

## OLLI Is Weathering the Pandemic Storm

Like many OLLI instructors who had to rely on Zoom technology when they could no longer use classrooms to reach students, Ralph Pearson had more than a little trepidation about what he was getting into. The presenter of "Art and Artists of the Hudson River School" not only had never taught a course at OLLI, he had never led a discussion and lecture online.

Living in remote Savoy in a home with a weak Wi-Fi connection, Pearson was forced to teach while sitting in his car, parked near a building that did have Wi-Fi. With only a few minor glitches, he got through all six lectures, which included posting visuals of paintings and film clips. And his course was very well received.

Pearson's heroic efforts were mirrored by countless other instructors who taught their courses by computer and will keep doing so, at least through the winter semester.

With extraordinary determination and great technology, OLLI at BCC is weathering this most unexpected pandemic storm. OLLI Administrative Assistant Andy Ottoson said, "It was an iceberg for OLLI, but our community rallied together and we're seeing more members and higher engagement than ever before."



want anyone left behind due to technical challenges.

OLLI Executive Director Megan Whilden has seen advantages to online classes such as increased enrollment and expansion of our geographic reach. Our spring session reached participants in 12 states and three countries. The Mona Sherman Lecture exceeded previous attendance and inspired additional online programming. OLLI had previously considered an online option for people with mobility issues, and now is exploring ways to offer some digital and some hybrid options mixing both in-person and remote participants.

OLLI staff and volunteers helped instructors convert their classes to virtual sessions. Doug Mishkin, who taught "Songs of Woody's Children" this spring, considered the challenge a learning experience. He knew right away that changes in his method were needed.

Mishkin says he misses being in the room with people, hearing their laughter and

*(continued on page 2)*

**READERS: OLLI Fall 2020 semester course listings can be found inside on page 5.**

## Three Join Board to Help OLLI Through Pandemic Era

The three newest members of OLLI's Board of Directors pursue a wide range of interests that include classical music, sports and care for animals. But they share a deep fondness for life in the Berkshires and an abiding commitment to intellectual pursuits.

So how could **Erin McNamara**, **Bruce Cohen** and **Steven Tobin** be any better suited to help lead OLLI at BCC? The answer—which was obvious to a nominating committee last spring—is that they couldn't.

McNamara, Cohen and Tobin were elected to OLLI's 19-member board at the organization's last annual meeting, May 22. In recent interviews, they discussed their backgrounds, interests, and hopes for OLLI as the organization finds its way through the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

In conversation, McNamara conveys an easy, casual manner one might associate with her native California. Don't be fooled. Her energy seems boundless and her interests unlimited.

When McNamara retired to the Berkshires less than three years ago, she said she "found a treasure trove of activities that I love but would never do without the support of an organization of people who share so many of my interests." McNamara met Claudia Schuster a long-time OLLI member, at an OLLI Open-House gathering and quickly became involved, taking courses and joining OLLI's mentoring committee.

The former Prudential Financial human resources executive quickly found herself applying her professional

*(continued on page 7)*

## As I See It

### *OLLI Community Will be Better, Stronger in the Post-Pandemic New “Normal”*

When I spoke to you at our Annual Meeting last May, I was able to report that despite all the challenges posed by the coronavirus outbreak, and because of all the hard work, determination and creativity of our amazing staff, committee members, lecturers and other OLLI volunteers, OLLI at BCC was doing well. It's now several months later, and I'm delighted to report that, while we're still facing the same challenges, our OLLI is going strong.

Yes, the continued outbreak has made it impossible for us to gather together for in-person classes, but we have been able to come together and learn together via Zoom. The use of distance learning

technology has also allowed us to expand to include members and lecturers from outside the Berkshires and, in a few cases, outside the country. I applaud the patience and sense of humor we've all exhibited as we've struggled to figure out how to mute and unmute ourselves and use “the blue hand.”

Some of our newer members may not know that we introduced a second summer semester just last year. It consisted of four courses attended by over 120 OLLI members with 139 total course registrations. The use of Zoom has enabled us to offer a second summer semester once again this year. It consisted of ten courses attended by over 290 OLLI

members with over 640 course enrollments! Given that so many of our cultural venues have had to curtail or cancel their summer seasons, having this expanded second semester has meant a great deal to our membership.

Of course, we all miss the opportunity to gather together, in person, to attend classes. We miss actually being with our OLLI friends, and all the wonderful summer outings our special events committee traditionally plans for us. We also miss attending all the concerts, plays, and other cultural offerings we associate with summer in the Berkshires. We know we're going to have to continue to be patient, creative and supportive of one another going forward. But we also know that we'll eventually get to a new “normal” and that the OLLI community will be even better and stronger for the experience.

Stay safe and well. — **Barbara Lane**

### *(Pandemic Storm continued from page 1)*

singing along with his playing the guitar. On the positive side, he likes the idea of a larger group from all over taking the course instead of only a small classroom of thirty.

OLLI online volunteers, Whilden and Ottoson were dedicated in providing the right blend of reassurance and technical support. They helped many instructors through the new way of teaching.

Kate Kidd said she really missed seeing OLLI members in her spring course “Transforming the Union.” “I get a lot of energy from seeing participants' reactions to material I'm teaching and that energy was not there when teaching on Zoom,” Kidd said. She didn't have technical difficulties but could rely on OLLI volunteer Randy Winn for backup and help in monitoring questions.

