoolyards where inconsiderate conduct, by action or by word spoken, has become a norm of behavior in the United States.

No one forces another person to be uncivil. Civility is an ethos that embodies the individual responsibility in exercising one's choice to be civil — or uncivil. This responsibility is not only to be directed outward; paradoxically, civility is also a responsibility to oneself. Civility, when gifted with sincerity, also bestows an intrinsic reciprocity bringing about a mutual benefit to both the benefactor and a recipient. Thus, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12).

Civility is especially integral in our OLLI experience, where mutual respect preserves the harmony of classroom exchanges. As elders we hold a certain gravitas that others come to expect in our interactions. This inner strength of OLLI is respecting with sincerity the opinions of others.

Respect for opinions is anything but easy. Disrespect for another opinion surfaces from two individual thought patterns: One is to directly criticize or reject an expression of thought as something unworthy of consideration; and the other is to presume that what one thinks must be what others think also.

"What one believes is an integral part of who we are," wrote P.M. Forni, co-founder of the Johns Hopkins Civility Project, in the book *Choosing Civility*. So, disrespect directed toward one's opinion quickly morphs into disrespect for the individual in the mind of the person holding such opinion. Compound this with gesticulation and body language ... Well, no need to express the defensiveness and resentment that are certain to occur.

OLLI invites freedom of discourse across all course offerings, activities and events. The OLLI member, as a sagacious and experienced elder, expects this freedom in order to generously challenge, concur or disagree without intimidation.

Dr. Forni sets out some guidelines to benefit from:

- Save the core of someone else's opinion even as you qualify your acceptance: "Yes, I agree that what you say may be true in general, but there are circumstances when ..."
- Recognize that although you don't agree, what you hear is not unreasonable: "That idea may be appealing; however, ..."
- Allow that if you know more, your opinion might change: "I don't know, it doesn't seem right, but perhaps there is more here than meets the eye."
- Make generous use of the metaphor of perspective: "Yes, but, if you look at it from a different point of view ..."

As elders, we choose civility, our "sign of respect," by ensuring OLLI makes room for the exchange of different viewpoints in a safe and supporting environment.

**Phil Graham**  
**President, OLLI at UAH Board of Directors**



# Events Committee



Coming events (from left): top row, weather exhibit at U.S. Space and Rocket Center and new Huntsville City Hall; bottom row, Fantasy Playhouse, space and astronauts program with NASA retiree Rick Chappell, and the Biergarten.

## EVENTS IN SEPTEMBER AND EARLY OCTOBER



After a brief break between semesters, OLLI events will resume on Sept. 19. Some events are filling up quickly, so be sure to register early to save your spot.

And if for some reason you must cancel after you have registered, let me or OLLI staff know as soon as possible. The next person on the waiting

list will appreciate that.

### Event recap

**Unclaimed Baggage tour**, July 25 — We visited “the nation’s only retailer of lost luggage” to learn how thousands of unique items are recovered from airlines, bus companies and railroads each day. The items are either sold in this store, donated to charities, or recycled. OLLI member Sam Campbell was selected for the “Baggage Experience,” where he opened a recently received carry-on bag to inspect the contents and sort them for sale, donation, cleaning or recycling.

### Coming events

- Friday, Sept. 19 — **How We Know the Weather** (Huntsville), 2-4 p.m. This exhibit at the U.S. Space & Rocket Center features over 30 fun, interactive displays, multiple live feeds, and unique sensory experiences for guests to explore and engage with, learning about the fascinating world of weather. Explore the captivating

history of weather instrumentation. Witness the awe-inspiring power of a tornado. Create your own mesmerizing wind patterns or learn to interpret radar, satellite imagery and weather forecasts. Uncover the mysteries of lightning, observe the enchanting formation of clouds, and feel the raw energy of nature course through you. Experience the thrill firsthand at the USSRC’s newest exhibit, “How We Know the Weather.” Cost: none. Attendance limit: 50.

- Friday, Sept. 26 — **Fantasy Playhouse production and tour** (Huntsville), 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Visit the Fantasy Playhouse’s historic and recently renovated Merrimack Hall to see a one-act production of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” followed by a tour of the facility. A Q&A session with the actors and creative team will also be included. Cost: \$10. Attendance limit: 25.
- Friday, Oct. 3 — **City Hall tour and Q&A with the mayor** (Huntsville), 2-4 p.m. Join us for a visit to the new City Hall downtown. Our group will learn about the construction of the building, the city departments housed together, and some of the artworks exhibited by local artists throughout the building. If his schedule allows, we will also meet with Mayor Tommy Battle for a Q&A session. Cost: none. Attendance limit: 60.

*(continued on the next page)*

# Events Committee

## EVENTS IN SEPTEMBER AND EARLY OCTOBER, CONT

- Monday, Oct. 6 — **Experiences in space exploration and astronaut training** (Huntsville Public Library downtown), 4:30-6 p.m. In recognition of October being proclaimed Space Exploration Month by the city of Huntsville, Dr. Rick Chappell (retired from NASA and Marshall Space Flight Center) will share his experiences planning space exploration missions and undergoing full astronaut training as an alternate payload specialist for the space shuttle Atlantis, STS-45. Cost: none. Attendance limit: 50
- Thursday, Oct. 9 — **Biergarten under the Saturn V** (Huntsville), 5-7:30 p.m. Bring your family and friends to an evening of good food, live music, and fun under the Saturn V rocket at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center. The beneficiary of this charity fundraiser will be OLLI at UAH! Cost: Varies by meal. Attendance limit: none.

