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.

MEET OUR NEW DIRECTOR

Fiona de Merell brings a colorful tapestry of experiences to her new role as Director of the Osher Institute for Lifelong Learning (OLLI) at UConn, Waterbury.

She learned Ancient Greek in order to read classical literature in its original language. Her bachelor’s degree from the University of Wales is in Classics and Ancient Greek.

Fiona eventually earned her master’s in Adult Learning from the University of Connecticut, having found she loved the field of lifelong learning. She is thrilled to have the opportunity to work with “peer learners” and expand the OLLI program to add more courses and reach even more people, including many who are still working, who seek new knowledge and experiences.

Fiona was drawn to the study of Greek classics when, “I read a copy of the Iliad at age eleven and fell in love with the characters.” She was intrigued by King Agamemnon, Achilles and Odysseus and their exploits during the Trojan War in Homer’s epic poem. She sees many parallels between the “timeless themes” of the Greek tragedies and what is happening today in contemporary society.

Despite her fondness and gift for languages and literature, Fiona says she “scrapped by,” working below her abilities in school for a number of years. “Could do better” was the comment most often on her school reports. She admits to being distracted from her academics by the lively hard rock culture around her.

She grew up in Walsall, an industrial town in the West Midlands of England and near the city of Birmingham, an area that was home to hard rock bands that became internationally famous. Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden were among bands she saw perform.

“I was really into rock and punk. I had spiked hair and black lipstick.” Gradually, her taste in music and culture expanded. Fiona sang in a band in her 20s and discovered Ella Fitzgerald and jazz. Today, she also enjoys classical music.

She began a master’s program but decided that wasn’t for her at the time. Fiona took a job in a financial services company, which sent her to India to help facilitate the firm’s work there. She was posted to Bombay.

“I loved Bombay; it was vibrant and exciting; the culture was so different” from anything she knew.
Aging

Bill Thomas M.D. is an author, entrepreneur, musician, teacher, farmer, and physician who explores the concept of human aging. The Wall Street Journal called Dr. Thomas one of the top ten innovators changing the future of retirement. In a humorous talk at the National OLLI conference this year he posed the question “What are old people for?” Humans are the only species that live as long after reproductive life as before. His succinct answer is, we need to age to make us whole and help figure things out. Those of us fortunate enough to reach old age can use our power of observation to learn every day.

We all managed to get through the parenting phase which is a very hectic time of life. He states with tongue in cheek, that one really needs grandparents to bring up babies. Grandparents who are no longer menstruating and whose moods and energy level are on an even keel. Grandparents whose muscle mass has decreased so that they no longer get into fights when upset. He reminds us that men’s muscle mass decreases one %/year after the age of 28.

Life is two sides of a coin, doing and being. We tend to value adults by how much they do but it is just as important to value people just for being. We value children more for being than for doing and we do value adults for being in love, being faithful and being oneself. Older folks may do less but they still bless us by being around us.

Dr. Thomas describes people transitioning from adulthood to elderhood. People need to grow up and in elderhood life is deeper, richer, more purposeful and intentional and less hormonally driven. He points out that we don’t want older people acting like younger people just as we don’t want adults acting childish. I’ve heard many judgmental statements like “He or she has never grown up and dresses or acts like a teenager.”

OLLI participation allows for lifelong learning and growth. Older people enrich their lives as they wish and at their own pace. Some of the learning may be academic, some cultural and some social. We may also have the inclination and time to gain insight and self awareness.

Dr. Thomas ended his talk with a funny memorable concept. “The secret of happiness is forgetting.” Forgetting about all those slights and insults years ago which are irrelevant to our current lives. Keeping this concept in mind there is less to worry about when thinking about dementia. With dementia you live in the moment as children do. For years gurus have said “live in the present” and avoid the anxiety of living in the past or worrying about the future. Should dementia strike you at some time you will be living in the present.

Life is two sides of a coin, doing and being. We tend to value adults by how much they do but it is just as important to value people just for being. We value children more for being than for doing and we do value adults for being in love, being faithful and being oneself. Older folks may do less but they still bless us by being around us.

Enjoy the winter and be prepared for the spring semester.

Ira Mickenberg M.D.

“It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.”

Charles Darwin

The Newsletter Committee thanks Jonathan Draper for all his help and suggestions these past years. Congratulations and good luck in your new venture.
“Outside, it was hot and uncomfortable; cows were lying across the road and elephants were in the street. The people were so kind and generous.” Almost everyone spoke English.

Living in Bombay was a “humble experience,” making “me appreciate what we have.”

She met and married an American from Connecticut and moved to the United States. In 2012, Fiona became an American citizen. Fiona decided she wouldn’t continue in financial services, a field she says was “unsuited to me.” Her marriage ended and she began thinking of new directions.

She had always written and began freelancing, writing some pieces for the Danbury News Times and other publications, including online magazines. But she needed steady income and began working as an administrative assistant and later as assistant to the director for the Torrington branch of the University of Connecticut. She became the Event and OLLI Program Coordinator at the University of Connecticut’s Waterbury campus when the Torrington branch closed. She recently was named Director of the OLLI program.

