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.

NOW WHAT?

Well, it has happened again. Columbine, Sandy Hook, Boston, South Carolina church massacre, San Bernardino massacre, Dallas, Orlando and now, Las Vegas- what will it take to finally come up with some common sense resolutions for these tragedies?

Kurt Anderson of the New York Times, has written a newly published book entitled, Fantasyland: How America Went Haywire, a 500 year History, in which he points out how gullible Americans have become. With the advent of the internet and the diminishment of local newspapers, alternative facts have become acceptable. One of the fantasies he points out that many people believe is that the government is going to take over the country by taking away your guns. He asks rhetorically, "Why are Americans buying the semiautomatic AR – 15 and rifles like it more than any other style, 1.5 million each year? Because holding and shooting one makes them feel cooler, more like commandos. For the same reason, half the states now require no license for people to carry their guns openly in public places... We are actors in a 24/7 tableau vivant, schlubs playing the parts of heroic tough guys... Spectacular mass killings happen in America far more often than anywhere else, and not just because we make massacre-perfect weapons so easy to buy. Such killers are also engaged in role-play and are motivated by our besetting national dream of overnight fame. The experts say that most mass killers are not psychotics or paranoid schizophrenics in the throes of clinical delusion; rather, they are citizens of Fantasyland and unhappy people with flaws and failures they blame on others, the system, the elitists, the world. They worry those resentments into sensational fantasies of paramilitary vengeance, and they know that acting out those fantasies will make a big splash and force the rest of us to pay attention to them for the first time."

LopezGerman,"America'sGunProblem,Explained, @vox.com writes:
"...The shooting has already led to discussions about gun control. Americans have heard these types of calls before: After every mass shooting, the debate over guns and gun violence sparks up once again. Maybe some bills get introduced. Critics respond with concerns that the government is trying to take away their guns. The debate stalls. So even as America continues experiencing levels of gun violence unrivaled in the rest of the developed world, nothing happens — no laws are passed by Congress, nothing significant is done to try to prevent the next horror.

It has become an American routine for the aftermath of a gun violence to play out this way.

So why is it that for all the outrage and mourning with every mass shooting, nothing seems to change? To understand that, it's important to grasp not just the stunning statistics about gun ownership and gun violence in the United States, but America's very unique relationship with guns — unlike that of any other developed country — and how it plays out in our politics to ensure, seemingly against all odds, that our culture and laws continue to drive the routine gun violence that marks American life." He then goes on to suggest some reasons why this is so, using graphs and statistics to back them up. One recent development that has direct consequences is this: “The single most powerful political organization when it comes to guns is, undoubtedly, the National Rifle Association (NRA). The NRA has an enormous stranglehold over conservative politics in America, and that development is more recent than you might think. The NRA was, for much of its early history, more of a sporting club than a serious political force against gun control, and even supported some gun restrictions. In 1934, NRA president Karl Frederick was quoted as saying, "I do not believe in the general promiscuous toting of guns. I think it should be sharply restricted and only under licenses." ..... (Go to Page 3)
OLLI GARDEN PROJECT

Our UConn OLLI Fulton Park Gardening Project is in its fifth year and is still in a growing phase. Its success is known to the National OLLI community. It is worthwhile to analyze aspects of this project that have made it such a success.

First and foremost it has a strong, dedicated leader, Nunzio de Fillipis. He is visionary, optimistic, hard working yet easy going and involved in every aspect of the project. Nunzio has a number of reliable “lieutenants” who make his life easier and provide additional expertise to make the project a success.

Volunteers are welcome but under no obligation to come a specific number of days of the week although it is suggested that they come twice a week. One’s efforts no matter how small are always appreciated. Each person is part of a vibrant team effort participating in a worthwhile project of growing and providing food for soup kitchens and for other needy people.

All suggestions are appreciated and anyone who wishes to try a new approach to the project is encouraged. All skills are incorporated into the gardening project, such as techniques of combining vegetables with flowers to ward off insects. Less cerebral skills requiring heavy manual labor such as shoveling you know what, are also needed. Participation on visits to the garden can be as intense as one wishes. You can work up a sweat infiltrating your muddy tee-shirt and go home fatigued or you can go home satiated from eating all the snacks provided.

One has the opportunity to learn new facts about the vegetables you eat, facts about vegetables that you have never eaten before, as well as recipes and gardening skills. Such a positive environment leads to socializing with a welcoming supportive community. This socializing happens in the garden and afterward at parties, planned walks and even trips to New York City or the opera. Everyone is on an earthy “organic” plane with social facades left at home.

Just as important as the project itself is the documentation, recognition of the volunteers and memorialized memories effected by Ralph Famiglietti’s digitalized Gazette, an on line publication occurring at least weekly during the project’s season. The Gazette has progress reports, comments gleamed from the internet about pests and produce, many photos of the volunteers and even information about activities that the volunteers may be interested in outside of the garden.

I hope this report entices more OLLI members to try getting their hands dirty and bringing new life to Fulton Garden by volunteering in the Gardening Project.

Ira Mickenberg M.D.

