

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Connecticut is an academic cooperative that provides older adults with opportunities for intellectual development, cultural stimulation, and social interaction

ST. PATRICK'S DAY

St Paddy's Day arrives next week when "all the world is Irish!" There will be parades (the first record of a parade was in New York in 1762) and parties and the 'wearing o' the green' along with piles of corn beef and cabbage and green beer. Even our OLLI Clubs and Activities Committee invites our members to a St. Patrick's Day Game Day. The celebration of his day goes way back.

The Feast of St. Patrick is a cultural and religious celebration occurring annually on March 17, supposedly the death date in 461 of the most commonly recognized patron saint of Ireland. (It may have started because Lenten restrictions for Catholics were usually lifted for the day). Patrick was not even Irish, however. He had been born into a wealthy Roman-British family and apparently was kidnapped by Irish raiders who kept him as shepherd/slave for six years. Legend has it that he received a vision "from God" who told him to escape and walk 200 miles to the coast where a ship would be waiting to take him home.

He became a priest and received another vision to return to Ireland and convert the pagan Irish to Christianity and became very successful in accomplishing that. According to legend, he used the shamrock with its three leaves to explain the concept of the Holy Trinity of Christian faith. In pagan times the number three was a significant number and the Irish already had many triple deities.

St. Patrick has many myths associated with him. One of which is that he 'chased all the snakes out of Ireland' which is not true because Ireland is surrounded by waters too cold for snakes to have come to Ireland. This idea probably symbolizes that Patrick brought Christianity to the Irish and 'chased' their pagan ideas out.

Even the color associated with St. Patrick is not green but blue. But over the years on the feast day people wore the green shamrocks and, in time, wore green articles of clothing until the wearing of green became symbolic with Irish nationalism and St. Paddy's day. Over the years, especially in the larger cities, St. Patrick's Day became more secular and the occasion for a chance to slough off the weariness of winter and celebrate the coming spring.

So join other OLLI members next Tuesday and let the games begin.





OLLI GARDEN PROJECT- part 2

Although the first season, 2013 was a success, we did not know if there would be a repeat performance. Dealing with a visionary we learned that there is no turning back. Nunzio felt that we needed to take over the entire 150 raised beds in the park. He pushed for this knowing that the volunteers were aging another year and we would need at least double the number of dedicated workers. His managerial style was to tell everyone that they could come and go as they please. He berated us if we stopped to rest and anyone who left early was accused of being a part timer. All of us were required to listen to his observations such as harvesting potatoes, cutting the outer leaves of lettuce or picking kohlrabi or beets. To the surprise of the original gardeners, Nunzio's dynamicism attracted at least twice as many highly motivated gardeners the second year. People came –**continued on pg 6**

The Newsletter is always looking for content from our readers. This may be in the form of original work or items you have found interesting and may wish to pass on to others. We always welcome any suggestions you may have to improve the newsletter or criticisms of it. The Newsletter exists to inform and entertain our readers.

Contact **Bob Grady** at yvoorg@aol.com or any presenter or staff member

OLLI Newsletters Go Internet

OLLI newsletters are available on our web page at
www.oli.uconn.edu/weekly-newsletters/

Then click on the left-hand index that says "Newsletters". They are available in PDF format. If you don't have the free reader, you can get it at www.adobe.com and click on the box that says "READER".

CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE PRESENTS GAME DAY ON MARCH 17

St. Patrick's Day will be the theme for OLLI's first 'Game Day' starting at 12:30 on Tuesday, March 17 in rm.102.

Players can enjoy various familiar board and card games as well as several new challenges. Participants may also bring a game with an OLLI friend or a small group.

In keeping with the mood, Irish music will be accompanying the fun. Of course, there will be special refreshments, snacks, and beverages on hand. The OLLI office will take reservations until March 13. Watch for updated flyers and upcoming e-blasts.

Save the Date!

If it's potato pancakes, stuffed cabbage, pierogi, kielbasa and other Polish culinary delights that whet your appetite, then set aside Tuesday, April 28, from 12 noon to 2:00 to join the OLLI Clubs and Activities Committee folks as they bring you the second annual ethnic food venture to the Belvedere Café and Restaurant, 82 Broad Street, New Britain, CT.

