Lisa McGuire’s new job: building connections

Heading the JMU Department of Social Work, Lisa McGuire’s new “hats” include being the Lifelong Learning Institute’s liaison with the university.

Replacing Ann Myers, who retired this summer after serving through LLI’s first 16 years, Lisa hopes “to make sure the university is aware of the program, and continues to provide support -- for example, space.” At her office on Carrier Drive, she’s already been lobbied about LLI’s space needs -- while hearing that with the university “in a growth mode, space is hard.”

Yet whatever spaces we occupy, connecting students with people they will serve professionally is Lisa’s passion -- and LLI, an essential resource.

Living for her first time in the East, enjoying its mountains, Lisa finds the JMU community similar to Indiana University, where she’d served as Interim Director of the BSW Program at the School of Social Work since 2010. Both have rural, friendly environments, she says.

Lisa was drawn by JMU’s emphasis on her specialty, service learning: combining classroom instruction with meaningful community service. President Alger stresses the concept, summarized by the slogan, “Be the Change.” Service-learning experiences, required in several majors including social work, often take students into communities they find unfamiliar, Lisa adds.

Many undergrads today are unfamiliar with people older than their parents, she add. She hopes to promote cross-generational experiences such as the Adult Health and Development Program. Taught by LLI Director Nancy Owens, that course pairs students with community members over 50 to share exercise, health education and social events while comparing life experiences. Though recruiting undergraduates is challenging, Lisa says, “when they do get involved, it’s almost always eye-opening.” The course counts toward social-work majors and some relevant minors, but is open to any JMU student. “I want to do a better job of marketing this,” Lisa says.

Lisa (ACSW, PhD), earned her BA from Butler University and MSW from Indiana (both in Indianapolis), and doctorate from Ohio’s Case Western. She has shaped a model for students’ writing assignments, a “reflective” approach that entails describing a service-learning activity, evaluating what they learn from it and its possible uses. Lisa has described that model in national and international publications, and conference presentations in Colombia, South Africa, Germany, and Croatia.

“It seems like I’ve been in the right place, at the right time, to do exciting things,” she says.

Lisa has two daughters: a university student and a teacher. She and her husband, employed by the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., appreciate her eastward move bringing them “eight hours closer.”

She sees many courses in LLI’s catalog she’d enjoy taking when time permits, especially on local culture and history. Her dreams also include teaching an LLI course, and rekindling past involvements with community theater.

Lisa readily acknowledges that a university-connected program such as LLI is “a new structure for me.”

Yet at 58, she does not find aging unfamiliar. And with a grandmother who lived to 104, and a great-grandmother, 101, she laughs, “I’m probably going to be around for a while, so I’d better figure this out.”

Written by Chris Edwards
Meet Knute Leidal, our LLI president for 2013-14!

My wife Betty and I were married here in Harrisonburg in 1959 and our three children were all born in RMH. After living 38 years in central New Jersey, we retired to the Shenandoah Valley in 2004. I had worked as a chemical engineer in the pharmaceutical industry, and Betty had worked in administration of a market research firm. We lived an hour from Times Square or Lincoln Center in NYC, and availed ourselves of many cultural opportunities.

We started taking LLI classes together in 2004-05, and have taken approximately 50 so far. We find the content of each course stimulating, the teachers extremely well qualified, and the rapport that can develop between the instructor and 30+ seniors with life experience, most engaging. For a very modest cost, we can expand our horizons in any direction we choose, and there has been a great deal of variety from which to choose. Lately, we have become groupies for specific instructors we admire, no matter what the topic.

So far, I have used the royal “we” for the regular programs we take together. I personally became involved with the New Horizons Band when it was formed. I continue to play my French Horn with this ensemble. Making music together is a rewarding way to spend each Thursday afternoon. I also became involved as a volunteer with the Administration and Finance Committee for three years, and more recently with the Advisory Board as President Elect. The dedication and hard work of all our volunteers has been inspiring. If you would like to have a say in what happens at LLI, we have a place for you!