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OLLI BOOK CLUB

Contact: Nancy Via at nvia@sbcglobal.net

All book club meetings will be held at the UConn Waterbury campus in room 102D at 1:00PM on the 3rd Monday of the month.

FALL 2017 Meeting Schedule:

October 16.... *The Marriage of Opposites*, by Alice Hoffman

November 20... *Elizabeth Street*, by Laurie Fabiano

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 OLLI staff member.
A 1977 revolt within the organization changed everything. As crime rose in the 1960s and '70s, calls for more gun control grew as well. NRA members worried new restrictions on guns would keep coming after the historic 1968 law — eventually ending, they feared, with the government's seizure of all firearms in America. So members mobilized, installing a hard-liner known as Harlon Carter in the leadership, forever changing the NRA into the gun lobby we know today. This foundation story is crucial for understanding why the NRA is near-categorically opposed to the regulation of private firearms. It fears that popular and seemingly commonsense regulations, such as banning assault-style weapons or even a federal database of gun purchases, are not really about saving lives but are in fact a potential first step toward ending all private gun ownership in America, which the NRA views — wrongly, in the minds of some legal experts — as a violation of the Second Amendment of the US Constitution.

So any time there's an attempt to impose new forms of gun control, the NRA rallies gun owners and other opponents of gun control to kill these bills. These gun owners make up a minority of the population: anywhere from around 30 to around 40 percent of households, depending on which survey one uses. But that population is a large and active enough constituency, particularly within the Republican base, to make many legislators fear that a poor grade from the NRA will end their careers.

As a result, conservative media and politicians take the NRA's support — especially the coveted A-to-F ratings the organization gives out — very seriously. Politicians will go to sometimes absurd length to show their support for gun rights.

Christopher Ingraham of The Washington Post notes, “Just 3 percent of U.S. adults own half of the nation’s firearms, according to the results of a Harvard-Northeastern survey of 4,000 gun owners... The researchers who conducted the study say that most gun owners cite a need for protection from other people as a primary reason to own guns. “When I look at our survey, what I see is a population that is living in fear,” Deb Azrael, a Harvard researcher and one of the study’s lead authors, told the nonprofit news organization The Trace. “They are buying handguns to protect themselves against bad guys, they store their guns ready-to-use because of bad guys, and they believe that their guns make them safer.”

This shows a significant shift from the 1990s, when most gun owners said they owned firearms primarily for hunting and target shooting."

So, OLLI members, the question to ask is, what is causing this fear? Is it rational or another fantasy that we are falling for? It is incumbent upon all of us to seek out the real reasons for what seems to be happening and not to accept blindly what may be someone else’s agenda.

rjg
October 6
Photography And Its Impact To His Life
Timothy Padgett
Padgett's interest in photography started at the age of seven when his father bought him a box brownie camera. By the age of 14, he was not only taking photographs, but also developing his own photographs. He is now a photography instructor as well as a fashion/model photographer. Come listen to his experiences as a self taught photographer and how those experiences changed his life.

October 13
Healthy Living
Doris Hanley

If you love something, set it free. If it comes back, it will always be yours. If it doesn't come back, it was never yours to begin with. But, if it just sits in your living room, messes up your stuff, eats your food, uses your telephone, takes your money, and doesn't appear to realize that you had set it free ... You either married it or gave birth to it.

Sally phoned her husband, Bill, at work for a chat. "I'm sorry dear," said Bill, "but I'm up to my neck in work today. I don't have time to chat."

Sally replied, "But I've got some good news and some bad for news for you, dear."

"Okay, darling," said Bill, "but as I've got no time right now, just give me the good news."

"Okay," agreed Sally. "Well, the airbag works!"

A man is waiting in line for a hit movie. Behind him are two women. The usher comes along and says that he has two seats together. Seeing the problem, the usher says to the man, "Let them go first. You wouldn't want to separate a woman from her mother, would you?"

The man says, "No, sir. I did that once, and I've been sorry ever since."

After school one day, a young first grade-boy was sitting at the kitchen table, eating his afternoon snack, when he blurted out, "Mom, the teacher was asking me today if I have any brothers or sisters who will be coming to school."

The boy’s mother replied, "That's nice of her to take such an interest, dear. What did she say when you told her you are an only child?"

She just said, "Thank goodness!"
Writing this column for the past two years on arts and culture has given me an opportunity not only to push myself on a weekly basis, but also to ponder the relationship between the arts and human existence.

This semester, I am privileged to attend an astronomy course presented by Professor Arnold Heiser entitled “The Large Scale Structure of the Observable Universe” with my friend Christine whom I met in one of my very first OLLI classes. This class has really made an impression on me. Okay, so the sun will die in eight billion years when it evolves into a white dwarf star. Before that happens the earth will have ended caused by extremely hot temperatures which will dry up the oceans, and kaput!! After last week’s class, Christine and I started talking about whether this information has any real impact our lives. And, what are we to make of all of this inevitable chaos? Well, get to that bucket list and enjoy the day! Carpe diem! I really don’t know the meaning of human existence, but I know that we are definitely tiny, miniscule flashes in the pan vis-a-vis the universe’s timetable. Enjoy it while you are here - don’t waste a moment.

