A Message from our LLI President, Greg Coffman

The next time you participate in an LLI class, take a moment to personally thank your instructor. Even if they’re professionals, still working or retired, they spend many hours preparing their lectures or activities as well as the added pressure of teaching their peers.

Because of their willingness to share their knowledge, experiences, and time, we’re able to enjoy a wide variety of topics that enrich our lives long after the classes have ended. In talking with many of them, one thing I’ve noticed is the enjoyment they get from working with LLI and its members.

However, did you ever consider yourself as an LLI instructor? Every LLI member has expertise in something, whether from a hobby, life experience, special interests, or profession. You don’t need previous experience in a classroom, just the ability to talk to other members, most of whom you already know. Think of the classes you’ve taken that were taught by fellow LLI members.

Now, think of yourself in that same role. If you’d like to share your knowledge and become one of our valued instructors, contact Nancy Owens for further information. LLI will work with you regarding scheduling, technology, materials, and anything else you may need.

With that said, our Curriculum Committee led by Jayne Rynar has put together a superb offering of classes for the Spring Session. These fellow members have worked hundreds of hours to bring it all together for us, so don’t forget to thank them, too. On behalf of the Advisory Board and its committees, we hope you enjoy the upcoming classes!

ED-VENTURE EXCURSIONS
Small, inexpensive, educational trips!

Thursday, May 14, 2015
Elkton: A Historic Tour of an Iconic Virginia Frontier Town paired with a tour of the Miller/Coors Facility
Highlights include a horse drawn wagon ride through Old Town, a visit to the Miller Kite Museum, a lecture on local church history at Elkton Methodist Church with a viewing of their beautiful stained glass windows, a visit to Elk Run Cemetery and stories of Civil War History, and a private guided tour of the Miller/Coors Brewery. $35.00 registration fee due by April 29, 2015.

Session One Wednesday, June 3
Session Two Friday, June 5

From Pixels to Paper: Transforming Your Photos Into Note Cards

Facilitator Lynn Whitmore, an Arboretum photography enthusiast and scrap booker and award winning photographer will teach participants how to transform photographs taken in the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum. Each person will have the opportunity to make 10 note cards, using the scrapbooking techniques and resources Lynn will provide. Registration fee of $25.00 due by May 20, 2015. There is also an $8.00 fee for supplies due to the instructor.
Dave Pruett navigates journeys through reason, wonder, history

Learners signing up for Dave Pruett’s LLI courses vary widely in scientific knowledge. Yet all who took “On the Shoulders of Giants: Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton,” or “Darwin: His Life, Theory, and Legacy,” probably learned something new about the evidence for and conflict over evolution, or how Einstein and Stephen Hawking built on the work of pre-18th Century cosmologists.

Dave, a mathematics professor at JMU since 1996, retired in 2012 but continues teaching undergraduate calculus. He feels humbled when addressing other fields, yet holds audiences on their seats’ edges when recounting the human stories behind each pioneering scientific “giant.” Copernicus, he explains, “knocked humans off their pedestal” by revealing that Earth is not the center of the cosmos. He was “lucky” to die in 1543 after publishing his findings that “the sun is a star. In 1600, that would get you burned at the stake.” It happened to Giordano Bruno, and in 1633, the aging Galileo was imprisoned by the Inquisition for supporting that “Copernican heresy.” Classes learned of Newton’s lonely introversion and forays in alchemy – and of Darwin’s long hesitation, centuries later, to publish Origin of Species, knowing the trouble his evolutionary theory would cause.

Dave describes his LLI approach, evolving from his study-abroad and honors classes for undergraduates, as “science lite, with history of science.” The courses correspond to sections of his 2012 book, Reason and Wonder: A Copernican Revolution in Science & Spirit, published by Praeger in 2012 (see http://www.reasonandwonder.org/). It received an American Library Association Choice award, though sales have been soft due to price. Local libraries have it, and he hopes for a paperback edition soon.

The book describes knowledge revolutions that have challenged what Freud called human “narcissism”: the Copernican (revealing that Earth is not the center of the cosmos), Darwinian (dethroning mankind’s unique creation), and knowledge of the often irrational human psyche (pioneered by Kant and Freud, among others). Dave suggests that science and philosophy/religion, split since Copernicus, may be on the verge of reuniting in this age of wonder-inducing explorations such as black holes and the genome.

Mathematics, he notes, sits at one end in a ranking of scholarly fields according to their potential for certainty. A member of Valley Friends Meeting, he’s equally fascinated by those at the opposite end of that spectrum – religion and philosophy.

The public, he feels, misunderstands the place of scientific theories on that spectrum. A valid mathematical theorem (such as that Pythagorean theorem we learned in high-school geometry) is 100 percent certain. But theories – for example, gravity, or evolution – are explanations built on a critical mass of observation, Dave says. While based on facts, they are “always subject to change.”