Registration for five other fall events opens Sept. 1:

- Friday, Oct. 17 — **National Speleological Society** (Huntsville), 2-4 p.m.
- Friday, Oct. 24 — **Ivy Green and Rattlesnake Saloon** (Tuscumbia), 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- Friday, Nov. 7 — **UAH physics lab class** (UAH Shelby Center), 10:30 a.m. to noon
- Friday, Nov. 14 — **Historic Weeden house tour** (Huntsville), 2-3:30 p.m.
- Friday, Nov. 21 — **UAH College of Nursing tour** (UAH campus), 2-4 p.m.

**Chris Stuhlinger**  
*Events Committee Chair*

## OLLI Life

### GAME TIME IN THE OLLI LOUNGE

OLLI members gathered in the lounge on three Wednesdays in August for Game On! — a time to gather with friends, play games and eat snacks. These photos are from the first event Aug. 13.

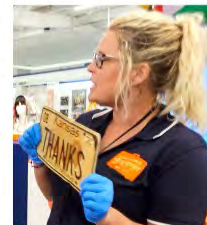


(Photos by Justin Clay)



# Events Committee

## TOURING UNCLAIMED BAGGAGE STORE, JULY 25



(Photos by Patricia Haag and Chris Stuhlinger)



# Coming Bonuses

## FRIDAY PROGRAMS ABOUT HORSES AND STRESS



What an open house we had!

If you were there on Aug. 8, you know. Of all the years Bill and I have been coming to OLLI and attending the open house for each term, this was by far the very best.

So many new people were interested and have now enrolled — wow! It just goes to show that when we spread the word and strategically place ads, people get the message.

I had a few friends come, and they told me they see why I like it so much. Just seeing the camaraderie and the warm friendships is rewarding — all the smiles and interest in what is going on at OLLI.

The September bonuses are both in 168 Wilson Hall at 11 a.m. on Fridays.

- Sept. 12 — **“Horse Talk” by Lacey Simmons.** Lacey will tell us about her life raising and training the horses she then rode, competing in the American Quarter Horse rodeo competitions. She will explain how she uses the insights she gained through her horses in her career as a financial adviser (she teaches money courses for OLLI). Ah, the life of a successful horse-woman! This sounds like a wonderful life.



September's Bonus speakers are Lacey Simmons on raising and training horses and Jess Taylor on stress and anxiety.

- Sept. 19 — **“Uncluster the Fluster: Everyday Ways to Approach Stress and Anxiety” by Jess Taylor.** Jess will lead us through a presentation on how to use mindfulness in our daily lives. Now, if she can just teach me to learn to say “No” a little more often ...

I hope to see you at all the bonuses and in the lounge enjoying the snacks and laughter and just spending time socializing with OLLI friends. I know it is something I look forward to every chance I get.

**Betty Koval**  
**Bonus Coordinator**

## COFFEE CONNECTION

A Casual Opportunity to Connect and Share Ideas

Join OLLI Board President Phil Graham over a hot or cold beverage in the OLLI Lounge. (152D Wilson Hall)

**September 8 – December 19**

**Mondays**

12:30 pm – 2:00 pm

**Wednesdays**

8:00 am – 9:30 am

**Thursdays**

3:00 pm – 4:30 pm



# News From UAH

## WHAT IT'S REALLY ALL ABOUT



OLLI at UAH is very proud of our upcoming course schedule this fall. We take our motto to heart when we say “Never Stop Learning” and back that up with courses for everyone.

But as important as our curriculum is to us, we understand that a diverse class schedule is just a small part of what makes OLLI so important.

What the vast majority of our OLLI members crave is connection. It's not necessarily as much about learning of an important historical event, literary figure, science equation or new skill or hobby as it is about doing that with other individuals who share the same passion for intellectual and social growth.

Social interaction is as important to our health as fitness and nutrition. As great as our courses are, much of the information can be found with any online search. YouTube alone has thousands of lectures on a variety of subjects. What OLLI provides is a **community** where “seasoned” adults can come and learn together. That's what our members want: a place to connect where they feel a part of something.

Creating a sense of community is something we all must do together. Wearing your OLLI name badge so we can call everyone by name. Wearing OLLI swag from our new OLLI store.

More importantly, it is simply being friendly to everyone. We can all relate to going to a function where everyone knows one another except us and all we can do is hold up a wall. Please be mindful of all members, whether new or veteran, and be friendly, courteous and inviting.

Doing something as simple as inviting that person you don't know to get coffee in the OLLI lounge can make a world of difference. We don't want to re-create the nightmares of eighth grade all over again.

Lacking that connection and a feeling of belonging is a key reason why many members stop coming to OLLI events and courses and do not renew their membership.

As the fall semester kicks off and members return to campus, let's all be cognizant of our fellow members. We have



Connect with your fellow OLLI members, including newcomers. OLLI is about more than courses — it is a community. (Photos by Patricia Haag and Marsha Langlois from open house on Aug. 8)

had lots of new members join, so let's show them what our OLLI is all about. As I have said, we are not just an organization, we are family. Let's show it!

With all of that in mind, I want to highlight the upcoming social for new members that will be Tuesday, Sept. 9, at 11 a.m. in the OLLI lounge in 152D Wilson Hall. This a great opportunity for new members to ask questions of OLLI staff and long-term members, as well as a chance to simply meet other members who are new as well and learning the ropes.

We look forward to seeing everyone this fall. Drop by and say hello!

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



# Course Spotlight

## FALL IS HERE; REGISTER NOW!

It is time to register for Fall 2025 courses. You can register here: [UAH Registration!](#)



### **MUSIC, PHILOSOPHY, AND LITERATURE**

**9/15 - 9/22 • M & W • 12:45 - 2:45 pm • 3 sessions • In Person • R. Goebel • \$40**

What does music mean? How can we find authentic words for the bodily-affective resonances of music that fill us spontaneously with joy or sadness or boredom? The literary imagination of poetry, novels, and other genres can help us find new answers to these philosophical questions. No previous knowledge of philosophy or literary criticism is required.