In preparation for teaching online, she said she tried to be even clearer in her own mind about key points in her narrative, as she wouldn't be able to see if people were getting it in her lecture. Although class contact wasn't personal, Kidd appreciated members' post-class comments, expressing their interests,

suggestions and feedback about the course.

Thad Kubis, who taught “Ten Fine Art Photographers,” is technically proficient and was able to take pictures of his photographs and project them without problem. He said he felt many members were not used to Zoom and had difficulty understanding the mute system, which brought interruptions, such as background music or noise to the class.

Like nearly all other instructors, Kubis said he misses the face-to-face class method, but in general thinks students were positive and happy with the course. He said he was pleased to be able to reach a larger audience—50 by Zoom as opposed to 20 in a classroom.

John Dickson, who taught “Great Decisions,” first reacted to the pandemic storm as something that is “far away and it won't affect us.” But when it hit, “I was concerned how OLLI would adjust to this whole new world” and continue to offer classes.

“How would members react to Zoom classes? Would they know how to Zoom in?” Dickson credits Executive Director

Whilden and Ottoson for providing excellent support to instructors.

“They attended to every detail needed to keep OLLI alive with a spring class schedule,” Dickson said. Although he misses the personal classroom interactions, Dickson said he thinks his teaching worked out and liked the lack of commuting and travel time.

Will teaching by Zoom be the “new normal” even after the pandemic? Will we ever go back to the classroom or will we sit hunched over our laptops for all future OLLI classes? Maybe OLLI will offer a combination of both teaching options—as most schools and colleges are now planning to do.

For OLLI, the fall and winter terms will be entirely online, but who knows what will happen longer term? In the meantime, keep your Zoom skills intact and prepare to participate and interact with members and instructors as we continue this new world of learning.

— **Joanna Fribush**

## Classrooms are Virtual, Learning is Actual

I confess that in March when it became apparent this pandemic was for real, I never dreamed we'd be sheltered in place through the summer and into the fall—and in all likelihood, through winter as well. But I never doubted OLLI would remain a vibrant force for all of us members—now more than 1,300 strong—who value learning and stimulating discourse under any circumstances.

So, hats off to Megan Whilden, our executive director, Andy Ottoson, our administrative assistant, and many others who kept OLLI going without missing a beat with the internet technology of Zoom. Megan aptly described the early semesters of Zoom as “learning to build the airplane while flying.”

And one can't say enough in praise of our dedicated instructors who, despite misgivings, dove into the online pool to teach. Learning online is a boon to many who prefer not to drive to BCC, Williamstown and other far-away places for courses. But many miss the personal interaction of the classroom. Face it, most of us joined OLLI for—as one of our new board members put it—“the most personable interaction” among fellow members.

As we settle into the “New Normal” class participation is growing exponentially. Since geography is no longer a barrier to class attendance, people from Canada, Georgia and California and are taking our courses and logging on to our special lectures.

It seems unlikely we'll ever fully abandon Zoom. But many foresee a future that combines both learning online and in classrooms. Here is the schedule:

**FALL TERM** • Sept. 21 to Nov. 2, all Zoom classes

**WINTER TERM** • Jan. 21 to Feb. 26, all Zoom classes

**SPRING TERM** • March 22 to April 30, no decision yet on whether all or some instruction will be on Zoom and the rest in the classroom

This edition of OLLI Update is bigger than our normal 8-pager because it is doing double duty as your newsletter and abbreviated fall semester catalog.

Before choosing your next courses, be sure to read Sandi Rubin's article highlighting the courses coming this fall and Kathy Zdeb's piece on OLLI's role in launching an “aging-in-place” initiative.

Other articles of interest include an unvarnished view of President Trump and the fate of American democracy in Malvina Wasserman's piece on David Frum. We're also featuring a moving memoir on the pandemic written by Steve Rubin who taught an OLLI course on memoir writing in the last term.

Learn how OLLI is weathering the pandemic in Joanna Fribush's story which is filled with colorful anecdotes of instructors who worked with Zoom for the first time. And glimpse a little bit of OLLI's future by reading the piece on three new members of our Board of Directors.

This tragic pandemic is forcing us to rethink the way we do many things. OLLI has remained vibrant because we are using internet technology to produce virtual classrooms.

But OLLI remains essential because there is nothing virtual about learning.

— Chris Guidette



Chris Guidette

Steve Rubin's fully subscribed class last June on *Writing Your Pandemic Memoir* inspired students and teacher alike to set down their thoughts. With a nod to “teach by example,” Steve wrote his own pandemic memoir, which OLLI is pleased to publish here. Through his efforts, the online publication *Berkshire Edge* also published four students' memoirs. Steve regularly teaches classes for OLLI. He is a professor emeritus and former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Adelphi University. His essays and articles have appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Hartford Courant*, *Berkshire Eagle* and elsewhere.

## Transformation: A Pandemic Memoir

by Steve Rubin

It's mid-March in the Berkshires. I manage to get one last day of skiing in, and then change happens quickly. Ski slopes close. Restaurants, bars, retail stores—all shut down. “Essential” businesses are allowed to stay open: liquor stores, but not the cannabis vendors in Great Barrington and Lee, for some reason. Most importantly, we are instructed to “shelter in place.”



It is early April in the Berkshires. Three weeks into the pandemic. Today I walk in the woods. There are no leaves, even a bit of snow on the ground. It is silent, isolated, empty. I can see through the bare trees to

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## Some Fall Course Highlights

If you are wondering what courses to take in the fall semester, here are some suggestions from Sandi Rubin, a long-time OLLI member and former OLLI president who remains active in just about every facet of the organization, including serving as secretary of the board of directors.

