

James Madison  
University -  
Lifelong  
Learning  
Institute  
July 2006



# The Explorer



WELCOME to the first of four 10th Anniversary editions of *The Explorer* Newsletter!

Whether you're a charter member of LLI or have a single class under your belt, you're sure to find something of interest in each issue. You are invited to submit one or two paragraphs describing your experiences in convocation programs, tours, curriculum, and other facets of LLI. Contributions will be printed in a column titled "In Our Own Words". Drop off submissions to the Blue Ridge Hall office, email to [lli@jmu.edu](mailto:lli@jmu.edu), or mail to The James Madison Lifelong Learning Institute, Blue Ridge Hall MSC 9006, Harrisonburg, VA 22807

## ***In the beginning.....***

The Shenandoah Valley, nestled between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountains, with its rolling hills, fertile farmland, friendly folk, and gentle pace of living, has become a haven to retirees who continue to move to the Valley. Rising numbers of senior citizens, and three retirement communities within a 10 mile radius of Harrisonburg, form a sizeable nucleus of people from all walks of life who seek continuing enrichment of their lives.

In conjunction with James Madison University in Harrisonburg, the Lifelong Learning Institute (known commonly as LLI), is open to all those who have attained the age of 50. Since the fall of 1996, LLI has offered a wide variety of classes, brown bag luncheons, special events and trips each year. Several classes have been repeated during the years, with one popular class being offered each spring since 1998, a solid tribute to both the instructor and the subject matter.

All of us participating in the LLI program are grateful to one man, Doctor Cecil D. Bradfield, for his vision and dedication in bringing this program to the Shenandoah Valley. The comments below are Dr. Bradfield's.

"I am delighted to offer a few words of appreciation on the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the James Madison University Lifelong Learning Institute. During my 30 years as a Professor/Administrator at JMU (1970-2000), I had the opportunity to initiate or co-coordinate several programs that prospered after my retirement.

The JMU-LLI stands out in my mind as one of these programs that has achieved excellence. From the beginning the JMU-LLI was designed to have a "stakeholder" structure that would bring together the participants, the community and the university. A Tenth Anniversary with excellence is a tribute to the strength of that model.

The purpose statement of a project proposal written by me in October 1995, stated "The purpose of this proposal is to develop a plan for implementing a James Madison University Institute for Learning in Retirement (LIR)." In that proposal I detailed how the project fit into changes taking place in the aging population generally and specifically in the central Shenandoah Valley. Additionally, the proposal detailed that I had reviewed the literature on the subject and visited several "Institutes" at William and Mary; Duke University and Mary Washington College. The proposal also noted that the Aging and Family Studies Program had conducted an Elderhostel in May 1995, that had involved current undergraduates in interaction with the older adult participants. This concept was also built into the structure of the JMU-LLI to the mutual benefit of students of all ages.

In the interest of stakeholder involvement a task force was developed in the spring of 1996 to initiate a pilot project for the fall when the first courses were offered.

The twelve person task force consisted of community stakeholders as well as JMU staff. The group drafted a constitution that was approved during the first membership meeting in May 1997 with the first advisory board elected. The name selected was "The James Madison University Lifelong Learning Institute." The university provided space and half time secretarial support in the person of Carolyn Craun and I was named Director. It has also been my privilege to be a course leader on several occasions. The development of the JMU-LLI is a case model of stakeholder involvement for program development.

My very best wishes for the future of the JMU-LLI."

Cecil D. Bradfield



## Spotlight on Instructors:

Robin McNallie

*We*'ve all had teachers that inspired and touched our lives, imparting knowledge and spurring us on to learn more and more. How wonderful, at fifty plus years, to still have that experience. Our LLI program is fortunate to have instructors with both the enthusiasm and educational background to offer that to us.

If you were to ask fifty LLI students "What's your favorite class?" you may get at least thirty-five different answers. However, ask the same fifty "Who's your favorite instructor?" a good number of them would answer, "Robin McNallie." Sometimes all they need to know about a class is that Robin will be teaching it.

His offerings have covered a wide range: Thoreau, Whitman, Shakespeare, as well as silent film comedies.

Perhaps the one class that produces the most enthusiastic response is "*The Question(s) of Mr. Poe.*"

"Robin did a great job of teaching Poe. I enjoyed studying both familiar and unfamiliar pieces with such a knowledgeable and fun loving instructor," observed Linda Waddell.

Others were inspired in more material ways: one student brought in a sculpture of Poe, working at his desk under the watchful eye of the raven; another rewarded her instructor with a Poe action figure.

Robin's commitment to the LLI program is fed by the memory of his mother, "who most definitely would have been first in line for many of the classes..."

