How would you like to be graduating from college and looking for a job in today's market? Pretty scary, right? The cost of higher education has skyrocketed and even post high school vocational school fees are prohibitive and do not guarantee a job. The American Dream was achieved by an educational system that became its means to more and better opportunities. That no longer seems to be the case. What are the causes of this situation and what might we do to ameliorate it?

There was a time when Waterbury was the Brass Center of the World and thousands were employed in its factories. Then, along came plastics, and brass and copper were no longer in demand. The factories moved west, and then overseas, taking the middle class jobs with them. Time Magazine's (4/22/13) cover story points out that, surprisingly, manufacturing is staging a comeback. "The off-shoring boom...does appear to have largely run its course." Wages and fuel costs in emerging countries are increasing and lessening the gap between us and them. Sounds good, right? Time uses the analogy of a GE battery plant which ships all over the world and has a 200,000 sq. ft factory which requires only "... 370 full-time employees, a mere 210 of them on the factory floor. The plant manager runs the operation...from an IPad, on which he gets a real-time stream of data from wireless sensors embedded in each product rolling off the line." In other words, today’s factory is not your old oil-soaked one that allowed people to begin to reach the middle class with good wages and long-time employment. Today's worker is working in an automated factory, 53% have at least some college education and nearly one in ten has a graduate or professional degree.

Thomas Friedman, (NYT, 3/30/13) writing about educational values and skills that matter, says, "This is dangerous at a time when there is increasingly no such thing as a high-wage, middle skilled job - the thing that sustained the middle class in the last generation. Now there is only a high-wage, high-skilled job. Every middle-class job today is being pulled up, out or down, or is being buried - made obsolete - faster than ever."

So, what should be the focus of education reform today?

We have got to stop teaching to the test. Quoting Harvard Education specialist, Tony Wagner, in that same article, Friedman writes, "We teach and test things most students have no interest in and will never need, and facts that they can Google and forget as soon as the test is over. ... More than a century ago, we reinvented the one-room school house and created factory schools for the industrial economy. Reimagining schools for the 21st century must be our highest priority. We need to focus more on teaching the skill and will to learn and to make a difference and bring the three most powerful ingredients of intrinsic motivation into the classroom: play, passion and purpose." Until we learn how to do that effectively, the American Dream may become just that - a dream.

I asked this question a couple of years ago, and I think it is even more important to think about again in light of the present situation. Until the solution to the coronavirus pandemic is solved (and it will be!) our lives will be different. So will education. Already teachers are being asked to teach remotely and that requires a different skill set. Our social interactions may be different and, as pointed out, jobs will change. We may have to drastically modify our thinking about politics and our economy. Life will be altered. How much so depends on how closely we listen to the scientists and experts. We are Americans and we can accomplish anything if we follow our motto — e pluribus unum — out of many, one!
JUST FOR LAUGHS

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!”

STAYING CONNECTED WITH OLLI @ HOME

• Sign up for our weekly e-newsletter (go to olli.uconn.edu and click the blue button that says "Add Me to Your Email List") to receive updates every Monday

• "Like" us on Facebook to participate in interactive posts and "Virtual OLLI Cafe." (https://www.facebook.com/olliauconnwaterbury/)

• Email yvoorg@aol.com or osher@uconn.edu with your own tips on how to stay busy during this time, photos, interesting stories or news articles, original work (paintings, drawings, writings) to be featured in our Newsletters

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.
VOICES and VISIONS

Enrolled in an art, photography, or writing course? The OLLI Editorial Committee invites you, as an OLLI student, to submit your work to our yearly literary and arts publication, Voices and Visions. Have you wondered what Voices and Visions is? Voices and Visions is a yearly publication created by OLLI members that showcases your writing skills, your interests, or your creative works in the form of artwork of any kind. We want to see what you have created and what you would like to share with the OLLI community. If you are an OLLI member this year, and have taken classes, you are eligible to submit your work. As your Editorial Committee, we meet and go over the submissions to find places for them in Voices and Visions. If needed, we will get in touch with you about any editing that might need to be gently done. We have a photographer who will work with you to be sure we get photos of your artwork to look its best. Guidelines and submission forms are online. If possible, we ask you to submit your forms online to LizHanahan@aol.com OR leave them in the OLLI office, though an email to Liz is highly preferable. DEADLINE: June 15th, 2020

Walking Activity

“Nature quiets the mind by engaging with an intelligence larger than our own.”

Come and walk in nature with some OLLI friends. Experience the beauty in our different communities. All walks are easy with some minor hill climbing. We will walk for approximately an hour. Third Wednesday at 10:00am. Meet at parking area. Bad weather will cancel the walk.

April 15th: DeDominicus Preserve, Old Lane, Cheshire. (Route 10 to Old Farms Road. At crest of hill there is a kiosk on left. Park on the side of the road. The trail is through the woods. More challenging, as it is not paved and there are hills. The beauty is well worth it! Hiking boots recommended.