Knute Leidal

There’s still time to register for B Session classes that begin on October 14th.
Available courses include the following:

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<th>Day</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>1-3 pm</td>
<td>George Bernard Shaw: Five Plays That Shaped the Modern World</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>9-11 am</td>
<td>Women of the Arabian Peninsula</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1-3 pm</td>
<td>Something Fishy; Fish Culture in the Central Shenandoah Valley</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>9-11 am</td>
<td>Chaucer’s The Canterbury Tales</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
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<td>The Five Cs of Climate Change: Causes, Consequences, Communication, Conflict and Cure</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
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<td>Introduction to Mussar: Jewish Spirituality and Personal Growth Part II</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>1-3 pm</td>
<td>Yes, You Can Draw.....Again!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>9-11 am</td>
<td>Easy Music Making with Your iPad</td>
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The Explorer Newsletter committee members: Betty Hoskins (Chair), Chris Edwards, Nancy Endress, Rosemarie Palmer  Ad hoc: Nancy Owens
Carol Ann Miller
The "IT" Girl for LLI!

Carol Ann Miller is one of our more popular instructors in the realm of Information Technology. An excellent teacher, she has patiently brought us up-to-date with Windows XP, Windows 7, and several versions of Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. It was Carol who worked with former LLI Presidents Barbara McSweeney and Bev Moore to help produce our “hi-tech” PowerPoint presentation at our 10th Anniversary celebration.

Carol was born in Pittsburgh, PA, but she considers herself a Virginian now after moving here with her husband Dick who joined a Virginia insurance brokerage firm in Harrisonburg in 1977. They raised three daughters here, who have all gone away, and have come back here to work and raise their families. Carol and Dick have four grandchildren. Their 18 year old grandson is now a freshman at JMU majoring (not surprisingly) in Computer Science.

More surprisingly, as knowledgeable as she has become, Carol never attended college. She wanted to major in Math, but her family could not afford to send her to college. So all her expertise is based on her on-the-job experience and self-study, as well as computer courses she took at Blue Ridge Community College and other continuing education opportunities along the way. She says “I just grew with computers”.

Her career at JMU began in 1984, where she first worked for eight years in University Advancement. She worked closely with the campus computing staff to learn and manage the day to day records and reports of a new mainframe database system housed at JMU. At the time all she had to work with was an IBM computer with two floppy discs and a terminal emulation system to the fund-raising database through her telephone. Her first Windows program was the 3.1 version.

She retired from the Information Technology Department at JMU in November 2012, after teaching countless in-house and departmental training sessions to staff and faculty as the demand and variety of software programs increased over the years. Her name was legion on campus in helping individuals become computer literate, including our LLI members. Carol says she misses the teaching job she came to love, especially caring about her students and helping them manage their IT challenges through a teaching philosophy “that was all about what participants could assimilate.”

Carol also continues to move us along with technology, teaching LLI classes about using iPads and social media.

Carol’s energy these days is focused on her second career in retirement. She has become a “CRE” in the Presbyterian Church, a Commissioned Ruling Elder. She currently serves as a lay pastor at the Buffalo Gap Presbyterian Church in Swoope, VA. She has the same responsibilities as a pastor---preaching, moderating session meetings, baptizing, serving communion, performing marriages, conducting funerals, providing pastoral care, and serving as a voting member of the Shenandoah Presbytery.

So in effect Carol is still a teacher, involved in studying and teaching the Good Word to her congregants. She says, “I knew that to honor God and His amazing gift of grace to me, I needed to give back to His children.”

If your path should cross with Carol’s, ask her about her 2007 trip to Africa and her 2009 trip to Central Asia, the former with the Outreach Foundation of the Presbyterian Church and the latter with the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship. She has some amazing stories to tell! And she remains dedicated in her work.

Written by Rosemarie Palmer
Brown Bag Lunches are held at the Gilkerson Center in Westover Park (unless otherwise noted) on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays, from 11:30 AM – 12:45 PM and are open to the public as a way to get to know LLI. There is no registration required, nor any fee. Bring your lunch! Come and enjoy fun and fellowship while having the opportunity to enhance your knowledge. Expanded details of each Brown Bag session can be found in the Brown Bag listings in the printed version of The Explorer or online at www.jmu.edu/socwork/lli/brownbag.html

October 15: How Poetry Changed My Life

Dr. Joanne Gabbin, Founder and Executive Director of the Furious Flower Poetry Center at JMU, will talk about defining moments in her career as a writer and the important poets who influenced her. A dedicated teacher and scholar, Dr. Gabbin was inducted into the International Literary Hall of Fame for Writers of African Descent. She is also founder and organizer of the Wintergreen Women Writers' Collective, owner of the 150 Franklin Street Gallery in Harrisonburg, and author of the children's book I Bet She Called Me Sugar Plum.