Cost of the dining experience is \$20 per person and includes the Polish buffet, a visit to a Polish bakery and a short walking tour of the Broad Street Polish area. OLLI presenter, Lisa Wisniewski, will be our guide along with members of the Clubs and Activities Committee.

Reservations can be made to Nancy Via, nvia@sbcglobal.net, telephone (203) 758-6359 or to Delma Way, delvilway@aol.com, telephone (860) 274-8621 by April 22 at the latest.

OLLI POETRY COFFEE HOUSE

2nd Thurs at John Bale Bookshop –
10:00am

Contact Denise Whelan
(denisewhelan@yahoo.com)

For more information

OLLI BOOK CLUB

Contact: **Nancy Via** at nvia@sbcglobal.net

All meetings of the book club will be held in room 102D, UConn, Wtby at 1:00 PM
3rd Monday

March 16
April 20
May 18
June 15

The Omnivore's Dilemma
Being Mortal
Underground Girls of Kabul
Tomlinson Hill

Michael Pollan
Atul Gawande
Jenny Nordberg
Chris Tomlinson



NIAGARA FALLS, CANADA

September 27-30, 2015

OLLI CAFE

Mar 13. THE GULF OF TONKIN EVENT- FIFTY YEARS LATER WITH JOHN WHITE

The Vietnam War essentially began in August 1964 when President Johnson told congress that two of our ships were attacked by North Vietnam while they were streaming peacefully on the high seas. That was a lie, but it that Congress to pass the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which became the legal basis for waging the war in Southeast Asia. "I knew it was false information because, as a naval officer, I read this secret messages from the ships, which said there was no attack. In 1967 I went public with that knowledge. It set off a world wide uproar." John will describe the situation and its aftermath, including his personal situation.

MARCH 20-WATR radio with Tom Chute

Our next overnight trip to Canada is going to be fantastic. Book early!!!!

Points of interest we will visit:

- The falls viewed from both the American and Canada sides
- Floral clock which is one of the largest in the world. The intricate designs on the face of the clock are made from approximately 16,000 bedding plants
- The Niagara Whirlpool, which is a natural whirlpool located in Niagara Gorge. Its greatest depth is 128 ft.
- Skylon Tower which has a revolving dining room (this is where we will have dinner on Day 3). It is 775 feet above the falls with breathtaking views.
- Niagara-on-the-Lake called the loveliest town in Ontario
- Winery tour along with a wine tasting

Butterfly Conservatory is located on the grounds of the Niagara Parks Botanical Gardens with over 2,000 butterflies, made up of 45 different species

Our hotel, the Country Inn & Suites, is centrally located to many attractions, i.e. the Canadian Falls, Clifton Hill which has an array of attractions and shops, Maid of the Mist, and the giant Sky Wheel (most are in walking distance).

Call Friendship Tours at 860 243-1630 to make your reservations. A valid passport is required. Cost \$510.00 pp double/triple and \$650 pp single. Non-member surcharge +\$20 pp. Included: 3 night hotel, 3 breakfasts, 2 dinners.

"In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago."

- "In the bleak midwinter," Christina Rossetti

(Well, maybe not so long ago!!) rj

Upcoming OLLI Travel

5/13/15-Culinary Arts Museum/RISD Art Museum-\$79pp

6/3/2015- Best of Boston (JFK Library & Cruise) - \$86pp

6/7 - 6/9/2015 – Ogunquit/Strawbery Banke (overnight)- \$397pp dbl (sold out)

9/16/2015 – NY Botanical Gardens (Frida Kahlo’s Garden) - \$75pp

9/27 - 30/2015 – Niagara Falls (overnight) - \$510pp dbl

All prices are member prices. Non-members are charged a slight surcharge. Call Friendship Tours for information and reservations. (1-800-243-1630). Mention OLLI Travel



HAPPY ST. PADDY'S DAY

Definition of an Irish husband: He hasn't kissed his wife for twenty years, but he will kill any man who does.

Murphy told Quinn that his wife was driving him to drink. Quinn thinks he's very lucky because his own wife makes him walk.

The late Bishop Sheen stated that the reason the Irish fight so often among themselves is that they're always assured of having a worthy opponent.

An American lawyer asked, "Paddy, why is it that whenever you ask an Irishman a question, he answers with another question?"
"Who told you that?" asked Paddy.