A woman who has always written down her thoughts, Fiona finds the “physical and mental process of writing helps clarify ideas. As I write, all of this stuff comes out.”

One of her pieces on her website reads in part:

_Somehow, the old is folding into the new._
_The lines are softer than I thought._
_The change from one to the other is gentler._
_No jagged cuts or jarring colors,_
_But a merging, swirls of what was then_
_And what is now._

- Mary Ann Martin

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Sponsored by the OLLI Clubs and Activities Committee...

**2017 THANKSGIVING FOOD DRIVE**

to benefit Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries!

Please drop off non-perishable donations to the Membership Table or to the OLLI Office (Room 103) from October 20th through November 20th. All donations are much appreciated!

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**Upcoming OLLI Travel**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Price</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/03/18</td>
<td>Metropolitan Opera House / Madame Butterfly</td>
<td>$208 pp</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/15/2018</td>
<td>South Central Park / Circle Line Cruise Tour</td>
<td>$98 pp</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/11-12/2018</td>
<td>Lackawanna Coal Mine Tour</td>
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Flyers available at the OLLI Information Table. All prices are member prices. Non-members are charged a slight surcharge that is listed on all flyers. Call Friendship Tours for information and reservations. (1-800-243-1630). Mention OLLI Travel. (Please do not call the OLLI Office.)

**Please Note** – All OLLI Trips will depart from and return to the Chase Parkway DOT Commuter Lot, Waterbury. Maps of this Departure Area are available on the OLLI Information Table in the main hall.
OLLI Café

November 10
Adulthood and Aging
Dr. Laura Donorfio

For the third year in a row, Dr. Laura Donorfio (Associate Prof. – human development and family studies) has teamed up with OLLI in leading a one-of-a-kind intergenerational service learning opportunity. Throughout the semester, nearly 40 UConn undergraduate students have been actively engaged, in various capacities, with OLLI members. Come join us for a fascinating presentation, featuring students findings and reflections on their involvement with OLLI!

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: Dr. Ira Mickenberg
Vice President: Mila Limson
Secretary: Pat Fahey
Assistant Secretary: Joyce Conlan

We’re on the web!

WWW.OLLI.UCONN.EDU

Airman Jones was assigned to the induction center where he was to advise new recruits about their government benefits, especially their G.I. insurance.

It wasn't long before Capt. Smith noted that airman Jones had almost a 100% record for insurance sales, which had never happened before. Rather than ask about this, the captain stood in the back of the room and listened to Jones' sales pitch. Jones explained the basics of the G.I. insurance to the new recruits, and then said:

"If you have G.I. insurance and go into battle and are killed, the government has to pay $200,000 to your beneficiaries. If you don't have G.I. insurance, and you go into battle and get killed, the government has to pay only a maximum of $6000."

"Now," he concluded, "which bunch do you think they're going to send into battle first?"

A knife juggler, driving to his next performance, was stopped by the police. "What are those knives doing in your car?" asked the officer.

"I juggle them in my act."

"Oh yeah?" says the cop. "Let's see you do it."

So the juggler starts tossing and juggling the knives. A guy driving by sees this and says, "Wow, am I glad I quit drinking. Look at the test they are making you do now!"
Once again, I can’t believe that our OLLI Fall Semester is coming to an end! What a great ten weeks it has been. I learned about the size of the universe (and how it is measured), China’s impact on the environment (and our own), great places to tour in Europe and attendant historical personages, the life and impact of Alexander Hamilton, and early Chinese history (to be continued.) Whew!!! What a great opportunity for learning and sharing OLLI has given me! And oh, yes, the opportunity to meet a wonderful undergraduate, Shanique, and share stories with her as part of an intergenerational project. And did I mention the fun of the weekly OLLI Café? While I will miss all of you, I don’t intend to stay idle during the upcoming holiday season. There is so much to do right here in Connecticut. I will just touch on a few areas of the arts, but there is an abundance of holiday events. Keep an eye on your local papers, the Hartford Courant, Connecticut Magazine, and the internet and Facebook for ideas on things to do.

Concerts are some of the best ways to celebrate the season. Three of my favorite groups are having their special holiday performances on three separate Sundays, so I am in luck:

**Waterbury Symphony Orchestra, Sunday, December 3 at 3 pm** at Naugatuck Valley Community College “A Concert Christmas” featuring “Peter and the Wolf.” A family afternoon complete with pre-concert lecture at 2 pm, and cocoa and cookies afterward. Call the box office to get your 20% OLLI discount on $35 and $55 seats.

**Connecticut Pops, Sunday, December 10, 3 pm, “Pops for the Holidays” FREE!** at Naugatuck Valley Community College. An event for the entire family.

**Kent Singers, Sunday, December 17, 4 pm** St. Andrew’s Church, Kent. “Comfort and Joy: Lullabies and Dance for Christmastide” featuring the music of Conrad Susa with harp, guitar, marimba and organ.