An exciting array of courses are scheduled for the OLLI Fall semester. They range from *Before Barney: The Rise and Fall of Dinosaurs*; *Disasters: Natural, Industrial and Manmade*; *What is Art? What is Beauty?* and many more. While all of them sound great, and I wish there were more hours in the day so I could take all of them, here are a few that seem particularly interesting to me.

The first is *Indigenous American Cultures: Cross-Pollination with European Thought*. It will be taught by Michael Wilcox as the third in a series of courses on the indigenous cultures of North America. Wilcox, who retired as a Wall Street economist, had a life-long interest in native Americans. In this class he will focus on the burning issues of our time: climate change, income and wealth inequality and equal treatment/opportunity and justice for all. To be discussed are the underlying problems the Europeans brought with them such as the privatization of public goods and racism. He will stress that the native Americans had more than 1,100 years thriving on this land before the Europeans arrived.

The next class that holds particular interest for me is *The Pilgrims—History Myth and Legacy*. It will be taught jointly by Jesse Waldinger, a retired attorney and playwright whose works have been performed on many stages throughout the Berkshires and beyond, and John Dickson, a retired U.S. diplomat and popular OLLI instructor. This year marks the 400th anniversary of the landing of the Mayflower. The course will focus on myths and history behind this watershed event: The Mayflower compact, the real reasons people chose to come to the new world, their relations with the natives, treaties signed, diseases brought by the settlers and more.

And, finally on my list is *Dressed up Poetry: Fun with Forms*, to be taught by Kate Sontag, a poet and retired English Professor. The class will explore traditional poetic forms as they have evolved over the years such as the sonnet, villanelle, and sestina. Sontag will also look

at lesser known forms such as the ghazal, pantoum, triolet and more. She will cover a range of cultures, ethnicities and historic periods, and participants will be able try their hand at constructing some of these forms.

Whether your interests tilt toward the sciences and hard disciplines or history and current events, or the arts or literature, there is no shortage of opportunities to find stimulating topics and instructors who will keep you occupied. I look forward to seeing many of you in class—on Zoom, of course.

— Sandi Rubin



Landing of the Pilgrims by Michele Corne

CIRCA 1805 WHITE HOUSE COLLECTION

# OLLI at BCC Fall 2020 Semester



**Mondays – Fridays**  
**September 21 through November 2, 2020 (a few classes extend later)**  
**Live & online via Zoom**  
**OLLI courses can also be watched on demand at a time of your choosing.**  
**All courses are six weekly 90 minute sessions except where noted.**

## MONDAYS

- M101: *Today's Headlines*** | moderated by Steve Tobin | 9:30am – 11:00am  
**M102: *Outsider Art*** | Larry Goldberg | 11:30am – 1:00pm  
**M103: *Before Barney: The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs*** | Steve Somkin  
1:30pm – 3:00 pm  
**M104: *What is Art? What is Beauty?*** | Laszlo Dienes | 3:30pm – 5:00pm

## TUESDAYS

- T101: *Pilgrims: History, Myth and Legacy*** | John Dickson and Jesse Waldinger  
9:30am – 11:00am  
**T102: *Deceptions in War*** | Greig Siedor | 11:30am – 1:00pm  
**T103: *Women as Leaders*** | Diane Whitehead | 1:30pm – 3:00 pm  
**T104: *Janey*** | Richard Matturro | 3:30pm – 5:00pm

## WEDNESDAYS

- W101: *Passion, Piety, Plagues, and Politics: The World of the Middle Ages*** | Phil Deely  
9:30am – 11:00am  
**W102: *Disasters: Natural, Industrial, Manmade*** | Alan Rubin | 11:30am – 1:00pm  
**W103: *Indigenous American Cultures: Cross-Pollination with European Thought***  
Michael Wilcox | 1:30pm – 3:00 pm  
**W104: *Hot Topics*** | A variety of speakers moderated by Steve Tobin  
3:30pm – 5:00pm

## THURSDAYS

- R101: *Real Estate Investment in the 21st Century*** | Stephen Pearlman  
9:30am – 11:00am  
**R102: *King Lear on the Page and the Stage*** | Anne Berman | 11:30am – 1:00pm  
**R103: *Transformative Technologies*** | A variety of speakers | 1:30pm – 3:00 pm  
**R104: *Beyond Mountains, More Mountains: Reading & Comparing Exceptional Poems***  
Robert Ronnow | 3:30pm – 5:00pm

## FRIDAYS

- F101: *Constitutional Law in the Time of COVID-19*** | Tom Gerity | 9:30am – 11:00am  
**F102: *The Berkshires: Coming of Age 1840-1890*** | Carole Owens | 11:30am – 1:00pm  
**F103: *Dressed Up Poetry: Fun with Forms*** | Kate Sontag | 1:30pm – 3:00 pm  
**F104: *Das Boot: The Uncut Version*** | Robert Miller | 3:30pm – 5:30pm

All fall courses will be held online via Zoom, the free, easy-to-use videoconferencing program. New to Zoom? No worries! Active OLLI members may email [olli@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:olli@berkshirecc.edu) or call the OLLI office at **413.236.2190** to schedule a free Zoom training session.

You can access OLLI's online classes via Zoom with an internet-connected computer, tablet, or smartphone, allowing you to see and hear the course. If you don't have access to the internet, you can also access the audio part of the class from wherever you are via telephone.