Reilly went to trial for armed robbery. The jury foreman came out and announced, "Not guilty."
"That's grand!" shouted Reilly. "Does that mean I can keep the money?"

Irish lass customer: "Could I be trying on that dress in the window?"

Shopkeeper: "I'd prefer that you use the dressing room."

Mrs. Feeney shouted from the kitchen, "Is that you I hear spittin' in the vase on the mantle piece?"
"No," said himself, "but I'm gettin' closer all the time."

Finnegin: My wife has a terrible habit of staying up 'til two o'clock in the morning. I can't break her of it.
Keenan: What on earth is she doin' at that time?
Finnegin: Waitin' for me to come home .

Slaney phoned the maternity ward at the hospital. "Quick!" he said. "Send an ambulance, my wife is goin' to have a baby!"
"Tell me, is this her first baby?" the intern asked.
"No, this is her husband, Kevin, speakin'."

"O'Ryan," asked the druggist, "did that mudpack I gave you improve your wife's appearance?"
"It did surely," replied O'Ryan, "but it keeps fallin' off!"

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UCONN, Waterbury

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The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Connecticut is an academic cooperative that provides older adults with opportunities for intellectual development, cultural stimulation, and social interaction. Our programs are centered around classes developed and taught by members who volunteer their time and talents to share their knowledge, life passions, and interest with other members. The OLLI program also sponsors special events featuring noted authors, scholars, and experts in respected professional fields.

OLLI Leadership Council

Council Members

OLLI officers are part of the Leadership Council, which is the principal representative body of the OLLI membership.

Council Officers

President - Richard Fogg
1st Vice President - Mary Lou Reignier
2nd Vice President - Delma Way
Secretary - Toni Escott
Assistant Secretary - Joyce Conlan



We're on the web! www.oli.uconn.edu

MEET YOUR PRESENTERS

Lisa Wisniewski has two major passions: teaching and advocating for people with Polish roots to maintain their heritage.

She also wants people to know about New Britain, Connecticut. “To understand New Britain, you have to understand the Polish,” she says. Lisa herself loves being bi-lingual, finding that having two languages opens up doors to opportunities.

She also cherishes Polish traditions centered around Christmas Eve and Easter. She grew up in Farmington, just over the line from New Britain. The New Britain Polish community was and remains central to her family.

Now focusing on a career in education, Lisa recalls her first job (part-time) was being a translator for Polish speaking people in a doctor’s office while she was earning her bachelor’s degree from the University of Connecticut. She later earned a master’s in Student Development in Higher Education and is pursuing her Doctor of Education degree from the University of Hartford.

Traditions that enriched her life growing up include the traditional Christmas Eve meal featuring twelve-major dishes with one empty chair at the table should an unexpected guest arrive. The meal begins with the eldest person saying a prayer; then *oplatek*, a special Christmas wafer, is broken and shared by guests with wishes for a happy year following. Typical foods served might include *Pierogi* (a kind of dumpling); fruit that may be dried, and potatoes with cheese.

Lisa, who loves to dance, remembers growing up learning traditional Polish dances, including the colorful and fast-paced *krakowiak*. She also took ballet and jazz lessons at a local dance studio. “The exposure to an audience and to other dancers was a good learning experience.”

Lisa, like many of the children in the Polish community, lived in a household where Polish was the first language. Her mother didn’t come to America until attaining age 30, Lisa says, and spoke Polish and some Russian. Mrs. Wisniewski learned English by watching soap operas. Her dad, also Polish born, came to this country at an earlier age. He became a tool designer who made light switcher and her mother became a product inspector.

Lisa spent a lot of time with her grandmother, who had lived through World War II. Once in a while her grandmother would “give insight” on wartime experiences that “made history come alive.”

Lisa went to a pre-school program at age two and cried every day. Soon it was clear; she didn’t know what the teachers were saying because she only spoke Polish. But she quickly picked up English as young children do and her academic experience got underway.

While her family remains a cornerstone of her life, Lisa continues



to challenge herself. She decided it is important for people to know the Polish communities on the East Coast and contributions they have made to this country.

Consequently she played a key role in bringing an international conference of students, *Quo Vadis Connecticut 2013*, to New Britain. *Quo Vadis* is comprised of young professionals of Polish descent in the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Europe interested in creating a global network of people of Polish descent living outside of Poland.