### **CHRISTMAS IN APRIL?**

**9/16 - 10/21 • Tu • 1:15 - 2:45 pm • 6 sessions • In Person • B. Carroll • \$40**

The traditional holiday of Christmas is celebrated on the 25th of December commemorating the messianic birth of Jesus of Nazareth. But what if that birth actually occurred at another time of the year? Could evidence from planetary motions of our solar system and interpretation of Scripture accounts prove such a hypothesis? Participants will learn and utilize ancient Babylonian astrology, clues from the Gospel of Luke, and modern planetarium software to propose an actual date.



### **HARMONIZING: YOUR UKULELE AND YOUR VOICE**

**9/17 - 10/8 • W • 1:15 pm - 2:45 pm • 4 sessions • In Person • P. Long • \$40**

Have you ever been part of a ukulele “jam” where it seems many of the songs were difficult for you to sing — too high or too low? In this course, students will address this with harmony skills. Learn your vocal range and apply it to any song. Chord theory — the backbone of harmony — will be covered. Popular songs will be introduced for harmony discovery and group singing. These skills apply to other instruments/singers as well, not just ukulelists. A bonus is students will come away from the class with enhanced ear training!



### **LEARNING SPANISH THROUGH MUSIC**

**9/24 - 10/29 • W • 3:15 - 4:45 pm • 6 sessions • In Person • J. Uithoven • \$40**

Join us as we employ music to learn more of the Spanish language! We will be using in-class and independent activities that will help you build upon traditional Spanish classes you've had in the past. Music gives us an opportunity to practice hearing and understanding different accents. In addition to language skills, we hope you will also discover a few new artists for your listening pleasure.

## Save 20%

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



# People of OLLI

## LARA RAE HOLLADAY: MUD PIES, COW SERMONS LED TO TEACHING ABOUT FOOD, PLANTS, HEALTH

*Lara Rae Holladay, who is part of the UAH Department of Biology, has for two years taught OLLI courses on plant-based cooking, sprouting and medicinal teas. She is the subject of this month's Insider profile. For a change, we are letting Lara speak for herself. The following are entirely her own words in response to questions from Glen Adams.*

**By Lara Rae Holladay**

I grew up between the coastlines of Florida and California, a child of divorce learning to find home wherever the road curved. My life was split between two very different worlds: my father, a Southern Baptist preacher who painted the air with sermons, and my stepfather, a military man who packed up our lives every few years like clockwork. Constant moves taught me how to talk to strangers, how to find friends in unfamiliar places, and how to carry pieces of home within myself.

Some of my earliest memories are stitched together with imagination and dirt. My brother and I would “play restaurant” for hours, proudly reusing McDonald’s wrappers as our menu and plating system. We thought we were running a five-star establishment. Eventually, I graduated from pretend food to “real” outdoor creations: mud pies adorned with leaves, sticks, and the occasional snail. My mom’s pots mysteriously migrated outside for my culinary experiments.

We lived in a small cabin nestled in the woods of Ohio, surrounded by cow pastures and open skies. With the fearless conviction only a toddler can carry, I turned my baby cradle into a pulpit and preached fire-and-brimstone sermons to the cows. “Repent!” I’d shout, arms waving, echoing the thunder of my father’s voice.

Looking back, it all makes sense: the preaching, the performance, the play, the food. Each piece of my childhood



Lara taught an OLLI class introducing plant-based cooking (two photos at top left) a few years after younger Lara preached to cows. At bottom left, Lara is with Jane Esselstyn from Esselstyn Foundation at a community outreach dinner about whole-food, plant-based lifestyles. Lara appeared with Dr. Jerome Baudry on Huntsville’s Channel 19 to discuss medicinal plants and the benefits of food as medicine.

was shaping something bigger in me: a deep love for community, creativity, nourishment and storytelling.

By high school, we lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico. My world had expanded far beyond the cow pastures and makeshift restaurants. I was deeply involved in the Office Education Association, ran track and field, and wrote in-depth features for the school paper. I also became known for organizing large-scale “community events,” bringing together students from up to six high schools. I rented venues, hired DJs, arranged security, and even had servers for the “beverages,” all covered by a small entry fee. It was my own way of building community — one epic party at a time!

My mind was a restless slate, always

searching for the next thing to discover, to understand, to learn, driven by an insatiable curiosity and a desire to grow.

As a feature writer for the school paper, I found my rhythm in words. I even went so far as to get “locked in” a juvenile detention center to report an in-depth piece, a bold move for a teenager, but I was curious, driven, and maybe just a little fearless.

I realized at a young age that I had a gift for bringing people together — connecting all kinds of individuals from different walks of life. I was offered a scholarship to study journalism but felt called down a different path. Before starting college, I took a job with a state senator running for the U.S. Senate. Campaign life was full of excitement

*(continued on the next page)*



# People of OLLI

## LARA RAE HOLLADAY: MUD PIES, COW SERMONS, CONT

and hard work, giving me a front-row seat to politics, people and power. I traveled the state, once again finding myself in a role centered on uniting people and creating meaningful connections.

That road eventually led me to Long Beach, California, where I accepted a job with a regional sales office for a commodities company. It was a whole new world: fast-paced, high-stakes and full of opportunity. I was only 18 when I took the job in Long Beach. Young, ambitious and eager to prove myself, I dove into the corporate world head first.