All of our online class sessions are recorded, so if you miss a session, we are happy to provide you with a link so you can watch it whenever you wish.

To register for fall semester classes, visit [BerkshireOLLI.org](http://BerkshireOLLI.org) or call **413.236.2190**. You must be an active annual OLLI at BCC member to register. Course fees are \$50 for one course; \$95 for 2 or 3 courses; and \$125 for 4 or more courses within a single semester.

Not sure which classes you want to take? Sign up for one or more **Flexpasses**, which allow you to take six individual class sessions of your choice within a semester, as long as the class is not full. Each Flexpass counts as a single course.

Planning ahead? Note that we have decided to hold our winter 2021 semester fully online as well, so you can continue to take classes with us wherever you are, no matter the weather! The winter 2021 semester is currently scheduled for January 21 through February 26, 2021.

# Noted Republican Warns of “Trumpocalypse” and Fate of American Democracy

Over 800 Attendees See Presentation Via Video-Conferencing Technology

Calmly and dispassionately, conservative author and political observer David Frum unleashed a blistering attack on president Trump in recent remarks before a virtual OLLI audience at this year’s annual Mona Sherman Memorial Lecture. Speaking via Zoom, a video conferencing system, instead of at the Mahaiwe Theater, a traditional site of the lecture series, Frum said of Trump: “He is a man who loves nobody and is loved by nobody,” a president lacking compassion for Americans most in need.

Frum is the author of ten books, including his recently published *Trumpocalypse: Restoring America’s Democracy*. He also said Trump’s “most enduring legacy, other than unemployment and death,” is to lead the United States into a “post democratic era.”

“I am a Republican. I think like a Republican. But I feel we need a Democratic President and Democratic Congress,” to reverse damage to our government caused by the Trump Administration and to restore some semblance of stability after three years of bitter social divisiveness.

The Mona Sherman Lecture Series is run by OLLI, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Berkshire Community College. The annual event is one of the highlights of the late spring schedule in the Berkshires. Under the direction of Lisa Sharkey, daughter of the late Mona Sherman—for whom the series is named—the lectures have brought nationally known speakers to Berkshire audiences for 11 years.

Frum explained the title of his book *Trumpocalypse* by going back to the original meaning of the word apocalypse—a glimpse of the future, a lifting of the veil. What will a post-Trump America look like? What are the realities we have to face? Frum points out that more people work in the yoga “industry” than in coal, yet we have a president who doesn’t know that or seem to care. “He is a backward-looking person at a time when we

need creative approaches to our future.”

One of the positives Frum sees coming out of these past years is that Trump has taken the cruelties and inequities that have always plagued our society and put them on the Jumbotron of our social media. And we don’t like what we see. The #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements are outgrowths of that phenomenon.

In response to questions from Fred Rutberg, publisher of The Berkshire Eagle and co-host of the lecture, Frum presented several practical solutions to what he sees as America’s current dilemma. Among other things, Frum called for eliminating the senate filibuster, and requiring the release of presidential tax returns and creating a new Voting Rights Act.

One of the anomalies of our Democratic system he said, is the outsized representation small, traditionally conservative states enjoy in Congress. Frum noted the combined population of four states—Montana, Wyoming and North and South Dakota—is smaller than the population of Massachusetts. Yet each of those four states is entitled under the Constitution to have two senators for a total of eight—in contrast to the larger Bay State, which is allowed only two. Frum, a Canada native, suggested—perhaps in jest—combining those four western states into a single state of “South Saskatchewan.” More realistically, he noted passage of a proposal to grant statehood to Washington, D.C. and perhaps Puerto Rico, states that could be relied on to send Democrats to Congress.

But in Frum’s grand design, job one is to replace the president and

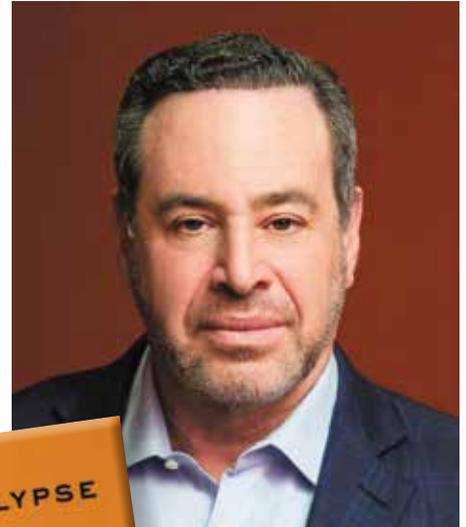
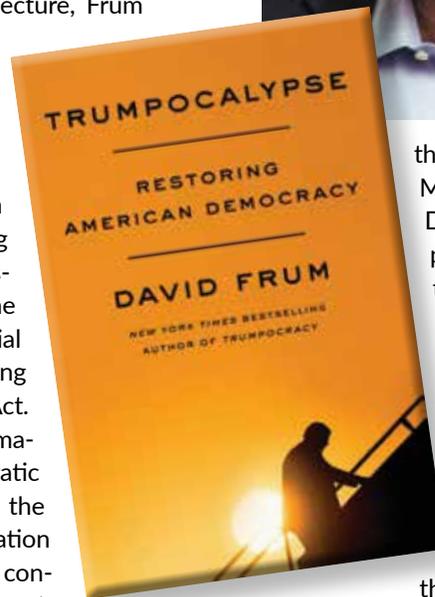