Lisa’s work has attracted national attention. She was invited to participate in 2014 in the White House Forum for Ethnic American Leaders in Washington, D.C.

As her own formal education progressed, Lisa has become increasingly aware of her own love of teaching. She is teaching a course at Goodwin College titled *The College Experience*, required of all freshmen. The course focuses on basic how to succeed skills, including best use of time, writing and reading analysis. “We read a book and we tear it apart.” Feedback from her students who suddenly understand a principle delights her. “I didn’t know it was that simple,” one exclaimed.

At OLLI, Lisa presents *The Polish Experience in America*. –
Mary Ann Martin

early and stayed late. Everyone felt appreciated and there was time for casual conversations while working together. We became a support group covered in mud.

Changes were made in 2014 which reflected our visionary's dreams and exhausted us. This year we planted seedlings instead of seeds. The seedlings were contributed by people realizing that we had a successful endeavor. Some aging raised beds had rotted wooden sides. These sides were replaced by 20 or 40 foot wooden planks. The planks had been buried in the back of the gardens and were reclaimed as needed. This pattern of reclaiming every aspect of the garden was typical of this second year. Whereas weeding had occupied lots of our time the first year, this year we used black plastic previously used on the beds we now acquired. This twice used black plastic was used at the end of the season to preserve the used beds for the next season. Part of the inspiration of the project was that nothing was wasted. Various volunteers also contributed resources as needed.

Resources such as home grown seedlings, gardening tools, snacks for the volunteers, stakes, nails and essential Home Depot products like more black plastic and a hammer. A five pound mallet caused tendonitis throughout the volunteer population until someone bought a hammer.



Saturday watering had been done exclusively by Nunzio the first year in addition to his being present every Tuesday and Thursday. A watering schedule for Saturdays was devised and everyone was happy to participate. Of course an effective rain dance on your Saturday would release you from your obligation. Another major first year problem had been the woodchucks. During the first year they managed to eat kale, beet greens, broccoli and Swiss chard before they were captured. The second year the cage was placed right at the entrance of their burrow hole and so they consumed the bait in the cage without causing damage. In 2014 sixteen woodchucks were relocated by our compassionate leader.

Individual volunteers applied unique strengths. A completely neglected strawberry patch was resurrected by replanting each plant carefully. Hopefully strawberries will be supplied for years to come. Someone suggested growing flowers to supplement the vegetables. Doubters among us learned that flowers are food for the soul. Beautiful floral arrangements accompanied the pasta primavera on the soup kitchen tables. Plans are being made to expand the perennial garden. The flowers were grown from seed or from contributed seedlings. Everything flourished. Nothing was wasted. Cold weather crops were

planted under netting supported by a skeleton of semicircular tubing.

Although when this project was started there was a history of vandalism in Fulton Gardens, during the two years of the project there was minimal destructive activity. Curious neighbors stopped by. A sign declaring that this was a community project supplying food to the soup kitchens halted all problems.

As the second season came to an end we all congratulated our visionary leader. He was such an inspiration but enthusiasm has no boundaries. He decided to cut down branches and then trees overlying the chain linked fence "to give more sunlight". Years of debris on the hillside were removed. We had shoveled 40 yards of soil into the beds but as our leader looked at the crowded roots of the end of season dying plants, he declared that we need to make higher beds and add more soil. All of the dying

plants were not discarded but placed in a make shift compost pile to be recycled so that we would have soil for next year. Seemingly random posts marked new beds in every free space available.

When all the peripheral debris was removed, stately wooden and concrete benches were uncovered. Just as we planned to sit in them in the future, we were told that they would support flower pots.

There are lessons to be learned from this project. Motivate people and there is no limitation as to what may be accomplished. Camaraderie and social interaction is a more effective motivator than money or things. No volunteer could be paid enough to do this work. Such a project needs a visionary. The leader needs to be accepting of all ideas, work harder at times than everyone else, be positive. Our leader has a goodness which is infectious. Many times there were easier ways to accomplish a task, especially with some money but the fun was in the process of doing the task. One aspect of having elderly volunteers is that some of us have had operations and illnesses. Cataracts have been removed. Joints replaced. Heart valves repaired. Procedures which require that the volunteer take a break before coming back with renewed vigor. Isn't this the mission of Olli? The gardening project is evolving into an institutional status.

Ira Mickenberg