Still undecided about my life path, I had a turning point when my manager pulled me aside for a heartfelt conversation. She encouraged me to never settle for just a job, but to pursue something I was truly passionate about, a piece of advice that has guided me ever since. That moment shifted something in me. I took my manager's advice and pursued a marketing degree, which led me to an exciting role in the high fashion wholesale industry in Los Angeles. I imagined a life immersed in textiles, trend forecasting and *haute couture*.

But just as the path started to take shape, the Rodney King riots erupted across the city. Everything changed overnight: plans, priorities and perspectives.

Around that same time, my brother, who had just graduated from culinary school in San Francisco, took an opportunity in Huntsville, Alabama, as a sous chef. He didn't ask, he insisted I come join him.

It was a leap I never expected to take, but something in me said "yes." So I packed up, left the fashion world be-

hind, and followed the call — this time not into boardrooms or showrooms, but toward something more grounded: food, family, and a different kind of future.

In Huntsville, my brother and I became part of a vibrant movement: pioneers of gourmet-style fine dining in a town just beginning to develop its culinary identity. We helped open The Green Bottle Grill and Bakery, a space where food was more than a meal, it was an experience. It was a life of high energy, late nights, and deep joy — serving, gathering, and building community one beautifully plated dish at a time.

Those were cherished years, full of laughter, creativity, and the sacred rhythm of the kitchen. During that time, I met my husband, and eventually we moved to Florida, back to familiar coastlines and sunshine for me. We had the privilege of having two sons.

Life took its turns, as it does. After a divorce, I was offered a position as the marketing director for The Ledges Country Club, so I packed up and returned to Huntsville. That opportunity reignited my love for serving others, bringing people together and creating experiences to cherish through food, connection and meaningful moments. After several years, this position led me to launch my own production company and later become the operating owner of another local restaurant.

The path kept evolving. I eventually accepted a position at The University of Alabama in Huntsville, first in the College of Business and then in the College of Science. I now work in the Department of Biological Sciences, where part of my role includes community outreach — something that brings together every thread of my journey.

After I received my certification in medicinal plants from Cornell University, we began cultivating a medicinal plant garden in the UAH greenhouse, a catalyst for our "food as medicine" initiatives. This journey soon expanded to include sprouting classes, plant-based cooking workshops, community supper clubs, space biology research, and active involvement with OLLI, deepening both community engagement and lifelong learning.

OLLI has made a profound impact on my life. It's a community of people whose curiosity, warmth and enthusiasm have opened doors to countless opportunities and built connections that stretch far beyond the classroom.

What started with mud pies, McDonald's wrappers, and cow sermons has transformed into a lifelong calling: to nourish, to educate, and to build community through the healing power of food and plants. It's wild to think that pretending to run a restaurant with fast food wrappers or preaching to cows from a baby cradle would eventually lead me here, to a place where food, science and community come together in such meaningful ways.

When I am not working, you can find me in the woods taking a nature bath, experimenting with food concoctions, hosting plant-based dinners, telling stories around a campfire, chasing my next adventure, cleaning up rivers in my kayak, or watching the pollinators dance through the flowers in my garden.

Maybe this was the path all along, rooted in play, purpose, and the desire to feed both body and soul.

*Thank you, Lara, for all you do for OLLI.*



# Social Committee

## SOCIAL FOR NEW MEMBERS WILL BE SEPT. 9



OLLI had a large turnout for the open house on Aug. 8, and everyone enjoyed the Social Committee's snack table in the lounge. We offered crackers, cheese, fruit, yogurt and many delicious desserts.

Aug. 29 was our first bonus of the fall term, and we had plenty of food to enjoy. After the program, "Listening to Music Poetically," everyone headed to the lounge to eat and meet

Coming on Sept. 9 at 11 a.m. is our new-member social. The Social Committee will be serving a sandwich, chips and dessert luncheon to welcome new members who have joined OLLI during the past year.

New this term: The Social Committee will be providing a lunch on the day most members have classes. More information to follow after term begins.

We hope to see everyone come and learn from great classes and bonuses. And be sure to stop by our food tables in the lounge.

**Marilynn Szecholda**  
**Social Committee Chair**



Snacks in the lounge were a popular feature of open house Aug. 8. (Photo by Patricia Haag)

## ODE TO RENATE, THE OLLI ELF



**Renate Kump**

Another Elf has graced our space,  
With gentle hands and quiet grace.  
She dusts the shelves both high and low,  
And leaves behind a subtle glow.  
Her wand may stir up elven dust,  
But homemade treats? A total must!  
From cookies warm to cakes divine,  
She makes our lounge a place to shine.  
So if you spot her—don't delay!  
Give thanks to Renate right away.  
Her magic touch, both sweet and neat,  
Makes every OLLI day a treat.

*Help The Insider identify and recognize OLLI Elves — people who quietly keep things cozy and tidy for the rest of us. If you have a nominee, email [OLLInewsletter@uah.edu](mailto:OLLInewsletter@uah.edu).*

# Travel Committee

## GREAT EXPERIENCES, BOTH NEAR AND FAR



We have been working on a new travel approach, involving shorter trips that can be undertaken quickly when opportunities come up — great experiences without long plane rides.

We had an idea for a recent trip to Atlanta, but it did not come together. We will be looking for others. We have a few kinks to work out on transportation, but the OLLI staff will help us solve those.

### Where they are now

By the time you read this, our intrepid travelers will be enjoying their wonderful trip to Costa Rica, Aug. 30-Sept. 7. Kudos to Chris Stuhlinger for leading another adventure.