November 5: JMU - Service to the Community

Wondering about the state of “town/gown” collaboration these days? Are you aware of the amount of community service provided by JMU students? Each social work major is required to complete a minimum of 472 hours working in a human service agency setting during their final semester of study. This brown bag session will feature three JMU social work students and their professor reflecting on the value of JMU students and their interaction with Harrisonburg and the surrounding communities. They will discuss challenges, lessons learned and self-care. Please join us for an informative discussion and a look at service from the student’s perspective.

November 19: Open Doors - Harrisonburg and Rockingham Thermal Shelter (formerly HARTS)

This presentation will include characteristics of chronically homeless people in our community, how they use the emergency winter shelter and focus on our Permanent Supportive Housing program. We will discuss why it is so challenging for a homeless person to make a transition from homelessness to a life of living in a permanent home with support. Brooke Rodgers, Executive Director of Open Doors, has worked in non-profits and community development corporations for 25 years in the areas of domestic violence, rural affordable housing and homeless problems.

Forbes Dinner and Show events available:
December 7, 2013   Holiday Fest - Dinner at Joshua Wilton House
February 7, 2014   Opera Spotlight - Dinner at Chop House
April 17, 2014     H.M.S. Pinafore - Dinner at Clementine’s
November 1, 2013  History Tour of Dayton, VA Trip

Thank you to our sponsors, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community and Sunnyside Retirement Community
Almost inevitably when reminiscing about Mary Frances Reilly (1940-2013), friends and family mention her exuberant laugh. We can almost hear that laugh again when we read Mary's essay titled "Seventy," published in LLI's January 2011 newsletter. Recalling myths of what 70-year-old women were “supposed to do,” Mary wrote, “They wear black dresses, practical shoes,” and spy on neighbors. Yet she added, “But I'm seventy. I wear blue jeans, tee shirts, and crocs.” Plus, “You are all safe from my prying eyes, folks, for now.” She was “too busy,” and having too much fun.

“She stayed busy, and she threw herself into life,” said Rev. Joseph Goldsmith, of Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, at the funeral mass for Mary, whose sudden death at her home in Harrisonburg August 30, 2013 shocked everyone.

Born to a family with deep local roots, Mary graduated from Harrisonburg High School and then Madison College. After teaching school for years in Mt. Jackson, she became a systems analyst in Raleigh, NC, and also worked in the Harrisonburg School Board office. In retirement, even after surviving cancer, Mary was active in LLI as well as her church, the Pilot’s Club, Valley Greeters, library work and planning family and class reunions.

At the service, friends from each of those facets of Mary’s life heard about family gatherings from Mary's niece, Teresa. Discovering Aunt Mary "had the best stereo and the best records," the children played them with maddening repetition, she said.

Mary, dubbing herself “a perennial student,” took numerous LLI classes starting ten years ago, and served on the advisory board as secretary, membership chair and this year, nominations chair.

LLI director Nancy Owens recalls, “I really liked Mary. She did so much for LLI and also participated in the Adult Health and Development intergenerational class I teach,” pairing undergraduates with older community members. Mary’s JMU undergraduate partner, Nichole Scott of Virginia Beach (pictured above with Mary), called Mary "an inspiration. She became much more than just part of the class and more like my friend."

Eight years ago, when Judy Liss - last year's advisory-board president - had recently moved from Vienna, Va., LLI classmate Mary “took me under her wing - introducing me to people and inviting me to join her at social events.” In LLI’s Classics Book Club, fellow-member Mary McMurray enjoyed Mary's unwavering enthusiasm. For LLI friend Linda Dove, “her vibrant personality and lovely giggle always lifted my spirits. I marveled at her talents in painting and writing.”

Mary, a lifelong cat-lover, requested that memorial contributions be given to the shelter, Cat's Cradle (PO Box 2128, Harrisonburg 22803).