PHOTO BY MICHAEL BENNETT KRESS



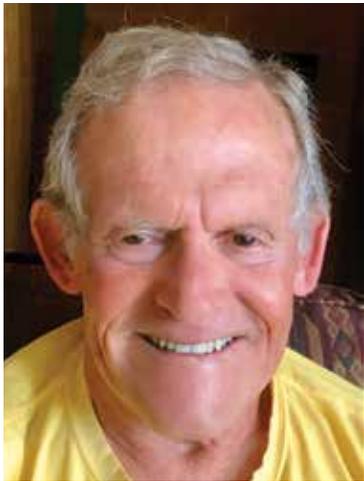
the Republican Senate Majority. He cautions Democrats need to move past their timidity and run the Senate with the same ruthless effectiveness that Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has shown.

Frum suggested a series of Grand Bargains between the extremes of

the Democratic and Republican Parties. One extended discussion would be about healthcare for US citizens vs. undocumented people living in the United States. Frum said he favors a “citizens-only” health care policy.

Watch David Frum’s Mona Sherman Memorial Lecture on YouTube at <https://you.tube/WSRdcljyPJg>.

— Malvina Wasserman and Chris Guidette



Bruce Cohen



Erin McNamara



Steven Tobin

expertise and for her natural love of working with young people seeking direction as they planned life after graduating from BCC.

A graduate of Pepperdine University, McNamara praised OLLI's rapid conversion to online operations, including "re-engineering the mentoring program," but added she looks forward to being able to return to face-to-face contact in both the classroom and mentoring.

Volunteering is an essential part of McNamara's life. She is a member of the Berkshire Humane Society. She walks pets and cares for sheltered animals. She is a member of the Lenox Cultural Council, which she joined when she took up residence in the Lenox Woods development after nearly five years of vacationing in the Berkshires.

Other commitments outside OLLI include serving as a trail steward with the Berkshire Audubon Society and volunteering at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Housatonic, where she is co-leader of the congregation's Social Justice Committee. She also serves as an Enumerator for the U.S. Census Bureau.

By the time he was asked to join the OLLI Board of Directors, Steven Tobin had already been a member of OLLI for five years. He moderated the "Today's Headlines" course with former OLLI president and treasurer, Leonard Tabs and successfully organized, again with Tabs, OLLI's highly popular second summer term (Summer II).

Tobin, a retired real estate developer, serves on both the OLLI curriculum and

development committees. He co-chaired the highly successful recognition luncheon for Arlene Breskin in gratitude for her work creating OLLI trips and other activities.

Tobin, who grew up in Miami Beach, said he and his wife Diane Whitehead were attracted to the Berkshires after one visit to Tanglewood. The combination of classical music and theater along with their love of outdoor activities, including hiking and exploring bike trails, started them renting a home in Lenox. Since 2014, they live in Pittsfield six months a year.

Tobin's OLLI experience started in 2003 with OLLI at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Fla. As his Berkshire stays extended to six months a year, he joined OLLI at BCC. But he became far more engaged in his Berkshire OLLI experience, where he found "the most personable interaction" among fellow OLLI members.

"This isn't just classes," he said. "It's the people." He, and his wife Diane "have a number of friends we never would have had before."

OLLI, he said, "has become a way of life."

On the day Bruce Cohen joined OLLI four years ago, he was so enthusiastic he signed up for six classes in his first term. The courses and curriculum have kept him coming back for more. "I am impressed by the quality and credentials of OLLI instructors," he said. He still takes "four or five courses every semester."

Cohen is a long-time Berkshire hand,

having owned a vacation home on Stockbridge Bowl with his wife, Joan since 1977 and he hasn't lost his enthusiasm for the Berkshires or OLLI.

Sports is a major part of Cohen's life and in his conversation about OLLI, he harkened to lessons learned as an All-American collegiate lacrosse player at Cornell University, where he earned a bachelor's and master's degree in me-

chanical engineering. Today he serves as an assistant lacrosse coach at Williams College.

"Teams win," said Cohen as he characterized the importance of board members working together. "I think of OLLI as a team."

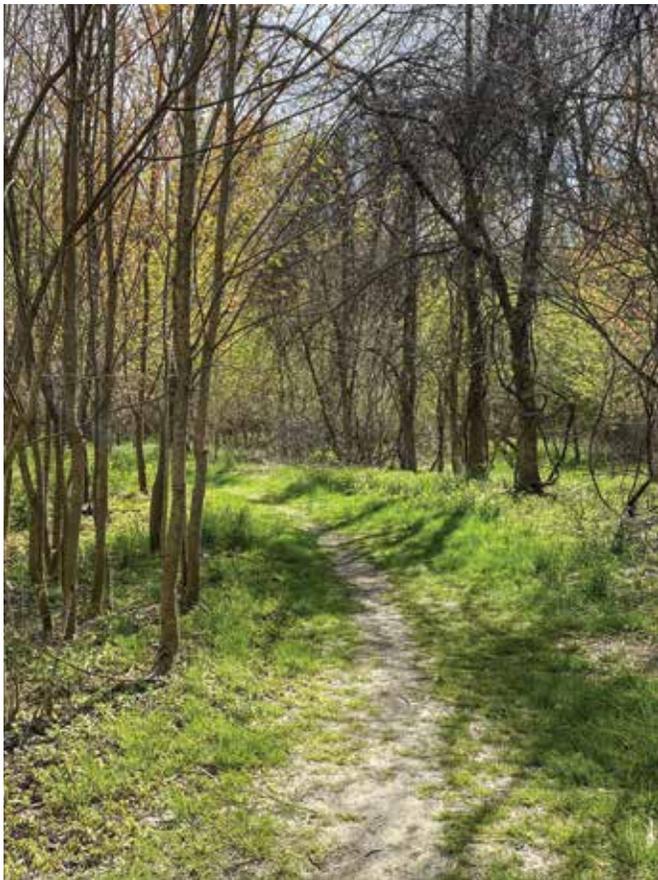
An important long-term objective for OLLI, he said, "is to try to figure out how to broaden our constituency." But Cohen readily admits that will be a major challenge.