### For 2026

- Steve Goodman is leading a wonderful **cruise along the Dalmatian coast** — April 24-May 11, 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, or visit [tinyurl.com/olli-dalmatia-greece2026](https://tinyurl.com/olli-dalmatia-greece2026).
- **Explore South Africa** — Aug. 21-Sept. 3, 2026. Join us for another exciting Nanda Journeys adventure as our OLLI travelers learn about the local history, culture and wildlife conservation efforts in and near Johannesburg, George and Cape Town. Visit Soweto, the Cradle of Humankind, Cradle Nature Preserve, Pilanesberg National Park, the Garden Route, Table Mountain and more. Mingle with the locals and participate in several safaris. The cost per person is \$4,699 (double occupancy, land only). For a detailed itinerary and registration information, contact Chris Stuhlinger. See the details at [tinyurl.com/olli-south-africa-2026](https://tinyurl.com/olli-south-africa-2026).
- **The Best of New Mexico: Santa Fe, Taos and Albuquerque** — Nov. 9-16, 2026. Explore the best that New Mexico has to offer: the cosmopolitan heart of Albuquerque, the state's largest city; the Old World charm of Santa Fe; and the frontier spirit of Taos. From history and culture to cuisine and the arts, compare and contrast these unique cities and see how they evolved into the jewels they are today. To express an interest or request information, contact Jane McBride or go to [tinyurl.com/olli-nm-2026](https://tinyurl.com/olli-nm-2026).



Learn about wildlife and conservation, as well as history and culture, during the tour in South Africa in August and September 2026.

### And now for a little travel opportunity on the side ...

We got a note from one of the travel companies that another OLLI group has limited openings:

- **Walk Ireland's Road to Peace** — April 24-May 2, 2026. Join OLLI at the University of Pittsburgh and Nanda Journeys for a cultural exploration through Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland — focused on peacebuilding, history and local tradition. Explore Belfast and Derry with local guides and reconciliation leaders. Hear personal stories from both sides of "The Troubles" — ethno-nationalist conflicts that lasted from the 1960s to 1998. Engage with academics, artists and peacebuilders shaping Ireland today. Savor Irish cuisine, live music and warm pub culture along the way. This thoughtfully curated program blends cultural immersion with powerful historical context—perfect for lifelong learners seeking insight and connection. Watch the orientation video at [tinyurl.com/pittsburgh-ireland](https://tinyurl.com/pittsburgh-ireland). The passcode is ".kY\$J3n3". Register at [tinyurl.com/ireland-register](https://tinyurl.com/ireland-register). Or contact me if you have questions.

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).

Never let your curiosity fade!

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*



# Travel Committee

## PITTSBURGH: THE ART, THE FOOD, THE ANIMALS



(Travelers who contributed photos for these two pages and those published earlier — from OLLI's tour in May — include Bill Confer, Jim Chamberlain, Michelle Laverty, Alison Toney, Jane McBride, Debbie West and Larry West.)



# Travel Committee

## PITTSBURGH: STEEL LEGACY AND GRAND SCENERY





# Travel Committee

## PERU: MOUNTAINS, STREAMS, HISTORY, POMP



(Photos on these two pages and those published earlier were contributed by participants in the June trip, including Sam Campbell, Bob Darnall, Nancy Darnall, Sue Farbman and Barbara Johnson.)



# Travel Committee

## PERU: AMAZON REGION'S NATURE AND CULTURE





# Member Interest Groups

## ANOTHER BENEFIT OF WALKING

Most of you are familiar with the many health benefits of walking, such as better cardiovascular fitness, weight control, stronger bones and muscles, improved mood and sleep, and a stronger immune system.

Recent study results suggest that physical activity, such as walking at least 2 miles per day, can also significantly reduce a person's chance of developing dementia.

Join our nature walks, hikes and bike rides, and you can not only improve your health, but also learn about nature and interact with fellow OLLI members.

If you want to join the Hiking and Biking MIG to receive details about coming 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)

### Recent activities

**Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge,** July 26 — Our group walked more than 4.5 miles through the woods, along fields, and by water lily-covered waterways on the hiking and biking trail. Several bird species were observed, including ospreys, egrets and herons.



OLLI members will visit Goldman Schiffman Wildlife Sanctuary (top photos) on Oct. 11 and Monte Sano State Park (left) on Sept. 28.



**Madison County Nature Trail, Aug. 3** — We enjoyed cooler temperatures during an easy walk around the lake and through the woods on Green Mountain.

### Coming fall MIG activities

- Sunday, Sept. 28 — **Monte Sano State Park** (nature hike), 1:30-3:30 p.m. Hike the Wells Memorial Trail and see the towering hardwood trees growing in this cove forest. Trail length is about 1.75 to 2 miles, with an elevation change of about 250 feet.
- Saturday, Oct. 11 — **Goldsmith Schiffman Wildlife Sanctuary** (nature walk), 10 a.m. to noon.

Enjoy a leisurely walk through this 375-acre city-owned wildlife sanctuary near the Flint River and discover these unique wild habitats situated among the many nearby subdivisions. The level walking trail will lead us through bottom-land hardwood woodlands and retired agricultural fields, by small ponds and swamps, and along the Flint River's riparian area. Look for birds and the occasional deer.

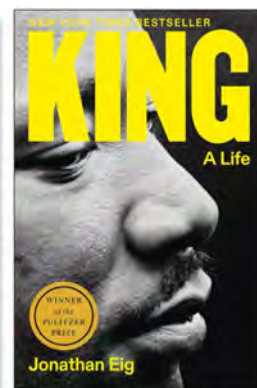
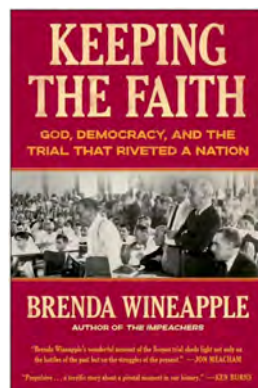
See you on the trail!

