



NIU SPRING 2015 LLI NEWSLETTER

ROAD SCHOLAR

Spring 2015

MUSINGS...

Carol Zar, Steering Committee Chair

**Lifelong Learning
Institute
at
Northern Illinois
University**

**Opening
doors...**

**Building
friendships...**

**Learning
for the
fun of it !**

**Invite a friend to
join the LLI !**

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LLI lights up our lives!

That's what I'm thinking as I write this on a gray and dreary winter day. If only LLI was in session! Then there would be something to look forward to. Unfortunately, LLI is between "semesters." But it does provide an opportunity to reflect on how much LLI contributes to brighten our days. With the wide variety of offerings, there is something for everyone. Our winter session is no exception, and spring looks like there will be much to whet the appetite for learning.

Of course, it's not just the topics at LLI, but the people we meet, many of whom we might not see were it not for LLI. They brighten the day as well. There's always something to talk about, maybe it's something interesting to discuss, or a funny cartoon someone noticed in the paper, or maybe it's just catching up on the latest gossip. But, whatever it is, it brings a smile to the day.

We've recruited some new members and also some new conveners. They enrich our classes and bring new ideas for us to explore. New faces are always welcome, so be a good neighbor and invite someone—or more than one person—you know to join you in taking a study group. You just might brighten their days as well!

I look forward to sharing a smile with each of you as study groups resume.

P.S. Another reason to like LLI...

Researchers at Duke University studied how the ability to remember daily events tends to decline as we grow older, while the ability to use general knowledge usually continues improving. They focused on how prior knowledge is used by older people to fill in the gaps of short-term memories. "Sometimes knowledge compensates for age-related declines in episodic memory, helping older adults match or even surpass the performance of younger adults," the study found. (from the University of California, Berkeley *Wellness Letter*)

So participating in LLI not only provides friendship and knowledge but also helps improve your memory!!



BANKING ON BOB

Bob Higgerson has become quite involved as both a participant and supporter of LLI, although he's not yet been a convener. Bob currently serves on the Steering Committee and has recently agreed to chair the Finance Committee. Not a bad record for someone who not so long ago enrolled in his very first study group. An Indiana native, Bob's path to DeKalb—and to LLI—has been rather circuitous. But when you learn his story, it all falls into place.



Bob grew up in Gary, Indiana, at a time when that now-beleaguered city was at the top of its game. With money rolling in from a booming steel industry (Bob's father worked at US Steel), the city boasted state-of-the-art schools with excellent academic programs. Following graduation, Bob enrolled at Indiana University in Bloomington, where he earned a degree in business administration. His first job was with GMAC, the arm of General Motors which manages the company's auto financing program. That experience made him an attractive candidate when Chesterton (Indiana) State Bank went looking for someone to set up a secondary mortgage program, a new concept at the time.

Bob might have remained in Indiana forever had it not been for a chance meeting with a DeKalb banker. While enrolled in the Graduate School of Banking at the University of Wisconsin, Bob's presentation at a professional conference in Madison so impressed audience member Jim Forster, of the DeKalb Bank, that it resulted in a job offer. Before long Bob, his wife Kathy, and their three young sons had relocated.

A career move to the Leland Bank took the family out-of-town and then back again when that institution was acquired by NB&T, where Bob concluded his banking career three years ago. More recently, Kathy retired from the accounting office at NIU. Now they are enjoying travel (this year to Italy), family (especially their three young granddaughters), and the cultural and educational benefits of living in a university town.

Bob was invited to LLI by fellow Kiwanis member Jerry Smith and was hooked after his first study group. He credits his mother, a long-time elementary school teacher, with instilling a respect for education and a love of learning. He says that after a long career in banking, where learning always had a results-oriented "bottom line" goal, he finds LLI study groups offer such a sense of freedom. "It's exciting," he says, "to indulge your intellectual curiosity in whatever topic you feel like pursuing." He doesn't rule out the possibility of convening a study group himself someday. "But," he says with a smile, "you can be sure it won't have anything to do with finance."

—Brad Pietens

MAKING ROOM

The good news: Our terrific study groups have been attracting higher enrollments in LLI. The bad news: Larger study group sizes mean that Rooms 405 and 505 at the Holmes Student Center, our usual quarters, are sometimes becoming uncomfortably crowded. Rooms are reserved far in advance, so we'll still be using those rooms for our winter and spring terms. But this fall, watch for room changes to more spacious quarters in the student center. After all, we love seeing more members more often!