“Science is a great servant and a terrible master,” Dave muses, comparing the World’s Fairs of our youth, full of utopian promise, with technologically-enhanced warfare, unemployment and environmental degradation.

Prior to arriving at JMU, Dave worked for NASA – earning his U.VA masters through a Shuttle Entry Air Data System experiment, and following Ph.D. completion from the University of Arizona with theoretical research in computational fluid dynamics.

Written by Chris Edwards
Welcome to new and returning members!


PREVIEW OF PATIENCE Wednesday April 8, 3:30pm, Ice House

Dr. Ralph MacPhail, a well-known authority on Gilbert & Sullivan and their operettas, will present a preview of Patience, to help us better understand the show. There are still tickets left for the April 9th show of Patience and dinner at Local Chop & Grill House. Deadline is March 9th.

Patience is a hilarious spoof of the stuck-up 'elegant' Victorian society ladies and gentlemen who embraced, often outlandishly, the 'Arts and Crafts' movement of those London times. Lots of stupid poetry, rivalries, affected mannerisms, and some great music.

It is a wonderful musical, but with the lightning-fast Victorian 'snooty' elegant language, it can be a task to follow everything. Here's the opportunity to find out about the play from an expert.

NOTE: Any LLI member and a guest are invited to this FREE preview.
It’s been a long and cold winter, but Spring is coming on March 20 - celebrate with one of these trips!

Van Gogh, Manet & Matisse: The Art of the Flower  Thursday, April 9, 2015

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A Spring Fling: Hiking Tours and Lectures
The State Arboretum at the University of Virginia’s Historic Blandy Experimental Farm  Thursday, April 30

A century ago the ecology of the Blue Ridge, along with much of the eastern United States forests, faced the demise of the majestic American chestnut tree. This disaster was solely human introduced. The foreign chestnut blight decimated our eastern forests and changed forever our Appalachian landscape. Steve Carroll will present a special lecture for LLI participants on Blandy’s experimental projects and its cooperative research with the American Chestnut Foundation and the Nature Conservancy. Registration fee of $45 due by April 15.

VALLEY UKULELE PLAYERS is a new “LLI Common Interest Group”, organized in September 2014. All you need to join is a ukulele and a Daily Ukulele Songbook (available on Amazon and also at Hometown Music in Harrisonburg.

We meet weekly to rehearse at 10 am on Fridays at Maple Terrace in the Shenandoah Room - this is in the Bridgewater Retirement Community at 210 Virginia Avenue, Bridgewater, VA, 22812. Our group varies from 8 to 12 members. We incorporate other instruments in some of our numbers, such as kazoo, train whistles, tambourines, and trumpets, depending on the talents of our members. Private lessons are also available.

We are an enthusiastic group of beginners who like to have fun strumming the ukulele, learning new chords, and singing along. Our leader is Sandra Cryder, a retired vocal music professor from JMU. She has helped by developing an assortment of repertoires, from Christmas to 60s favorites. We have a website (valleyukuleleplayers.com) and a Facebook page (Valley Ukulele Players). Even though we are new, we have played various gigs in the Harrisonburg area! Come to one of our rehearsals, or contact Rosemarie Palmer at 540-515-0097 or email shenrose129@gmail.com with questions or concerns.
VENETIAN GRANDEUR: PADUA AND VENICE

A ROAD SCHOLAR TRIP

On September 10, 2014, I joined a Road Scholar group of 22, at the Venice, Italy airport, for a tour of one week in Padua and one week in Venice. We were whisked off by bus to the nearby ancient city of Padua (Padova) to begin a tour focused on Renaissance art and architecture. We were housed in a centrally located hotel that facilitated guided walks through the avenues and piazzas of the old center city which was founded on 45 BC. One walk included a visit to the University of Padua, founded in 1221 and its medical faculty, where Galileo conducted research in the 17th century. We entered the world’s first anatomical theater for medical students, a centuries-old, carved, wooden, spiral structure, still intact. We also visited the Basilica of St. Anthony, the resting place of the patron saint of Padua.

We came to Padua primarily to see the Giotto frescoes of 1303. In those works Giotto broke from the medieval Gothic style of painting in one of the key works of European art, depicting emotion in the faces of his subjects, foreshadowing the more naturalistic painting style of the Renaissance. Also in the hub of the city are two large market piazzas separated, by the huge Palazzo della Ragione, whose interior walls contain a series of frescoes, some from the mid-1400s depicting allegorical figures and zodiacal signs and representations of daily tasks of the middle ages. At one end of its huge room is a gigantic wooden horse from 1466 modeled after a statue by Donatello. In a corner is a black stone about 3 feet high, where medieval law offenders could plead with local judges for mercy while sitting on the “stone of insults” with naked buttocks.

We took a day trip from Padua to Ravenna by bus. After the decline of Rome, Ravenna became the capital of the Western Empire and continued as capital under Ostrogoth and Byzantine rule. We were there to see the marvelous gold encircled mosaic images of religious and imperial figures on church walls.

