Lifelong Learning: A Family Affair with OLLI@UND

Learning is driven as much by nurture as by nature.
That’s Lori Swinney’s take.

The director of the UND Center for Instructional & Learning Technologies holds a PhD (from UND) and is an active OLLI learner, along with her mother, Maxine Rasmussen, who holds a PhD in counseling psychology. Swinney says she grew up in a learning-supportive environment. Her dad, a chemical engineer, started his own fertilizer and chemical business, where Swinney worked for 20 years before turning back to her original love—teaching and learning (she still does the books for her mother’s business).

Swinney and her mother don’t just learn together.
“For years we also taught communication classes to young people who wanted to get married,” said Swinney, whose master’s degree included designing a curriculum for her mother’s online intro to psychology course at the University of Minnesota, Crookston.

“We’ve also done workshops on creativity, and working with difficult children,” she said.

When OLLI came along, Swinney and Maxine joined up right away.
“My mom and I took the first course together,” she said. “It’s one of the things that I love most about UND—it’s having close access to lectures and special programs such as OLLI.”

“Learning is a quest I have always followed,” Maxine said. “I like filling up space in my mind with new ideas and concepts, it is exciting.”

Since then, it’s been an ongoing interest.
“We love the environment,” Swinney said. “For example, we took two history courses during the same semester that were taught by historians Hans Broedel and Bill Caraher—Hans about witchcraft and the Middle Ages, and...”

Lifelong Learning Quote

“Learning is not a product of schooling, but the lifelong attempt to acquire it.”
Albert Einstein (1879–1955)
Director’s Corner
We Need Your Input to Help Grow OLLI!

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute is in need of members. OLLI is also in need of volunteers. Here is why.

With the endowment funding from The Bernard Osher Foundation, OLLI@UND needs to grow and maintain its member base. OLLI’s membership fluctuates each year and every few years, we do a membership drive – to “get the word out about OLLI” OLLI needs to continue growing or it could be in jeopardy of losing its endowment funding. Without the endowment, we wouldn’t be able to sustain the program as we know it today.

We are currently at 542 members in the Grand Forks and Bismarck areas; one of the lowest months we have witnessed. Our goal is to reach 700+ members. If OLLI is to continue as a strong organization and continue receiving the endowment support, it needs to grow and keep its membership base (500 members is the minimum number allowed for OLLI’s continued endowment funding). UND and BSC (in partnership) will be leading a member recruitment and outreach campaign in late summer leading up to the Fall Showcase in August. We’re asking all OLLI members to participate in a brainstorming session on the same day as the May Showcase to provide input on increasing membership. OLLI is your organization, please provide us with your input.

Bismarck area members
Please mark your calendars for Thursday, May 15 – Showcase from 11:30 am – 1:00 pm, brainstorming from 1:00 - 2:30 pm (both at Room 431, NECE Building)

Grand Forks area members
Please mark your calendars for Monday, May 12 – brainstorming from 1:00 - 2:30 pm (REAC Building, 1st floor classroom), Showcase from 4:30 – 6:00 pm (Grand Forks Senior Center)

This is one way, as OLLI members, to make an impact on your OLLI program. OLLI is also in need of volunteers. As we look at a majority of OLLIs from around the United States, they all have high levels of volunteers. We’re seeking additional OLLI members to assist in a number of different areas:

Curriculum – We’re seeking individuals to continuously send Connie Hodgson (Grand Forks) or Alison Zarr (Bismarck) with quality course ideas, quality instructors, interesting trip ideas, etc. to maintain quality programming for your area.

Outreach – We’re asking for your ongoing help to assist staff members at UND in Grand Forks and at Bismarck State College in Bismarck to get the word out about OLLI – distributing OLLI catalogs, talking with non-profit organizations, etc.

Member Drive – This summer and early fall, we’re asking for some special help. We’ll be gathering your ideas at the May brainstorming meetings in Grand Forks and Bismarck to put together a Member Drive/Outreach plan over the summer which will hopefully garner new members for our August Showcases.