ELEGANT EATS AT ELLINGTON'S

On Tuesday and Thursdays, during the fall and spring semesters, a three-course, prix fixe meal, with two choices per course, is offered at Ellington's on the main floor of the Holmes Student Center. The restaurant, including meal planning and preparation, is run by NIU students as part of a course. Meals cost \$10, including beverage and tip (extra charge for wine). Each meal has a theme, perhaps a country (Spain), a product (apples), or a holiday (President's Day).

On Tuesdays, LLI members are busy with our Notables brown-bag lunches. But on Thursdays, members occasionally do eat at Ellington's. Reservations are suggested but not required. A semester's worth of menus is posted at www.niu.edu/ellingtons, along with a reservations link. In the coming terms, watch for an occasional email announcement to get interested members together for a group lunch at Ellington's on a Thursday.

Note: Why Ellington's? It's a tribute to jazz virtuoso and composer Duke Ellington who played his last concert on March 20, 1974, two months before he died, in the ballroom of NIU's Holmes Student Center.

SIGN-IN SHEETS DISAPPEARING

You will no longer be asked to sign-in on sheets on the tables outside our meeting rooms. But since study group enrollment lists will still be prepared for conveners, LLI will continue to put a list of those enrolled in each study group on the table. It's a good way to remind yourself of a name when you recognize a face or to find out whether a particular person is in your study group.

However, if your name is not on a study group list because you registered late OR because you decided to take a study group for which you had not signed up (and that is perfectly OK with LLI!), PLEASE write your name on the sheet. It will be very helpful for the convener.



**TELL US WHAT
YOU THINK**

EMAIL SURVEY

Watch your email inbox in the coming months for a survey about alternate times for study group meetings.

KUDOS TO CONVENERS

Conveners are the life-blood of LLI. They are what enable us to offer a diversity of intriguing study groups. For many, convening is such a good experience that they make come-back appearances as conveners. But LLI is always looking for new conveners. So special thanks to these LLI members who stepped up and convened their first study groups in 2014: Brian Fulton, Wilson Wiedenheft (an NIU grad student), Guy Todnem, and Joyce Barker.

THE SPRING 2015 LLI MENU

March 17 – May 7 (All study groups eight weeks, unless noted.)

Meditative Traditions in World Religions – Tim Griffin
 Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Native American meditative practices

Great Thinkers in Psychology – Joe Grush
 Creators and approaches of psychoanalysis, behaviorism, humanism, psychometrics

Ballet: France, Russia, Britain & America – Al Resis
 Music and performances by renowned ballet companies

Introductory History of the Bible (7 weeks) – Joe Gastiger
 Who, when, why of Bible history; voices included and suppressed

How Do We Know That? Thinking about Earth Differently (4 weeks)
 - Wilson Wiedenheft

Geologists’ new understanding of how Earth got to the way it is

Rome: The Second Time Around (6 weeks) – Judith Testa
 Fascinating but less visited Roman sites, from ancient to modern

The 1950s: Part I – Elaine and George Spencer
 The bomb, the Cold War, crime, decolonization, other political and cultural changes

Contemporary Southeast Asia – Clark Neher
 Focus on Indonesia, Vietnam, high economic growth rates, democracy vs. military rule

The Reconstruction Era – Richard Downen
 Civil War’s aftermath of turbulence, ad hoc solutions, freedom, impeachment

Explorations in Creativity – Marilyn Cleland
 Practices and exercises using varied approaches to tap into your creativity

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Fall 2014

Robert Dutton, DeKalb
 Steven Greenfield, Sycamore
 Chris Guhl, DeKalb
 Cherie Hauptman, Rochelle
 Alan Kleinstiver, DeKalb
 Mary Ellen Krasula, DeKalb
 Teresa Mach, Sycamore
 Karen Mueller, DeKalb
 Judy Olsen, Cortland
 Gail Schourek, Hampshire
 Patricia Sellers, Paw Paw

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

LLI Winter Term	January 20–February 12, 2015
LLI Spring Term	March 17–May 7, 2015
LLI Annual Soiree	June 19, 2015
LLI Summer Term	July 7–July 30, 2015
LLI Fall Term	September 15–November 5, 2015

BEST RECRUITERS: MEMBERS

“A friend told me about LLI.”

Surveys of new members found that such personal contact was by far the #1 reason people heard about and joined LLI. So, spread the word. And you are always welcome to bring a guest to a study group session or to any Notable. Who knows? You may be recruiting a future convener.

To add someone to the LLI mailing list, send the name, street address, and (if possible) email to the office at NIULLI@niu.edu or call 815-753-5200.