As an example, he described his unsuccessful effort to recruit members of his bicycle riding group. "There is no overlap" among the cyclists and members of OLLI he said.

Operating in the pandemic era and beyond is another major challenge for OLLI, according to Cohen. The Zoom internet technology is a boon for many. "You don't have to get in a car and drive. People have turned to this technology," he said. But social connections are important to OLLI members and in time "we'll go back to the classroom but we won't give up ZOOM entirely," he said.

Meantime, Cohen and his wife, Joan, remain active in OLLI. "If there were no OLLI the Berkshires would be less enjoyable," he said.

So, like McNamara and Tobin, Cohen will add his thoughts and voice to board deliberations and help make decisions that will guide OLLI through the pandemic and beyond. — **Chris Guidette**



*another hillside. I am alone and strangely content, if only for the moment.*

I wasn't happy with the "stay at home" dictate. I'm generally outgoing, sociable, gregarious at times. I'm also a "joiner." Last winter I joined the 70 and over ski club. I joined a hiking group. I joined a book club. Last summer and fall were a bit frenetic: I taught a class for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, conducted a monthly seminar for the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, volunteered for several community and town committees, and regularly attended group exercise classes. Fearing stasis and a lack of purpose in retirement, I over compensated. Staying at home was going to be difficult.

*It is early May. I again hike alone in the woods. Spring comes slowly to the Berkshires, but there are now signs of growth: flowers beginning to bloom, trees leafing, the ground beneath my feet softening. There are more people too, more hikers. I readily give them a wide berth as we pass on the trail, which is no longer mine alone.*

I am one of the lucky ones. I am healthy; I have a comfortable place to live. My roommate of the past thirty years is smart, well read, and a good conversationalist. What more could I want? We cook at home and eat well.

We are (more or less) financially secure. We have Netflix movies and shows to watch nightly, Zoom cocktail parties with far away friends and family. Staying at home, it turns out, is not as bad as I feared.

But these are guilty pleasures. And ephemeral at best. The world intrudes. People are sick and dying, hundreds of thousands worldwide; many are out of work; funerals take place via Zoom; families are separated; our president is fumbling the recovery. There are times I cannot sleep. I worry about friends and family. I fear for aunts, uncles, and cousins now in their nineties. I fear for the children; I fear for the future.

*It is early June in the Berkshires. The pandemic is fading, the "curve" is flattening, or at least that is what we're told. The flowers and trees are almost in full bloom. It is more difficult to find hidden trails where I can walk alone, quietly, without the noise of the world around me.*

"In order to understand the world," the French-Algerian author Albert Camus tells us in one of his essays, "one has to turn away from it on occasion." And so I try. But even on my solitary hikes, I know I cannot truly "turn away." The pandemic intrudes; the nightly news intrudes. The fear of a "second wave" intrudes. "Pestilences," Camus tells us in his novel *La Peste*, "have a way of recurring in the world." This plague too will return. It will always be with us. Perhaps it always has been.

*It is mid-June in the Berkshires. It has turned hot and humid. It is no longer possible to hike alone. And now, almost three months into the pandemic, I miss family and friends I cannot see except through a screen. I miss the physical contact: the embraces, the hugs, a warm hard shake, the familiar touch. I miss swimming at the community center. I miss my exercise classmates—not friends exactly, but good companions.*

This pandemic has changed the way we live, and we may not soon go back to the old way of doing things. It also has changed me, and I too will not easily return to former habits. I will not take lightly those whom I miss, the friends and family who readily offered those warm embraces I so casually accepted. And I will not fear stasis. I will take solitary hikes, and I will be content to stay at home.

But make no mistake: should this or another "pestilence" return, as Camus predicted more than fifty years ago, I will not be happy. I will be distraught and fearful. I will once again worry about all those who will be hurt, sick, or dying. I will fear for my and my family's health. But I will be ready.

## OLLI and Partners Launch Aging-in-Place Initiative

**A**ging-in-place became more attainable with the launch in August of the nonprofit organization Villages of the Berkshires, Inc., which relies on volunteers, including OLLI members and Berkshire Community College students to provide area residents services that support independent living. With older adults representing 40 percent of Berkshire residents, the Lenox-based group is gearing up at a time when congregate living holds even less appeal, given the prevalence of COVID deaths in such residences.

A \$77,000 federal grant was an impetus to launch now, after more than two years of planning. The funding came from Community Care Corps, Administration for Community Living, which promotes innovative local models to foster independent living.

The majority of the grant will support hiring a volunteer coordinator. Volunteers are at the core of how all Villages operate. Howard Shapiro, Villages of the Berkshires president and longtime OLLI at BCC member said he believes Berkshire's collaborative approach for building and training a corps of volunteers appealed to the funders. Fellow longtime OLLI member and Villages vice president Carl Shuster agrees collaboration among Berkshire Community College and OLLI at BCC proved crucial to securing the grant.

