



# Claudia and Carl Shuster

**Lenox, MA**

Carl Shuster had a successful career in law while volunteering with numerous organizations. Claudia Shuster taught early childhood education at Central Connecticut State University and served as a consultant to state agencies and local child care programs. Then the suburban Connecticut couple retired, settled permanently in Lenox, and life really got busy.

As weekend visitors for some 18 years, Carl and Claudia and their children enjoyed the Berkshires and its many cultural offerings, especially music. But in deciding to make their weekend residence their permanent home, Carl and Claudia said the area had to meet “one very important criterion – the availability of continuing education.”

And so, Carl and Claudia became involved in the Berkshire Institute for Lifelong Learning (BILL), the predecessor organization of OLLI. What followed was a busy schedule of courses, lectures, and meetings with some of the most accomplished professors in western Massachusetts. The Shusters found themselves in a growing community of people who, like themselves, were stimulated by culture, learning and working for others.

Carl’s involvement with OLLI deepened as he agreed to serve on the Institute’s board of directors, eventually becoming its vice president. Claudia joined him on the board and became active in OLLI’s Berkshire Community College student mentoring initiative, eventually co-leading the program.

Because of their love of classical music and frequent attendance at Tanglewood, it was only natural they’d also become active in a variety of musical activities. Claudia sings with the Berkshire Lyric Chorus. Carl is a board member of WMHT, the Albany-based public broadcasting station. And for the past 15 years the Shuster’s condominium has been a setting for musical performances, primarily by young professional musicians whom they meet through the Tanglewood Music Center program.

Claudia complements her music interests with painting, indulging her talent for creating portraits by occasionally painting the musicians who have performed in house concerts at the Shusters’. Carl and Claudia have recently turned their focus to Villages in the Berkshires, a new non-profit organization which helps older adults to remain in their homes, aiding them with everything from the challenges of computer technology to shopping, transportation, and overcoming social isolation.

Fulfillment in retirement, as the Shusters show, comes from committing time and energy to activities they love and the joy of helping others. Carl notes, “In the Berkshires it is so easy to get involved and find people with like interests.”

**Photography:** Lucy Kennedy

**Words:** Christopher Guidette