From Padua we took a train to Venice, approaching the coast, we could see across the water the distant shapes of towers and domes of the island city seeming to rise out of the sea. Our final approach to Venice was by vaporetto, the water bus and main means of public transport that links the separate islands that make up that truly unique, water-bound city.

We sailed into Venice on the traditional, primary thoroughfare, the Grand Canal. It is lined with wonderfully decorated old palaces. We disembarked across the Grand Canal from St. Marks Square. We carried our suitcases a short distance and up the steps of the stone footbridge over our own little canal to our pleasant, small canal-side hotel. I had the good fortune of getting the one room with a balcony and its lovely canal view.

Venice is a feast for the eyes. It is a seemingly endless banquet of beautiful and surprising visual delights. There is of course the gigantic square (piazza) of St. Mark with its brilliantly decorated Basilica and Ducal Palace. Throughout Venice, in all directions appear ancient carvings, wide water vistas, tall towers, lovely canals with graceful gondolas, striped-shirted boatmen wielding their unique long oars, a wide variety of boats, magnificent structures of the old Venetian Republic, paintings and sculptures of the great masters in museums, “scuolas,” and glorious buildings of the Church, throngs of people from many lands, intimate couples under awnings of outdoor restaurants. One travels through the group of islands by foot or by boat only. No land vehicles are found, except for the occasional push-cart of a delivery man, no cars, trucks or bicycles. - continued on the next page
All would be in danger of ending in a canal and/or obstructing the passage of people. The absence of motor vehicle noise and fumes (except from the boats) is a blessing for the walker. The arched footbridge over a canal almost inevitably provides an interesting scene of old buildings with dark waterlines rising out of (or perhaps sinking into) the generally calm canal waters, structures that may have waterway entrances might show fine, ornate or scaling and crumbling facades, with unusual window decorations or shapes. Shadows enhance the sense of mystery and history that is always present.

We experienced good food (including yummy gelato and tasty fish) fine lectures, excellent, helpful guides, interesting shops, an excursion to the glass makers in Murano, lovely and impressive churches, beautiful art (both ancient and modern) an impressive opera in an overwhelmingly beautiful opera house. The travelers in our group were compatible, pleasant and interesting, and the weather was ideal. We learned more history and gained a greater understanding and appreciation of the distinct culture of the people of Venice. We departed our picturesque canal-side hotel via speedy water taxi directly to the airport and our flights home.

Charles R. Raisner
March 17

A Mennonite Girl Meets a Glittering World – the Story of How I Came to Write a Memoir and What I Learned. Shirley Showalter will talk about what it was like to write the story of her childhood, find a publisher, revise and refine the manuscript, and then market the book. The book launch of Blush: A Mennonite Girl Meets a Glittering World took place in 2013. Shirley married a “Valley boy,” taught English at Harrisonburg High School 1970-72, and then went to grad school. She became a professor and a college president at Goshen College in Indiana spent six years as a foundation executive in Michigan and returned to Harrisonburg in 2010.

March 31

Climbing Together for Peace

Mark Logan, age 71, tells his story of climbing the world’s tallest free standing mountain, Kilimanjaro in March 2013. He and six others, from different backgrounds, different countries and different generations, prayed together at Kibo Hut, 15,000 ft., for world peace. As the oldest member of the team, he will share his experience of dreaming, planning and climbing this mountain for world peace. Mark Logan lives in Bridgewater and grew up on a poultry farm in Rockingham County. His wife is French, they were married in Spain and raised their children in Colombia.

April 7

Digital Visual Tour of Stained Glass Windows in Sacred Places of the Shenandoah Valley

D. Lee Beard takes viewers on a visual journey discovering the wide range of sacred stained glass window styles typical of small town America, tracing their history from the medieval gothic revival of the 19th century to Tiffany windows and even the more modern abstract designs. Lee Beard is the Director of Media Production Services at James Madison University.

April 21

The United Way - Dreaming and Doing for Our Community

“What do you dream for our community?” Bring your dreams and join an engaging discussion with United Way staff on how we can make those dreams come true in our neighborhoods. We’ll talk about the unique challenges our community faces and how we can work together to make Harrisonburg and Rockingham County stronger now and for generations to come. There will also be an opportunity to get details and register for the United Way Day of Caring Lifelong Learning team on Wednesday, May 13, 2015.

May 5

Potter John Heatwole: His Life and Legacy

John David Heatwole (1826-1907) was born in Rockingham County into the famous Heatwole family. He married Elizabeth Coffman, daughter of potter Andrew Coffman of near Elkton, VA. This connection helped Potter John learn the trade and become one of the foremost pottery makers in Rockingham County in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Civil War caused upheaval in the Valley. Pacifist and faithful member of the Mennonite church, Heatwole tried to escape the coercion to join the military. His experiences avoiding the Confederate draft will be examined. Dale MacAllister is leader of the Shenandoah Valley Folklife Society and editor of its newsletter. Dale is the “must go to” for all things historic.
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