"Ours is the first Villages to partner with an OLLI. With about 120 OLLIs in the country and an even greater number of Villages, we could serve as a national model," said Shapiro.

Villages of the Berkshires is an OLLI offspring, long in gestation. Shapiro and Shuster planted a seed of the idea several years ago while consulting on OLLI's strategic plan. They urged the organization to go beyond educational and social programming, by promoting volunteerism in communities and on campus. OLLI's Mentoring for Success program first demonstrated the benefits for both OLLI members and BCC students.

Collaboration between Villages and BCC formalizes that relationship. The Office of Student Affairs and faculty in nursing, human services, technology and other fields will oversee credit-bearing educational experiences for students who serve as Villages volunteers, building a beneficial intergenerational relationship.

For now, Villages of the Berkshires steps cautiously into operation during the pandemic, limiting assistance to technology support or friendly visits by phone, and a website rich with information and resources. As restrictions ease, transportation, grocery shopping, simple household tasks and repairs, and other face-to-face services will expand.

Marketing the Villages has its challenges, according to Shuster. "People

have an innate desire for independence. Unless and until they need help—to walk the dog, shovel the walk, find a card playing partner—they will hang back from becoming members," he said. For Villages to succeed and still exist for them at some unknown date, however, requires membership commitment now, something of an insurance policy for future needs.

For more information about membership, services and volunteer opportunities, visit Villages of the Berkshire [www.villagesoftheberkshires.org/](http://www.villagesoftheberkshires.org/)

— Kathy Zdeb



### OLLI UPDATE

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## Thank You OLLI Volunteers!

OLLI wouldn't exist without its extraordinary volunteers who organize our courses, lectures, and special events; serve on our board; lead our Shared Interest Groups; serve as Zoom co-hosts; and so much more. If you'd like to help shape OLLI's programs and work with great people, we encourage you to volunteer with us! Contact OLLI Director Megan Whilden for more information on how to get more involved: **413.236.2192** or **mwhilden@berkshirecc.edu**.

Thank you to each and every OLLI member listed below—because of you OLLI at BCC is a vibrant, successful and inspiring learning community in the Berkshires and beyond.

*Note that this list does not include OLLI's many accomplished volunteer instructors and speakers: that list will be published in a future Update.*

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Therese Allen	Elisa Frankel	Benjamin Liptzin	Arthur Sherman
Howard Arkans	Louise Frankenberg	Barbara Mahony	Carl Shuster
Eleanore Aronoff	Joanna Fribush	Amy Mann	Claudia Shuster
Yvette Bastow	Magda Gabor-Hotchkiss	Jeffrey Mann	Carole Siegel
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Robert Bogomolny	Joseph Gerard	Jane McWhorter	Elske Smith
Maxine Bookless	Paul Gniadek	Doug Mishkin	Naomi Spatz
Nan Bookless	Sheldon Goldberg	Ann Morgan	Kenneth Stark
Nancy Bott	Barbara Greenbaum	Alex Nardacci	Chelly Sterman
Bob Braddick	Igor Greenwald	Linda Neville	Lance Sterman
Arline Breskin	Christopher Guidette	Virginia O'Leary	Martha Stewart
Barbara Bricker	Clyde Haberman	Dianne Olsen	Ronald Stewart
Joan Brotman	David Hagerty	Lesley Oransky	Lawrence Strauss
Maureen Brower	Hope Hagler	Paula Patterson	Kirk Swiss
Bernadette A. Brusco	Linda Halpern	Ralph Pearson	Ellen Tabs
Russell Burns	Kerry Hamilton	Greta Phinney	Leonard Tabs
Leyn Burrows	Brian Harrison	Mary Piazza	John Tinger
Margaret Cahill	Barbara Hartman	Mary Pomerance	Steven Tobin
Deborah Caine	George Haus	Joanne Rogovin	Janice Toran
Helene Calman	Lee Hertz	Richard Rosenfeld	Nancy Travis
David Cass	Linda Hertz	James Rosenstein	Doug Truth
Alice Caton	Tom Hodgson	Colleen Rossi	Nancy Vale
Bruce Cohen	Theresa Hurley	Alice Roth	Carolyn Vandervort
Ellen Croibier	Carol Jones	Alan Rubin	Barbara Viniar
Judy Cromwell	Gordon Josephson	Lenore Rubin	Libby Wade
Adele Cukor	Judith Katz	Sandra Rubin	Barbara Waldinger
Mary Ellen Czerniak	Nina Keneally	Alan Rubin	Jesse Waldinger
Phil Deely	Lucy Kennedy	Susan Russell	Stacy Wallach
Bonnie Desrosiers	Judy Keshner	Carol Sabot	Nancy Walters
Robert Desrosiers	Katherine Kidd	Jane Salata	Malvina Wasserman
John Dickson	Steve Klepetar	Linda Sambel	Terry Weaver
Kit Dobelle	Rosanna Koelle	Myrna Schneiderman	Mara Winn
Ann Dorfman	Thomas Koelle	Rose Scotch	Randall Winn
Kathleen Duquette-Penna	James Kraft	Judy Seaman	Joel Wolk
Carolyn Fabricant	Barbara Lane	Anthony Segal	Robert Youdelman
Mary Farrell	Edward Lane	Elizabeth Selkowitz	Karen Youdelman
William Fields	Rae Langsdale	Marty Sennett	Katherine Zdeb
Andrew Fisher	Augusta Leibowitz	Harold Shair	Jay Zeif <i>in memorium</i>
Karel Fisher	Judith Lerner	Howard Shapiro	
Marilyn Flaum	Peter Levine	Shirley Shapiro	

## Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Machine Learning are Topics in New OLLI Technology Program

OLLI at BCC will offer a new multi-season program starting this fall, titled *Transformative Technologies and Their Impact on Work and Society*. The initiative is designed to educate OLLI members and the community at large about new technologies, including their current state, emerging trends, and their implications for the Berkshires and beyond. Some details are still under development, but many of the elements are already set.