May 20th: Hopbrook Trail, Naugatuck. Parking at lot at the intersection of Routes 63 and 188.

Questions? Diane Visconti (203)215-8548 or email Vis1795@aol.com

The OLLI Walking Activity will continue at the discretion of the involved OLLI members.

OLLI Travel:
The OLLI trip to the New York Philharmonic has been cancelled, and Friendship Tours is refunding fees. The OLLI trip to Harlem has NOT been cancelled by Friendship Tours, so any OLLI member who wants to cancel needs to contact Friendship Tours directly at 1-800-243-1630.
Katherine Clements reports that The OLLI Book Club met on Monday, March 30, 2020 via Zoom. She shares: We will be meeting on April 20, 2020 also on Zoom. We will be reading The Island of Sea Women by Lisa See. If anyone is interested in joining us, please e-mail Nancy Via at nvia@sbcglobal.net and we will send you an invitation to our April meeting.

Want to read this but can’t make it to the bookstore during quarantine? Find the e-book and audiobook versions of this book on Amazon!

ISOLATION

I was born during the Great Depression. Surviving that and World War II, On an August day, I Learned we had a weapon that could cause the Apocalypse! But, The world kept turning. People persevered. Innocence was lost. However, God kept testing, like Job. Ominous, earth-shattering events occurred. Is this New pandemic finally the one - Or just another test?

RJGrady
3/27/20

If the walls are closing in on you, take some of the class suggestions you have acquired from all those courses you have taken at OLLI. Remember Voices and Visions will need prose, poetry, painting and photography selections for its coming edition this August.

OLLLEADERSHIPCOUNCIL

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

President
Ira Mickenberg
Vice President
Mila Limson
Secretary
Mary Peitler
Asst. Secretary
Joyce Conlan

Find a full list of OLLI Clubs and Committees and their descriptions on Page 3 of the course catalog!
One Day of Joy
by Marjorie Fitzgerald, 2012

Spring has sprung.
Colors bloom around us -
Lime green newly-born leaves unfurl,
Pink cherry blossoms wink at us,
White petals sail from dogwood trees
Under the robin egg blue sky above us.
The yolk- like sun
Warms our day.
Powder puff cotton balls of clouds
Float in the distance.
Multicolored tulips lining the walkway
Stand at attention for all to notice.
Purple hyacinths, crocuses and sun-kissed
Daffodils bring smiles to our faces.
People walk with a renewed energy,
Children run to meet the day with
enthusiasm.
Yes, spring has sprung.
Thank Heaven!

April Promise
by Bob Grady, 2011

March's "just Spring" has finally gone.
The gusty winds subsided to breezes
That flow softly over the new buds.
Showers nourish the roots
Of flowers and trees
And the myriad colors of April
Burst forth from every corner.
Golden forsythia dot the landscape.
Pinkish-white dogwood perfumes the yard.
The stark black trees have softened
To pale greens and reds
Of emerging leaves and buds.
Yellow daffodils, red tulips
Jump from nowhere, it seems ..
Purple flowers and green grass
Delight the eye and prove
That this is why New Englanders
Abide the nasty winter snows.
And now it is May-
All is right with the world.

Crater Lake National Park
by Gen Delkescamps, 2014

Geraniums on the Wall
by Anna Ascione, 2014
Why is this coronavirus so dangerous? The president keeps saying that nobody could have ever conceived of something like this happening. That is not true. Scientists and epidemiologists have predicted that something similar would happen based on what has happened in the past. Climatologists have also prophecied that as the climate changes there will be drastic calamities happening. The lack of knowledge about an unknown novel disease and the seeming inability to do anything about it leaves people anxious and frightened. That’s what makes this pandemic so dangerous. So what can we do about it?

First of all, follow the experts. When they tell you to stay inside, do so. Their expertise is predicated on their knowledge about similar situations. As they gather more information about the coronavirus the data may cause them to modify their suggestions. If this means that you should change your actions, do so. There is so much misinformation from talk radio and television it is necessary to find someone who objectively presents the facts. Usually scientists deal in facts, in opposition to politicians who may have their own agendas.

Tom Friedman of the New York Times wrote this week, "As Rob Watson, one of my favorite environmental teachers, likes to remind people: 'Mother Nature is just chemistry, biology and physics. That's all she is. You cannot sweet talk her. You cannot spin her. You cannot manipulate her. And you certainly cannot tell her, Mother Nature, stop ruining my beautiful stock market.' No, no, no. Mother Nature will always what ever chemistry, biology and physics dictate, and "Mother Nature always combats last," says Watson, "and she always bats 1000." Do not mess with Mother Nature. But that is exactly what President Trump did initially with the coronavirus – and is trying to do still with climate change."

So, OLLI members, it may be time to modify your belief system and start listening to the scientists.