An example of literature and world events coming together can be seen in Robin's own reflections:

"I shall also carry with me lasting memories of my own LLI experiences. Most vivid of these is that moment on the morning of September 11, 2001, when the Shakespeare class I was teaching learned of the shocking attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon (and in Pennsylvania). After receiving the news, class members decided we needed to continue our session, if for no other reason than to retain some semblance of ordered sanity amid the mindless chaos of that terrible time. Appropriately, the work we were then looking at was Hamlet, Shakespeare's most profound examination of the horrific consequences that lie in store when bloody deeds are once set in motion."



## James Madison University- Lifelong Learning Institute 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

Wednesday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006  
2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

### JMU Festival Conference & Student Center

Mark your calendars now and reserve August 16<sup>th</sup> for the Lifelong Learning Institute's (LLI) 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration at the JMU Festival Conference & Student Center. The fun-filled afternoon is free and will feature refreshments, exhibits and big-time entertainment, including the comedy team of Ted and Lee; the Diane and Co. dance troupe, and music by Adair McConnell. Exhibits will include an arts and crafts show featuring the work of LLI members; a preview of fall 2006 LLI courses; and information about LLI and Elderhostel. A slide show will highlight LLI events from the past 10 years.

The Lifelong Learning Institute offers non-credit, leisure learning courses, brown bag lunches and day-long trips to adults age 50 and above. Classes are led by various faculty and community members who are experts in their fields. There are no exams or grades in the courses, just a sharing of an interest in learning.

LLI is inviting everyone 50 and above to join us in our celebration, so spread the word to your friends and neighbors. Admission is free and parking is plentiful. Use the JMU entrance on University Boulevard, across from the JMU Arboretum. The Festival Conference & Student Center is on the left and parking on the right.

For more information, contact  
Nancy Owens at (540) 568-2923  
or [owensne@jmu.edu](mailto:owensne@jmu.edu).



# In Our Own Words...



## FRIENDSHIP FLOWERS

"That's an awesome picture," I said as I peered over the shoulder of a fellow LLI classmate. "Oh, it could use some more work, but thanks," he quietly replied. "He always does a good job," said his wife, "but he's very modest about his talents."

I thought her work was also far superior to mine. My next thought was, "This is a nice couple, people I'd like to learn to know better." It was a beginner's class in dry chalk painting and I was struggling. I had never tried sketching, drawing, painting or any other artistic rendition, but isn't that what LLI is about: trying new things? The instructor patiently explained and demonstrated how to produce an apple or an orange casting its shadow; mine looked like a comet charging through the sky. It was supposed to be a still life. By the end of the five weeks of class, I finally managed an old-fashioned blue pitcher holding sunflowers that somewhat resembled an arrangement I have in my kitchen.

As the art class progressed, I kept being drawn to the couple, close to my age, but a few years younger I guessed. When we meet new people, it seems to be common practice to ask a few general questions of each other; "Where do you live?", "What did you do before you retired?", "Where did you live before you moved here?", "How do you like living in this area?" Based on the answers we glean from these meager conversations we form opinions.

Why are we sometimes so shy about testing new thoughts, ideas and relationships? Sometimes we suffer from low self-esteem, fear of rejection, or bad experiences from the past. My husband and I agreed that we should pursue this relationship and issued an invitation to get together for a meal. We have shared happiness and sorrow, disappointment and elation, family and friends. We anticipate many more years of friendship and sharing.

Why? All because of LLI. Had both couples not been members and participants in the LLI programs, I doubt that our paths would ever have crossed. I would say, thank you LLI for being there to provide opportunities for us to expand our horizons in education as well as to develop firm and lasting friendships.

Ann Daggett  
Bridgewater, VA

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## THINKING

After over 20 years of civilian and military education, I thought I had covered most of the interest-

ing subjects. And then I got the LLI catalog: Existentialism Part II. "What's that?" I exclaimed! It had to do with philosophy. Something about what certain philosophers had to say about life. So what did I care about what old thinkers thought? I never had a course in philosophy so I guess maybe it's time to learn how to spell it.

So I signed up. I enter my first class and I'm amazed to find almost 30 students. Most were about my age. Some had several books. Most everyone had a notepad. I thought to myself, "What have I gotten myself into?"

And in walks what I thought was another student. He's about 6 foot 5, curly gray hair and he's carrying a satchel. He walks to the front of the room, puts his satchel on the table and introduces himself as Dr O'Meara. "He's got to be the teacher, even looks like a philosopher!"