A poem Mary once wrote for an LLI class begins:

Intricate patterns of light through lace curtains, hanging in my great aunt, Annie Sheehy’s living room in a house long gone and forgotten except perhaps by me...

Mary left us far too soon. Yet that class's instructor, Robin McNallie, suggests that, in light of her Irish heritage and love for poetry, fate seemed to time her departure fittingly - on the same day as poet Seamus Heaney.

-- Chris Edwards
Welcome to new and returning members!

Bridgewater:  Eleanor Baker, Marsha Fitzgerald, Bonnie Gleason, Barbara Henry, Carol Perkuchin, Patricia Skelton, Janice and Ben Wade  
Broadway:  Delores Reid, Helen and Ben Ridder  
Dayton:  Robert Flory, Judith Wright  
Elkton:  Paul Oviedo  
Fairfield:  Erica Perrel  
Harrisonburg:  Rob Alexander, Roxanna and Jim Atwood, Jane and Tom Barrick, Jenny and Charles Bell, Marilyn Brook, Paula Caldwell, Michele Cavoto, Donna DeMeres, Darlene Dolby, Stephen Farrar, Judi Fields, Susanna Finn, Genevieve Fleming, Paul Gooden, Patricia Haden, Karen Hoover-Maddox, Marijke Kyler, Joseph Lapp, Challace McMillin, Alta Mercer, Barbara Miller, Frank Moran, Debra Mowery, Joanna Perez, John Reeves, David Reser, Toni Stone, Marilyn Tuttle, Barbara Vought, Sarah Ann Whitmore, Donna Williams, Arianne Young  
Keezletown:  Marie and Noland Suter, John Welsh  
Luray:  Laurel Mazziotti  
Massanutten:  Charlene and Robert Grogg  
McGaheysville:  Jerry Cockrell  
Mt. Crawford:  Malcolm Cameron, Deborah York  
Port Republic:  Rosa King  
Scottsville:  Robert Keeton  
Singers Glen:  Carol Mishler, Sharon Payne, John Weir  
Staunton:  Linda and Charles Snyder  
Waynesboro:  Larry May, Patricia Schlick  
Weyers Cave:  Betty Shreckhise

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR MEALS ON WHEELS
Valley Program for Aging Services

Deliver Meals to Homebound Older Adults
Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 12 noon
Price Rotary Senior Center
305 Dogwood Drive, Harrisonburg

Volunteers must use their own vehicle for meal delivery.
Please contact the VPAS Volunteer Coordinator, Dawn Shull for more
Information:  540-383-6855
Photos from the LLI digital photography class offered in May, 2013. These shots were taken by Sue Olson when the class met at the JMU Arboretum.

Frank Marshman was the instructor for the class.
Summer One Day Class
June 25, 2013
VMRC Village Hall
Oil Painting class - blank canvas to finished picture, all in one session.
Report from our Director’s visit to Athens - Georgia, that is!

I had the opportunity of attending the Southern Conference for Lifelong Learning Institutes in Athens, GA, at the University of Georgia, July 24-26, 2013. I’ve been to this conference several times over the years, and always come away with new thoughts and invigorated by the programs presented.

There were over 200 participants from about 60 OLLIs and LLIs across the region, from those just starting to those with memberships of over 1000. (OLLIs, are lifelong learning institutes that have received endowments from the Bernard Osher Foundation, therefore are called OLLIs.)

I tried to attend as many concurrent sessions as possible, and picked up information from those I could not attend. Marketing and fund development were two areas to which I paid attention. While our marketing budget does not come close to the University of Georgia’s OLLI program with 1100 members, I did learn more on the value of seeking sponsors to defray costs. Fund raising for non-profits, like most LLIs are, is an area we have recently been researching. Ensuring the adequacy of funds and resources to support lifelong learning organizations now and into the future was the topic of several presentations, and important to many of the participants judging from the attendance.

There were many other presentations that I wanted to get to, but I seem to have a problem being in two places at one time. Sessions on newsletters and travel excursions, capturing the baby boomers attention with different programming, and special interest group development are some examples. And of course, there are the people who attend to learn from, LLI members and staffers too.

Perhaps you would be interested in attending with me next year in beautiful Asheville NC?

Nancy Owens

Director, James Madison University Lifelong Learning Institute