The two things I can think of to honor our brief time as humans are, of course, to love and help each other, and also to take in the natural beauty and human talent that is all around us. Do you like visual arts? Great! Experience what Connecticut has to offer - Yale (free!), the Mattatuck (right around the corner), The New Britain Museum of American Art, and many university and private galleries around the state. Music and voice? The Waterbury and Hartford Symphonies, local choral groups, and of course the Metropolitan Opera are there for our enjoyment. Drama? Connecticut is blessed with a plethora of theaters including the glorious Yale Repertory, the Shubert, the Palace (look out the UConn library windows – you can see it!) and many others.

Don’t just be a passive recipient, however. You, my friends, are human and therefore possessing some creative essence. Science tells us that all of the elements in our bodies come from stardust that is millions of year old, so we are all of one body, a very beautiful, poetic, and communal thought. Celebrate that beauty! Take a painting class, even if it is outside your comfort zone – you might just find a smidgen of talent that has been hiding in there. Get out your camera, or treat yourself to a new one. Sing along with the radio – loudly! Get up and dance with the tv or radio, and write, write, write! Put down your thoughts about anything – who knows, you might have a bit of Emerson or Thoreau (or even Erma Bombeck!) in you. Have a poem in you? Put it to paper. Get out that old trumpet or clarinet that’s been sitting in your closet since high school and see what you can do. We are here on earth but for a nanosecond, friends. Keep up your friendships, make new ones, and find someone with whom to enjoy the arts, culture and nature. There is a close connection between the arts and health. As humans we have a rich tradition of using the arts to heal body, mind and spirit. Take advantage of this natural medicine!

If humankind doesn’t pre-empt Mother Nature and blow itself up (see Bob Grady’s wonderful front page column in last week’s OLLI Newsletter), or if we don’t keep killing each other with guns and violence, then maybe most of us have a few more years or decades to enjoy the mystery of human existence. Do it in an artful way, and with gratitude to the Entity of your choice! Carpe diem, my OLLI friends! Carpe diem, indeed. Enjoy your nanosecond and enjoy the art that is in us all!
Openings for OLLI Leadership Council

Are you interested in becoming more involved in the internal organization of OLLI? Two positions on the OLLI Leadership Council will be open in 2018. These positions are:

Secretary
Assistant Secretary

The Nominating Committee is accepting the names of all OLLI members interested in either of these positions. (Self-nominations are also encouraged. This is your chance to see how decisions are made in OLLI and to have more input in those decisions.) Please send nominations by e-mail to either of the Nominating Committee Co-Chairs listed below.

Please include the word OLLI in the subject line of your e-mail. Please describe in fifty words or less why you believe this nomination should be considered.


Nominating Committee Co-Chairs
Ned Conlan - econlan@snet.net
Merle Arcovio - merlek@optonline.net

A SENSE OF PEACE AND UNITY MARKED THE ECLIPSE

“The eclipse was incredible and once the moon moved across the sun and started to block the sun’s rays, there was such a sense of peacefulness, camaraderie and pure wonder.”

This statement comes from an interview with my friend, Zelda, and her family, who traveled more than 1518 miles, round trip, to view this spectacular show of nature.

Zelda, her husband and four children felt they had to drive to Georgetown South Carolina for the rare chance to view the incredible event. Georgetown is 40 minutes south of Myrtle Beach.

The family was not alone because the town they chose as their viewing spot has a population of 5,000. On eclipse day there were about 30,000 people in the area.

Zelda remarked that people came from all over the U.S. She smiled when she said that there were a group of eight Orthodox Jewish men who came to Georgetown, South Carolina from Montreal to enjoy the eclipse and eventually approached her son and husband to form a minyan and pray.

“A minyan for any Jewish religious service, requires 10 Jewish men to begin their prayer service. When the Canadians noticed that my husband and older son had their heads covered with a yarmulke or kippa, the head covering worn by religious they realized they could start the prayer service.

“Actually the crowd watching the eclipse, was noticeably one of peace and patience. Children would play together and then stop to note the progress of the moon and return to playing.

“It was cloudy as the eclipse began but the sun came out in time to ‘play its part’

“My family felt the eclipse was such a rarity and relatively close to where I grew up, that we felt compelled to go. We felt that witnessing the eclipse was a chance for us to witness God’s work.”

“One of my memories is the incredible amount of cheering that broke out during the 90 seconds that marked the total eclipse. We knew the eclipse was approaching when the temperature dropped about 7 degrees. While it didn’t get totally dark, it was like twilight, the birds quieted their chirping as they do before sunset and a wind came up.

“We could view Jupiter and see Bailey’s beads in the outer edge of the moon. The ‘moon beads’ come from the sun’s light peeking through the crevices at the edge of the moon. During the eclipse, we did not need our special glasses. However, we did need them when we wanted to look at shrinking sun.”

“Yes, we drove more than 1,500 miles to see the eclipse. I’ll always remember the beautiful feeling, the sense of purpose and the peace of this extraordinary event.”

Evelyn Marshak