The kickoff event will be an online conversation on September 16 with Lawrence D. Burns, currently an advisor to the Google self-driving car project and formerly a Vice President at General Motors. The topic will be “The Quest to Build the Driverless Car and How It Will Reshape the World.”



Beginning on September 24, OLLI will offer an eight week survey course on how new technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, big data and machine learning are affecting our region and the broader society. The weekly topics will be:

1. **Where Are We Now and How Did We Get Here?**
2. **How Are Different Countries Responding to New Technologies?**
3. **Enabling infrastructure to Deliver New Technologies.**
- 4, 5, 6. **Smart Manufacturing, Education and Health Care.**
7. **Societal Impact of These Technologies.**
8. **Where Do We Go from Here?**

The culminating event will be a conference next spring, which may be adapted to a virtual format if conditions so require. The conference will include lectures, moderated panel discussions and participant Q&A sessions led by national and regional thought leaders.

A groundbreaking aspect of the program is OLLI's partnership with the Berkshire Innovation Center and 1Berkshire, as well as OLLI's four college partners: Williams College, Berkshire Community College, Bard College at Simon's Rock and the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. All of these organizations are deeply interested in the subject matter of the program. By including them in the planning, OLLI hopes to build knowledge in an unusually broad range of listeners, thereby contributing to the economic development of the region.

OLLI owes thanks to the members of diverse experience and skill who have worked on this project for the past year. These include Arthur Sherman, Bob Braddick, Katherine Kidd, James Rosenstein and Megan Whilden.

— Peter Bluhm

## Speakers and Special Events

We're looking forward to our Fall 2020 semester, which will be held online via Zoom from **September 21 through November 2** and beyond. But there's lots more going on as well! Check out some of our upcoming speakers and special events below and keep an eye on your email as we continue to announce new events. All events listed below are held online via Zoom.

Register for all of these online events on our website: **BerkshireOLLI.org** or call **413.236.2190**.

**Thursday, September 10, 10am-11:30am:** OLLI's Fall Online Open House —meet our fall instructors and learn more about upcoming courses! Free & open to all.

**Friday September 11, 3pm:** “Spirit Voices: Art, Culture and Myths from the First Nations of the Northwest Coast” with Joan & Paul Gluck. OLLI Distinguished Speakers Series.

**Wednesday, September 16, 7pm:** Lawrence Burns, author of *Autonomy: The Quest to Build the Driverless Car—And How It Will Reshape Our World*, in conversation with Patrick Larkin, Director of the Innovation Institute. OLLI & the Berkshire Eagle Conversations series.

**Wednesday, September 30, 7pm:** Maya Rockeymore Cummings in conversation with Will Singleton on *We're Better Than This*, the just-published memoir by the late Congressman Elijah Cummings. OLLI & the Berkshire Eagle Conversations series.



Maya Rockeymore Cummings  
(continued on next page)



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**(Speakers and Special Events continued from previous page)**

**Saturday, October 3, 3pm:** In “Up from Ghosting,” local author & biographer Susan Dworkin explores her career as a ghostwriter in a lively interview with Barbara Greenbaum. OLLI Distinguished Speakers Series.

**Wednesday, October 7, 6pm:** Doug Mishkin moderates a lively discussion on “The Supreme Court’s Recent Religion Cases” with two of the nation’s leading lawyers on issues of religion and the law.

**Wednesday, October 14, 7pm:** Jean Guererro, investigative journalist and author of the new book **“Hatemonger: Stephen Miller, Donald Trump, and the White Nationalist Agenda,”** in conversation with CNN’s Jim Acosta.

**Saturday, October 24, 3pm:** “Polls and the Presidential Election:” days before the decisive 2020 vote, Professor Thomas Hodgson walks us through polling and its impact on the Presidential election. OLLI Distinguished Speakers Series.



Jean Guererro

PHOTO BY STACY KECK

**Wednesday, November 18, 7pm:** A conversation with Barbara Bonner, author of **“Inspiring Forgiveness: Poems, Quotations and True Stories to Help with Forgiving Yourself and Others.”** OLLI & the Berkshire Eagle Conversations series.

Plus many of our **Shared Interest Groups (SIGs)** are meeting online, including SIGs focusing on Playreading, French Conversation, Gender Roles in the 21st Century, Mystery Novels and more. All SIGs are free for and open only to active OLLI at BCC members.

**Learn to Zoom with us!** We’re happy to provide free training and support to any OLLI at BCC member who has not yet tried online learning with Zoom, or doesn’t yet feel comfortable with it. If you would like to learn more, email us at [OLLI@berkshirecc.edu](mailto:OLLI@berkshirecc.edu) or call **413-236-2190** or and we’ll connect you to a free Zoom training.