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

## READERS' MIG TO DISCUSS EVOLUTION, CIVIL RIGHTS

The OLLI Reads Member Interest Group invites all OLLI members to its book discussions in Wilson Hall. The next ones will take place on two Wednesdays for different books:

- Sept. 10, noon to 1:15 — **Keeping the Faith: God, Democracy, and the Trial that Riveted a Nation** by Brenda Wineapple (2024). This is about John Scopes' 1925 trial for teaching evolution in Dayton, Tennessee, and its historical context.
- Nov. 12, 1-2 p.m. — **King: A Life** by Jonathan Eig (2023), a biography of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. The author's website says: "The first major biography of King in 40 years, based on hundreds of interviews and thousands of newly discovered documents, this is King like you've never seen him before: flawed, brave, radical ... and under heavy attack by the FBI."





# Member Interest Groups

## HIKING MIG EXPLORES FIELDS, LAKE, WOODS



**WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE  
REFUGE, JULY 26**



**MADISON  
COUNTY  
NATURE  
TRAIL,  
AUG. 3**

(Photos by Chris Stuhlinger)



# Huntsville Then and Now

## ITS NOT TOO LATE TO TROT THE GLOBE



**By Lee Roop**

By the time you read this, my wife, Patricia, and I should be home from our visit to Eastern Europe and I should be back in OLLI classes. I say that confidently because I am a believer in being positive (or faking confidence) before any takeoff. And I believe in sugar-coating my situation whenever possible.

Another matter entirely is functioning on the real final runup to a really big trip. I generally freak out early to avoid the rush, and that approach gives me a chance to pass through the stages of fear before takeoff. Theoretically.

This will have been a major trip abroad for me, although I know it's just another visit to the airport for many of us at OLLI (or anyone in Huntsville). I wish I could have consulted your travel advice, and I'll go back and forth later asking what I missed. It's not too late to send me welcome tips for next month's column, tentatively titled either "What you should have done in Europe" or "How to have fun in Europe when you're clueless."

You've heard me say that I didn't believe I'd have to go anywhere to understand the world after growing up in Huntsville. Whether you grow up here or just live here for a time, the world comes to you. You've also heard me say that my schoolmates were from England, New York and Los Angeles (and Birmingham), and together they knew enough to get me started in life.

I did walk across the Mexican border once to shop and went to Jamaica several times in those early years. I was reminiscing about those Jamaican trips recently with an old friend and partner in crime. We jumped off the cliffs of Negril, danced to live reggae, and climbed the Blue Mountains on scooters, stopping only to buy ganja on a curb. Or so I remember it.

And my career as a journalist brought me to some exciting locations, including Cuba. Seeing Fidel Castro officially open a new school was memorable. He looked healthy,



Ernest Hemingway's house in Havana provides reminders that writing does not require fancy equipment. (2018 photo by Steve Stewart)

and his fatigues were clean and pressed. Seeing exotic dancers circle and climb a giant tree was an interesting way to pass an evening, as well.

But the pinnacle was margaritas in the Floridita, Hemingway's favorite bar, after peeking through the window at his study and desk at home in Havana. The room was filled with books, as I remember, but a good chair and the plain typewriter on the desk were all he needed.

I thought for years that trips like that and visiting most of the American states were sufficient. It isn't where you are, I thought, but what you do there and how much you learn. And it's about whom you're with. Personally, I can have a good time waiting for a plane with Patricia.

But we signed up for a tour of Budapest, Vienna and Prague this year, and the more I learned about each, the more excited I became. Sponsors and trip teammates are all WLRH public radio fans or people connected with the station, and it's always good to hang out with them. It turns out I may be late getting started but I'm ready to go.

# Admin & Finance Committee

## HOW AND WHY TO DONATE TO OLLI AT UAH



Several times yearly, our OLLI at UAH announces the ways to donate to our program: the OLLI Support Fund, the OLLI at UAH 501(c)(3), the Osher Endowment Fund, and the OLLI Scholarship Fund. Let's share the information about the funds, how to donate, and why you would want to make those donations.

Donations provide valuable resources to OLLI. Registration fees,

membership fees and class fees are not sufficient to fund everything we do.

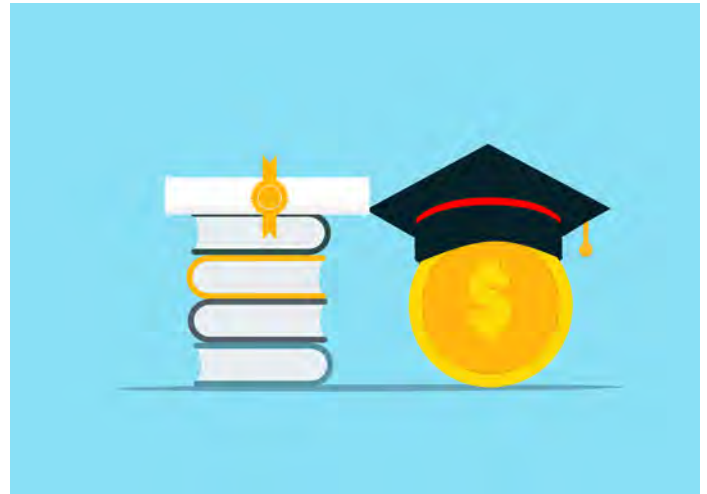
### Your donation at work today

Several years ago (maybe 10), our Board of Directors with then-Dean Karen Clanton founded the **OLLI Support Fund**, administered by the university. Its purpose is to fund current needs and wants.