As was my custom back in school, I was starting to take copious notes. The more Dr O'Meara talked, the less copious my notes became. And pretty soon the note taking stopped. I was mesmerized by his presentation on how old thinkers thought. It was as if there was no one else in the room. I'm alone. He's talking. But he's not just talking. His whole body and expressions are talking. I am glued. I am mesmerized. I am thinking. And I'm enjoying it! I've been thinking for 76 years and after all that time I've finally begun to ask "Why do I think the way I think?"

Boy, what a teacher! After 20 years of all types of classes, Dr O'Meara is the most outstanding teacher I have experienced. I hope the young students at JMU appreciate this outstanding teacher. He has introduced me to several of the old thinkers and I will be taking his next course on American philosophers. If you enjoy thinking, take his course.

Whitney C. Scully

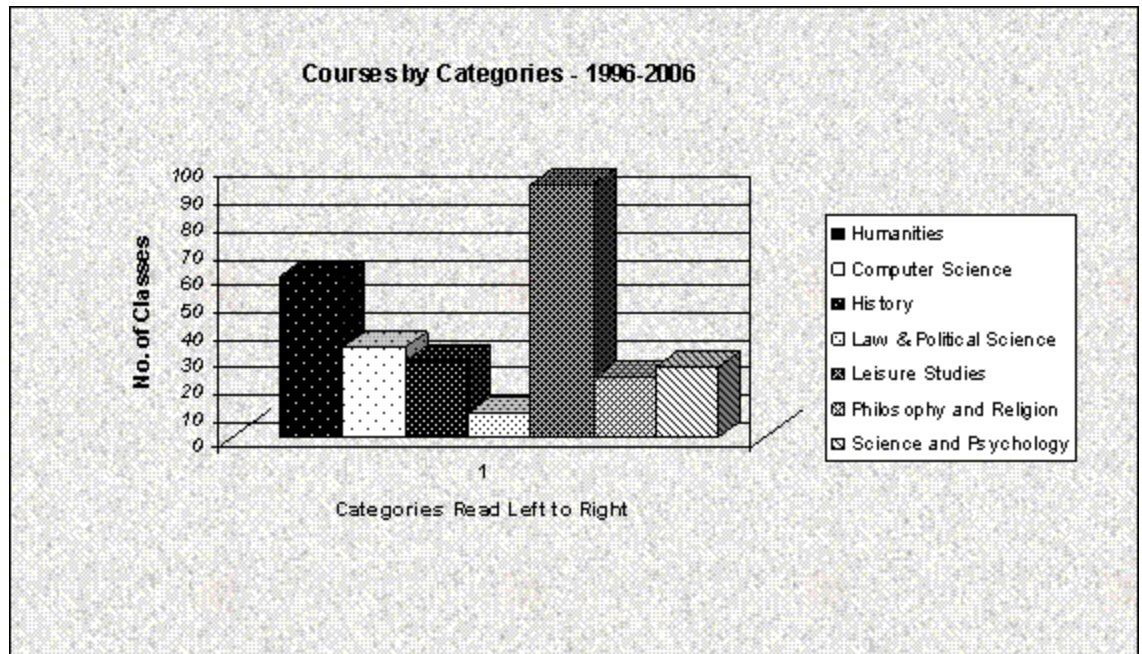
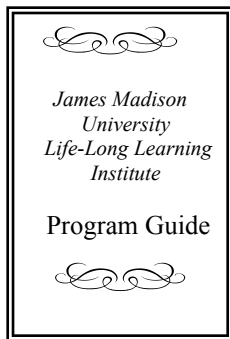
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## A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE

My favorite tour was to the new museum in Winchester. I would love to go again. I've had several great instructors. Clive Hallman for Founding Fathers; he has so many facts on his mind. Mr. Sullivan, for local municipalities and Mr. Leach for Lewis and Clark

All of the instructors I had held my attention. It has been a wonderful experience.

Doris J. Stimpson



### Course Offerings

In the fall of 1996 the fledgling James Madison University Lifelong Learning Institute offered its first classes. The four courses covered health, history, computers and memoir writing. From this humble beginning the program has blossomed over ten years to thirty classes in the spring of 2006. Courses are added based on evaluation forms given to each student with space for new course ideas. The curriculum committee takes the requests very seriously and accommodates them when possible.

A wide range of courses reflects the broad interests of LLI students. Most are retirees; many have come to the Shenandoah Valley from elsewhere. Some courses have proven so popular that two sections have been offered. By far the largest number of classes falls into the category of Leisure Studies. Our retirees fill their time with meaningful activities. Eighteen classes of bridge have been offered from *Bridge Play for Fun* to *Advanced Intermediate Bridge*. Another popular class is *Beginning Bird Watching* for those whose interests are in the outdoors. Classes in *Antiques*, *Golf*, *Gourmet Cooking*, *Don't Retire Your Money*, *Senior Living* and *Wine Appreciation* have been given. Some students want to exercise their bodies as well as their minds and take courses in *Tai Chi for Seniors* and *Yoga*.