Classroom Greeters/Monitors – Starting this fall, we will ask for classroom greeters/monitors – someone who is willing to turn the lights on, help introduce the speaker, welcome OLLI members and send course evaluations to Connie.

If you have ideas, please contact me (lynette.krenelka@UND.edu), Connie Hodgson (connie.hodgson@UND.edu), Alison Zarr (alison.zarr@bismarckstate.edu) or call 1.800.CALL.UND.

- Lynette Krenelka, Director, Office of Extended Learning
Member & Instructor: Ann Vadnie

Ann Vadnie has been in the classroom for most of her adult life. It’s been a really good run—and it’s not over yet. The retired public school teacher now spends much of her year preparing for her OLLI classes and for history presentations to area clubs and other social groups.

“I’m a lifelong learner, too,” says Vadnie, a Bismarck native who was mostly a ninth grade English teacher when that grade was part of a Bismarck area middle school.

“Now I teach—and take—OLLI classes, and I love it!” she says. “It’s such a delight to have people in my classes who have something to bring to the table, so it’s not just all you, the teacher.”

Vadnie, who got her teaching degree at the College of St. Catherine (now St. Catherine University) in the Twin Cities, says a remarkable fact about teaching adults is her classes are full of knowledgeable folks who’re willing to participate.

“There’s a lot of give and take in OLLI classes and that’s a part of the fun,” says Vadnie, whose forebears settled in the Bismarck area and became integral members of community.

“Teaching OLLI is a whole other niche that really reinforces my own belief that education should continue your entire life,” says Vadnie, who got a master’s degree in South Dakota, reinforcing her own commitment to the principle of lifelong learning. “I’ve always had a thirst for new knowledge, and now, the research for my OLLI classes helps fulfill that in me. I get to pass what I know along to people who want to continue their education—it’s a truly wonderful feeling!”

Vadnie teaches several subjects through OLLI: next up is “Her Stories in History,” a class about women in history, scheduled for this coming fall.

“I might have to slow down a bit because I’m having a total knee replacement in July,” says Vadnie, whose family history includes farmers, miners, a fire marshal, an insurance agent, and a grocery story owner.

Teaching for Vadnie includes staying up on Bismarck history—she delivers a lot of presentations around Bismarck about the history of the town and the county.

She notes that in her most recent OLLI class, 30 students enrolled—a full house.

“It’s delightful to see that many people interested, and I get a lot of folks who have taken more than one of my classes,” she says. “I guess they enjoy the way I teach.”

Does she ever think about her days among children? You bet.

“Many of my own students went on to become teachers, and it’s humbling to think about that when they tell me that I inspired them to become teachers,” says Vadnie, who adds she enjoys learning, as well as teaching. “I recently took a OLLI class in poetry.”

Her secret: overprepare.

“I’m real comfortable presenting, but that’s because I know that I need to prepare effectively to give students—whatever their age—a good experience,” Vadnie says.

Any surprises?

“Well, being a middle school teacher prepares you for almost anything,” Vadnie says. “But there’s no doubt that I love teaching adults—it’s so much fun because teacher and students can have a good time together.”

And, she says, “Good friendships form.”

- by Juan Miguel Pedraza, writer/editor
Summer 2014 OLLI Courses

Complete course details will be provided in the Summer 2014 Course Catalog

Grand Forks
- Physics for Fun
- Birds on Parade
- Oneness in All Life: An Exploration of Mindful Living
- All in One Sack: Humor and Tragedy in the Life of Germans from Russia
- The Legend of the World Savior
- Nutritional Health Problems in the US
- Ethiopia Reads
- Creating Positive Relationships through Effective Communication
- 10 Tips to Save Money, Be More Comfortable and Make Your Home More Energy Efficient
- Christmas in July
- Nutrition and Today’s Produce
- The Basic: Memory Loss, Dementia and Alzheimer’s Disease
- UND College of Nursing and Professional Disciplines Tour
- UND Forensic Clinical Practice Facility Tour
- Comprehensive Energy Tour (Oil Trip) – May 28-30
- “Rachel Calof: A Memoir with Music” play in Devil’s Lake
- Landscaping from Scratch