During the pandemic, these funds helped keep our program operating as membership decreased and the curriculum contracted. OLLI kept our staff, continued to offer classes via Zoom, and kept members connected through our *eNews* and *The OLLI Insider*. Other expenditures include equipment upgrades such as wireless microphones for our instructors, the smart board with OLLI announcements mounted on the wall opposite Room 152, the new registration software, new chairs in the OLLI lounge, and an outdoor bench honoring OLLI members, past, present and future. There is an ongoing need to replenish these funds.

We are one of only a handful of OLLIs with a nonprofit component organized under Section **501(c)(3)** of the federal tax code. Our Board of Directors, as well as the Administration and Finance, Curriculum, Member Services, Social, Travel and other committees, manages the money to enhance the efforts of our program staff. Our committees have annual budgets to cover their expenses. Those expenses include coffee, curriculum, food, social activities and marketing. Our bylaws also require a minimum reserve above the annual budget; this reserve is totally funded. This budget allows the board to help pay for our holiday party and annual meeting.

OLLI at UAH operates on a relatively small budget of roughly \$17 per member. The board and the A&F Committee encourage committee chairs to approach their annual budget requests with intention and creativity to offer a rewarding array of educational, social, cultural and travel experiences. Revenue sources include a portion of our membership fees, donations from members, any proceeds from events, and travel rebates.



Your financial support enhances OLLI's educational and social efforts for members, as well as a scholarship for a UAH undergraduate. (pixabay.com art by Mohamed\_hassan)

### Your donations at work today and in the future

The **Osher Endowment Fund** consists of two \$1 million grants from the Bernard Osher Foundation ([osherfoundation.org/olli.html](https://osherfoundation.org/olli.html)), which encourages excellence, sustainability, and success. Requirements for receiving these grants included a minimum of 500 members for the first grant and 1,000 for the second. During the pandemic, our membership decreased, as with most lifelong learning programs; we are currently at about 890 members. An ongoing effort to get back over 1,000 includes retaining members, recruiting new members, and recovering members who did not renew. A recent speaker at the Southern Conference on Learning in Retirement speculated that a program needs to recruit up to 25% of its membership per year to sustain growth and stability. (As a side note, the most effective way to recruit new members is word of mouth; please share your love of OLLI with friends, family and neighbors.)

Donations to the Endowment Fund expand the capital basis to generate more interest earnings from which to support our staff. The annual proceeds from the endowment are a percentage of these earnings; the university uses the earnings to fund our paid staff: Clay Williams, Alice Sammon, Justin Clay and Anelisse Westmeyer.

Each of the above funding sources directly benefits OLLI at UAH. All of them are necessary. Donations are key to generate enough income to keep our OLLI one of the best and most affordable Osher programs in the country.

*(continued on the next page)*



# Admin & Finance Committee

## HOW AND WHY TO DONATE TO OLLI AT UAH, cont

### Your donations as an investment in UAH and tomorrow

To encourage undergraduate studies and add value to our presence and commitment to the university, we also have an **OLLI Scholarship Fund**. It helps fund an undergraduate UAH student who needs financial assistance.

An example of the caliber of student these donations support is OLLI Scholarship recipient Neomi Marriam ([tinyurl.com/neomi-marriam](https://tinyurl.com/neomi-marriam)). She is featured in the UAH School of Business' "Top 20 of 2025" ([tinyurl.com/uah-top-20-2025](https://tinyurl.com/uah-top-20-2025)), which honors its best students, many of whom need scholarship aid.

As costs for education rise, scholarship funds must keep up. Our Scholarship Fund currently provides partial funding for one student. Over the years, these students have been traditional and nontraditional students with various areas of study including business, premed and engineering.

### How to donate

Now, you see there are a variety of ways to support OLLI at UAH. Click [uah.edu/library/olli/donate](https://uah.edu/library/olli/donate) to make your online donation. The same link provides other methods. If you have an individual retirement account, you may qualify to make Qualified Charitable Distributions (see your financial adviser).

You may want to consider a monthly donation, a legacy gift or securities. A donation to the 501(c)(3) may be given to our treasurer, Bob Darnall, or mailed to OLLI at P.O. Box 1581, Huntsville, AL 35807.

### Why donate?

As you see, member donations enhance our program, help secure our future, and enrich our experiences. Giving makes us feel good; helping others is empowering. Donations impact more people than we may know, connecting us more closely to the program, its mission and our members.

### How much?

The answer is up to you. OLLI at UAH sets no individual goal for annual giving. No amount is too much or too little. And every member's effort rewards both the program and the donor.

All the funds mentioned here are tax-deductible according to recent tax codes (again, consult your financial adviser).

**Nancy Darnall**

**Vice President for Administration and Finance**  
**OLLI at UAH Board of Directors**



UAH can help you select a gift for OLLI that perfectly suits your family's circumstances.

Get your complimentary guide:  
*Leave Your Legacy with One of These Ways to Give.*

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

# Constitutional Corner

## ‘WE THE PEOPLE’ RULE!

This is the first of monthly “Constitutional Corner” columns, to be written alternately by John Mason and Mark Tenhundfeld.

By Mark Tenhundfeld



Fans of “Hamilton” might remember King George III singing to the colonists, “You’re on your own. Awesome. Wow! Do you have a clue what happens now?” Turns out we didn’t.

The 13 sorta-kind-but-not-really-united states were bumping along according to the Articles of Confederation during and right after the Revolutionary War. That document was

what you get when a drafter’s to-do list begins each day with “Overthrow tyrant.” Understandably, the Articles erred on the side of making sure the newly created national government would be too weak to tyrannize.