For theater, many local drama groups are doing special plays. Among them is one of my favorites, TheatreWorks in New Milford, which will be presenting “Stage Kiss” by Sarah Ruhl from December 8 to January 6. A charming tale about what happens when lovers share a stage kiss. Caveat: Adult themes, strong language.

On a grander scale, a new play entitled “Rags” a musical saga of immigration to New York City ca. 1900, is on the boards now until Dec. 10 at Goodspeed Opera House in Haddam. Music by the creators of “Annie” and “Fiddler.”

If you are feeling like a very special treat for the holidays, The Bushnell has a wide variety of events on tap, including film, concerts, comedy, and drama. And of course “The Nutcracker” performed by the Nutmeg Ballet on December 16 and 17. This holiday staple is ubiquitous, but that doesn’t mean it isn’t a lot of fun! Did you know that most ballet companies nationwide make up to 40% of their operating budgets from their Nutcracker presentations? Nutmeg Ballet will also be performing this at the Warner in Torrington on December 9 and 10, and the Brass City Ballet will present their rendition on December 16 and 17 at Naugatuck Valley Community College. How much fun would that be to take the grandchildren to any of these venues to enter into the tale of Clara and her prince!

And in January and February, a couple of things to keep in mind:

**Waterbury Symphony** – Music in Great Spaces – “Heroic Music for Brass and Organ” at St. Michael’s Church in Litchfield on Sunday, January 28 at 4 pm and at St. John’s On the Green Waterbury on Sunday, Feb. 4 at 3 p.m.

**Opera at local theaters:** The Regal Cinemas in Waterbury and the Warner Theater in Torrington will livestream the Metropolitan Opera’s production of Donizetti’s “L’Elisir D’Amore” on Saturday, February 10 at noon.

Enjoy your holiday celebrations. As always, please email me at berryfitzp@gmail.com with suggestions for previews and/or reviews of the arts or cultural events in Connecticut (and beyond!)
As a young child of five, **Ted Welsh** was fascinated by maps. He enthusiastically traced and colored maps made for children.

He’s still interested in maps, now showing in history classes how geography, language, religion, ethnicity and other matters come together to shape the destinies of nations. Modern maps often reflect changes from the originals because of conflicts.

He encourages discussion among students who sometimes struggle to reconcile views they have after learning in depth the background of a region and the opinions they held before.

Ted grew up near Syracuse, New York, where he attended a regional high school and enjoyed skating and skiing as well as playing lacrosse and other sports.

After high school, Ted entered Stonehill College in Massachusetts where he met a professor who “wowed” him. The professor’s parents were missionaries in China, giving him a unique perspective on Asia. He established the Asian Studies major at Stonehill. Ted was in the first, small group of graduates with that major in 1973. Ted earned one master’s in Oriental Studies from the University of Arizona and a second in Education from Fairfield University.

An inveterate traveler, Ted believes understanding the culture of others is extremely important to the process of finding solutions to world problems.

He has been to China many times and vividly recalls the first trip in 1979. “The vitality everyone had; it was electric!” Everywhere he went, the Chinese would gather around the outsider, eagerly asking questions. “I’d talk to somebody selling ducks; within two minutes 25 people” would gather. “When you’d tell them you were from America, they’d light up.”

Ted began and directed an international student exchange with a sister school in Shandong Province, China, that ran for five or six years at Norwalk High School. He also ran for a number of years a Model United Nations program in Norwalk, where he taught for 32 years.

Under the exchange program, Chinese students would live with local families while attending Norwalk High School while Norwalk students would stay with Chinese families.

“When you live with someone, that really turns the lights on.” A “transformation” would occur both ways with the growth of “tolerance for difference.”

In the UN program, students learned in depth about specific countries and also used the procedures and rules used by the actual United Nations. The program is a “good way for kids to learn about the world.” Some of the Norwalk participants had the opportunity to go to an international conference at The Hague in the Netherlands; others participated in one in Beijing, China.

“Knowing things matters,” Ted contends. Too often, kids turn to Smart Phones for information. The answer is given but it lacks content that provides context.

Ted laments that American students know comparatively little of our military history. On a recent five-week trip to Australia, he was struck by the presence of so much military history with many monuments and museums. The visiting history teacher found the Australian young people know “way more about their history than our kids (know about ours).” They know the battles, the names of the generals.”

Ted retired from Norwalk High School in 2012. A friend teaching in an OLLI program in Rhode Island suggested he explore presenting in Waterbury. He really likes having students who come with a base of knowledge. “I don’t have to do a lot of ground work.” During the fall semester, he presented “The Dragon Rises Again: Part 1: The Deep History and the Development of Chinese Society, Culture and Politics (500 BCE – 1839)

Ted enjoys reading, primarily non-fiction. A recent favorite book was *Ike and McCarthy* by David Nichols which deals with President Eisenhower pursuing the downfall of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Another book Ted liked was *The Devil in the White City* by Erik Larson that is centered on the building of the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. —**Mary Ann Martin**