Bismarck
- People from North Dakota
- Encounters at the Heart of the World
- Inside the World of Music
- Watergate – 40 Years Later
- Gangs of North Dakota
- Am I Living in a Desert?
- Telephone, E-Scams, Mail Fraud and Cyber-Phishing
- Armchair Traveler – New Zealand
- Container and Patio Gardening – Plant Perfect
- The Long Hot Summer of 1964 (book discussion)
- Adventures of Birding
- CSI – North Dakota
- Buckstop Junction Tour
- Metal Arts/L & H Manufacturing Tour
- Dakota Zoo
- Day Trip to Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery and Aquarium
- Comprehensive Energy Tour (Oil Trip) – May 29

Visit olli.UND.edu throughout the year for updates on courses and events.
Leadership Council Spotlight

Jan Kolding

Birthplace: Watford City, ND

Past:

Graduate of North Dakota State University - Higher Education & Science major
Taught school, then spent 27 years in Human Resources at Sears, Cloverdale and State Government

Current:

Retired
Married to David for 52 years
Two adult children, Jennifer Bentz and Jeffrey Kolding

Hobbies:

Quilting - especially at church for Lutheran World Relief
Reading
Taking OLLI classes

Interesting Information:

Lifelong Learner
I attend exercise classes at the Y
I’m a Bible Study leader

Course Review: IMPACT
(International Movement Promoting Assault Contravention Training)

Instructor: Kay Mendick

I took the IMPACT course to learn to defend myself but I walked out of the course with so much more. I feel more confident, empowered and safer in this world. This course is incredible!

With the IMPACT course you learn hands-on techniques to defend yourself in real-life situations. The course also covered verbal and non-verbal strategies to deal with difficult people. Because of the course, I’m more aware of my surroundings and have learned to believe my instincts. The instructors are very professional and fun to work with. They teach every move step-by-step and each student gets the opportunity to practice several times, in order to develop “muscle memory,” as they say. It’s a safe learning environment and there’s a lot of encouragement, praise and support from the instructors and group members.

I highly recommend the IMPACT course for women of all ages and wish this education was more available to females all around the world.

Thank you IMPACT for the IMPACT you made in my life!

- by Neha Khanna
Upcoming OLLI Showcases & Events

Grand Forks area members
• Monday, May 12: member brainstorming from 1:00 - 2:30 pm (REAC Building, 1st floor classroom)
• Grand Forks Showcase
  Monday, May 12 from 4:30 - 6:00 pm: Grand Forks Senior Center, 620 4th Ave S, Grand Forks, ND 58201
  Guest Speaker: Heidi Hughes, Education Director Coordinator for the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers
  Watershed District

Bismarck area members
• Bismarck Showcase
  Thursday, May 15 from 11:30 am - 1:00 pm: Room 431, NECE, 1200 Schafer St., on the BSC campus
  Guest Speaker: Robert Wefald, Retired District Judge, USS North Dakota Commissioning
• Thursday, May 15: member brainstorming from 1:00 - 2:30 pm (Room 431, NECE Building)

Visit the new OLLI website!
• Register for courses
• Renew your membership
• View OLLI news
• Download the latest course catalog

Family Affair: continued from page 1...

and Bill about the fall of the Roman Empire. They worked very well together, they were both very engaging.”

Learning is where it happens, Swinney says, and it’s not always a classroom.

“When I was working with my dad in the feed and fertilizer business, when we did a lot of deliveries to farms,
I learned a lot of things about animals that I didn’t know,” Swinney said. “For example, I learned what ‘settled’
means—when you say a cow is settled, it means she is pregnant.”

When she came back to UND, she started taking advantage of the policy of one free course per semester—it’s how
she got through her master’s and PhD programs.

“I learned about how to engage learners and all about content delivery, and how to teach with technology,”
she said.

Once she was done taking the free classes to get her advanced degrees, Swinney turned—with her mom—to OLLI.
“She and I both love to do that,” she said. “We both love learning.”

- by Juan Miguel Pedraza, writer/editor