Alas, the national government was also too weak to govern. It was wholly dependent on stingy states for its revenue. It couldn’t stop states from imposing tariffs and other barriers to entry on goods from other states. It had no executive to, well, execute the laws or federal courts to settle disputes fairly and consistently. Any changes to the Articles required all 13 states to agree. It was, in short, just ye olde big mess.

These shortcomings almost cost us the war (check out the Newburgh Conspiracy for some background color on that point). They also prevented the national government from quelling insurrections after the war (see, for example, Shays’s Rebellion) and made it impossible to have a functioning national economy (see, for example, Maryland’s feud with Virginia over the Potomac River). Clearly we needed a better governing document if we were to transform the several united states into the United States.

The solution? Replace a compact between the states with a compact between the people. And make it clear that you’re doing so by stating at the very beginning of this new compact that “We the People of the United States ... do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

We the people, not the states, established the Constitution as the highest law of the land. We the people gave the national government additional powers while retaining a meaningful role for the states. We the people gave the majority the right to govern while protecting individual liberties. In so doing, we the people created a durable government that advanced, and was advanced by, national unity.

And it really was an act of we the people. Akhil Reed Amar, in his wonderful book *America’s Constitution: A Biography*, calls the ratification of the Constitution “the most democratic deed the world had ever seen.” Several states (for exam, Massachusetts, Maryland and the Carolinas) waived their



property ownership prerequisite to voting so that more people could participate in selecting delegates to attend state constitutional conventions. Others (for example, Connecticut) allowed all town inhabitants (and not just “freemen”) to vote. This was, in the Bidenesque vernacular, a big effing deal for democracy, setting in motion the longest-running experiment in self-governance the world has ever seen.

The shift from an agreement among states to an agreement among the people produced consequences both tangible and symbolic. Examples of the former include the U.S. Supreme Court striking down state laws that conflict with the Constitution (see, for example, *McCulloch v. Maryland* [1819], which upheld the right of Congress to create a national bank free from state taxation) and preventing states from ignoring federal law (see, for example, *Aaron v. Cooper* [1958], which reminded Arkansas in no uncertain terms that it could not nullify federal desegregation orders).

Less tangible but no less important is the shift’s impact on our national character. Government of, by and for the people has been our North Star ever since we declared independence from Great Britain. The Constitution also made it the law of the land.

Of course, ideals sometimes are honored more in the breach than in the observance. Enslaved people, for instance, likely weren’t so thrilled about a Constitution that seemed to distinguish them from “the People.” Similarly, women (who, under the doctrine of coverture, lost their legal identity when they married) would have searched in vain for any specific protections for women in the original Constitution.

But, paraphrasing Martin Luther King Jr., our nation’s moral arc has bent toward justice. Historically marginalized groups have made progress despite the ferocious opposition of those seeking to defend the real or imagined advantages of exclusion. Demagogues have long been leading that opposition as they have sought power by stoking prejudices, undermining the rule of law, manipulating the media, and selling partisan snake oil in an effort to turn American against American.

We the People — all of us — deserve better. Our owners’ manual (aka the Constitution) tells us so.



## SCENES FROM SUMMER: LEARNING, EXPLORING

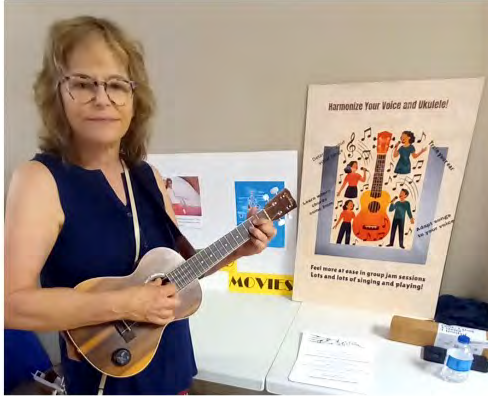
OLLI attractions during the summer included, clockwise from top left: a course in plant-based cooking; a miniature mug that the UAH library created by three-dimensional printing, offered at a “coffee trail” expedition; a 3D printing class in the library; a wine course; a course on creating bird-friendly habitats in a garden designed to feed birds; a visit to 1818 Farms at Mooresville; and a course on cardiopulmonary resuscitation.





## KICKING OFF FALL SEMESTER WITH OPEN HOUSE

Open house on Aug. 8, during which fall semester classes and other attractions were highlighted, was one of the most successful in recent memory, measured by attendance (at least 278) and the number of people who joined OLLI (at least 47).



(Photos by Glen Adams, Patricia Haag, Marsha Langlois and Steve Stewart)



# OLLI Life

## FALL OPEN HOUSE IN WILSON HALL, AUG. 8



(Photos by Glen Adams, Patricia Haag, Marsha Langlois and Steve Stewart)



# The Last Word

## ALABAMA OLLI DAY

OLLI members from UAH, The University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa) and Auburn University met at Riverchase United Methodist Church in Hoover on Aug. 12. It was the annual statewide OLLI Day for networking, learning and celebrating, including discussion of the OLLI Shares program in which the three OLLIs share some of their online courses. Participants included these from UAH: (from left) Nancy Darnall, Keith Cromartie, Alice Sammon, Richard Brooks, Clay Williams, Bob Carroll, Bob Darnall, Lisa Brunegraff and Alison Toney. Clay is OLLI program manager for UAH, and Alice is program coordinator. The others are volunteer members of the Board of Directors.



## SHOW YOUR OLLI PRIDE



These are two of more than a dozen items for sale in the OLLI Merch Store, available now at the direct link [tinyurl.com/olli-store](https://tinyurl.com/olli-store) or through the OLLI website at [uah.edu/olli](https://uah.edu/olli).