



NIU SPRING 2013 LLI NEWSLETTER

ROAD SCHOLAR

Spring 2013

MUSINGS...

Carol Zar, Steering Committee Chair

**Lifelong Learning
Institute
at
Northern Illinois
University**

**Opening
doors...**

**Building
friendships...**

**Learning
for the
fun of it !**

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join the LLI !**

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Happy New Year to all! I hope you enjoyed the holidays, had time to gather with friends and family, and, perhaps, enjoyed a bit of down time. But now it's time to get back into the LLI swing! My wish for LLI during 2013 is that we continue to prosper and grow. Over the past two years, more than 80 individuals have taken their first LLI study group. Many have continued to take subsequent study groups. During that same period of time, several individuals have stepped forward to try their hand at convening a study group for the first time. It is this constant infusion of new ideas, fresh outlooks on topics, and renewed zest for learning that keeps LLI going.



Elsewhere in this newsletter, you'll read about some of the people and projects that contribute to keeping LLI functioning. There is no need to remind you that it takes many hands to make light work of keeping LLI the strong, vital organization it has become. During the period between LLI terms, I run into our members anxiously awaiting the start of the new term. They miss their LLI friends and the stimulation they receive from attending our study groups. And that's what we strive for. We want LLI to be an integral part of your year, something around which you plan your other activities.

By the time you read this, our winter term will be in full swing, our spring program will be locked in, and the curriculum committee will be hard at work planning for summer and fall. New ideas are always welcome as is feedback on what we are doing well and at what we need to work harder. Feel free to talk to me or any other steering committee member during study group breaks, over lunch, or when you run into us around town! We'd love to hear your thoughts.

So, let's enjoy each other's company, explore new ideas, and have an exciting 2013.

"Life is a highway for learning on which the journey, not the destination, is the real reward. Take this opportunity to make or renew friendships, exchange ideas, explore the possibilities, and enjoy new experiences. Come join us. It's an offer you shouldn't refuse."
-- Brian Fulton, in article about LLI

WILD ABOUT WILDLIFE

Although she was born in Maryland, Gail Venteau lived in many different locations during her growing up years, including Massachusetts and New York. It was probably in upstate New York where she first developed an awareness of wildlife, which continued through the years as she pursued a career in nursing, married, moved to Virginia and became a parent. Eventually in the mid-1990s she returned to the beautiful Hudson River Valley area where her fascination with wildlife continued to grow. Six years ago Gail relocated to DeKalb, motivated by the fact that her daughter was a student at NIU. And one of the first things she noticed about her new home was the abundance of native wildlife. "I've always been aware of the various creatures wherever I've lived," Gail says, "but until I moved to Illinois, I'd never seen them so up-close and personal."



Already a participant in LLI, Gail decided to take her involvement one step further by convening a study group on a topic of great personal interest: *Living With Wildlife in Illinois*. She's developed a wide range of topics and has assembled an impressive list of guest presenters, including Chrisy Gerbitz, who will explain the efforts to rehabilitate injured wildlife at Oaken Acres. Fellow LLI participant Tom Smith, an avid wildlife photographer, and Peter Olson, assistant director of NIU's Art Museum and an artist and printmaker specializing in bird images, help to round out the program.

Gail has now officially retired from her nursing career, but anticipating the arrival of her first grandchild in April, she's not going anywhere soon. We hope she builds on the certain success of this new endeavor with other equally creative ideas for future LLI programs. —Brad Pietens

FOUNDATION FUNDS PROVIDE EXTRAS

Many LLI members have made tax-deductible gifts to LLI through our account with the Northern Illinois University Foundation, whether by supporting our Soiree fund raiser or making a gift in memory of or in honor of someone. In turn, that account allows LLI to spend money beyond our operating budget on things that enhance our program. All such expenditures are approved by the LLI Steering Committee.

Foundation funds recently paid for the over-the-head microphones that our conveners and speakers now wear, making it much easier to hear them – especially if you are seated near a noisy heating/ac unit. An “Elmo” overhead projector, which can be used with any printed material, was a previous purchase.

Our large increase in membership this past year may be partially due to our increased outreach efforts, such as the Northern Public Radio underwriting spots funded from our foundation account. Foundation funds were also used before the Senior Fair to pay for ads about our presence at the fair and a live interview on DeKalb station WLBK-AM.

SPREADING THE WORD

“We all know what a good deal LLI is and how important it is in our lives. The job of the LLI Outreach Committee is to get the word out to more people,” says Carol Zar, who coordinates LLI’s new Outreach Committee.

Before the fall term, the committee focused on radio publicity. Committee member Jerry Smith was interviewed at length on a remote broadcast by DeKalb station WLBK-AM from the Senior Fair. This initiative was in cooperation with LLI’s Special Projects Committee.

Since comments in study groups indicate that many LLI members listen to public radio, area public radio stations WNIU-FM and WNIJ-FM were naturals for reaching potential members. Underwriting spots (not ads) describing LLI as “...offering retirees weekly study groups, from poetry to politics. No homework, just learning for fun...” ran for several weeks. Both radio campaigns were paid for with our NIU Foundation funds.

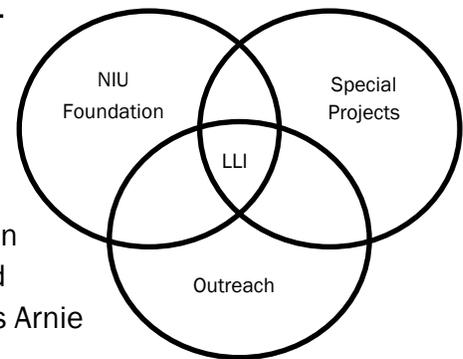
To help with retention, as well as recruitment, a short survey was sent to people who joined LLI in the past two years, whether they took just one study group or are active members. Questions included how they heard about LLI and why they joined and stayed or dropped. The responses are now being compiled and will help in planning future projects.

Others working on these projects are committee members Jan Graefen, Joanne Dillman, Elizabeth Bass, and Brian Fulton, who wrote an article about LLI for the NIU Annuitants fall newsletter.

SPECIAL CHAIR FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS

“It needs to be done.” That’s why Pat Mehagan says she has chaired both the LLI Special Projects committee and coordinated our Senior Fair and Soiree projects.

The Senior Fair, sponsored by local state legislators, is an annual, free, summer event with booths for vendors and organizations with products and services aimed at seniors. Pat had read about the fair and got the approval of the LLI Steering Committee for an LLI booth. That booth has catalogs on display, pens to hand out, and a sign-up list for those interested in more information. Pat staffs the booth, usually with members Arnie Lehto and Thelma Coles.



The LLI Soiree, our major social and fundraising event, started in 2008 when LLI lost its start-up subsidy from NIU and needed more income to break even. “We didn’t want to raise our fees,” Pat recalls, so a group of members considered fundraising ideas and quickly focused on an event with time to just socialize.

Pat has chaired each of the very successful Soirees. (Over 80 people attended last spring.) Typically underestimating what she does, Pat says, “All I do now is make sure things get done.”