Humanities are well represented with courses in the arts, film studies, foreign languages, dance, music, literature and theater. Art classes have included a *Survey of Art History*, *Fiber Arts*, *Flower Arranging as Art Form*, *Intro to Stained Glass*, *Painting with Pastels* and *Pottery*. Two Film classes are *Movies R Us* and *Silent Film Comedies*. Dance classes range from *Expressive Dance* to *Line Dancing* and *Old English Country Dancing*.

Music is a popular category. Whether your interest is *Bluegrass* or *Church Pipe Organs*, LLI offers a class to suit. *Instrumental Music: Scrape, Whack, Puff, Tweak* is the most colorful title offered. More stately is *Music in Western Culture: 18<sup>th</sup> Century – 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. A hands-on

piano class using electronic pianos gives those who always wanted to play the piano a chance to try.

Literature always enriches our lives and courses have included Hemingway, Emily Dickinson, Emerson, Shakespeare, Jane Austin, Thoreau and Whitman as well as Introduction to Contemporary Poetry. One Course Catalog listed a class called *Shakespeare; Did he Have a Ghost Writer?*

Three very popular categories are computer science, history, and philosophy and religion. Our students are grounding themselves in the 21<sup>st</sup> century choosing computer classes from Beginning and Intermediate Computers and Introduction to the Internet to more difficult studies such as Word, Excel, Windows, PowerPoint, Quicken and even Computer Maintenance. Digital Photography had students in JMU's media lab working with Photoshop to learn how to download and edit their digital pictures. One couple had taken an extended trip to Alaska and had lots of photos to deal with!

History buffs have chosen from course offerings on everything from *Medieval Roots* to *New Women in the South*. *The History of the Shenandoah Valley* has been enjoyed as well as several classes on the Civil War. Church history and studies of various religions have enriched the knowledge of many. *Understanding Islam and Muslim* proved timely and enlightening. A very popular course is *Menonites of the Valley* in which students are taken to homes and businesses of our Mennonite neighbors. A delicious meal prepared in the home is a highlight of the class.

Finally, science classes have kept our brain cells active. Archeology, astronomy, botany, geology and physics have broadened the horizons of many students. Geographic Sciences have provided classes on Africa, China, Cuba, Japan, the Mid-East and Russia.

Whatever your interests, whatever your background, LLI has something for you.

The James Madison University  
 Lifelong Learning Institute  
 Aging, Family and Intergenerational  
 Studies Program  
 Department of Social Work  
 Blue Ridge Hall MSC 9006  
 Harrisonburg, VA 22807



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### Special Interest Groups

How often have you said to yourself, "Oh, I wish this class wouldn't end"?

It doesn't have to! Many of our LLI classes have resulted in "spin-off groups" either because of common interests or simply that participants have enjoyed each others' company. From the very beginning of the program, members have made the choice to continue. The range is wide and varied: kayaking, memoir and creative writing, yoga, bridge, line dancing, hiking, and Southern women writers.

If you know of a group that is not mentioned above or would like to put out the word about a group you would be interested in forming, let us know by email at [owensne@jmu.edu](mailto:owensne@jmu.edu) or phone (540) 568-2923. We will be providing information on the various groups in following issues.

#### Easy Hiker's Club

LLI's wildflower, bird watching, and geology classes all contributed to the genesis of this group. Getting underway in the spring with a roster of six hikes

in April and May, their email distribution list has continued to grow as word spreads. At least one hike is scheduled per month, with more being added during the spring, varying days and times, so that everyone can find one that will meet his or her schedule. Locations are also varied (and suggestions are welcomed), with hikes in the Shenandoah National Park on Stony Man and Trimble Hollow and in the George Washington National Forest at Hone Quarry and on Massanutten Mountain. There is no charge to join the group and carpooling is available. The only requirements are sturdy shoes or boots, water, hat, insect repellent, and a love of nature. Level of difficulty ranges from easy to moderate.

So, if you like being out in nature and observing wildflowers and birds, consider joining this group of congenial individuals by contacting

Rosemarie Palmer  
 at [palmerrx@rica.net](mailto:palmerrx@rica.net)  
 or 540-564-2797



Newsletter Committee Members: Paul Graham, Chair  
 James Butler Carol Lawson Nancy Sweet  
 Eileen Dight Mary Reilly Dick Wurst  
 Nancy Endress Lois Rhodes Ad hoc: Nancy Owens, Jean Taylor  
*Don't miss the next issue, scheduled for September!*