**Shared Interest Group Guide**

Or everything you wanted to know about OLLI SIGs – but never dared to ask…

Shared Interest Groups (SIG) are member-led groups centered around a shared interest or activity and are free and exclusively for OLLI at BCC members. Any OLLI member can propose a SIG, and OLLI staff and volunteers will assist in launching it.

* SIGs are **S**hared **I**nterest **G**roups – so if you have a passion you would like to share with other Berkshire OLLI Members, then a SIG might be the way to go. Classes usually last 4-6 weeks, SIGs give you a way to continue an interest year-round. Note that there are no instructors in SIGs, they are groups centered around discussion or activities.
* Our SIGs cover a wide range of topics, everything from Poetry Writing or Painting Techniques through to Downhill Skiing and Knitting & Needlework. We have several book clubs, groups that discuss gender roles and the future of aging and there is always room for more!
* SIGs sometimes evolve after a class when participants decide they want to continue exploring the topic covered in the class. Other SIGs have evolved from OLLI Members deciding they have an interest in common.
* It usually takes one or two people to take the lead of a SIG. The leaders need to be able to help determine the goals of the SIG and be able to communicate with members of the SIG as well as being point person(s) for potential new SIG members to contact for information.
* SIG meetings can be as frequent as the group decides. Most SIGs meet monthly, but some meet more frequently.
* Meetings can be regularly scheduled (e.g., 3rd Wednesday of every month) or scheduled on an “ad hoc” basis.
* Meetings can be in-person or on Zoom. The OLLI Office can assist by reserving meeting spaces on the Berkshire Community College campus or set up Zoom meetings. SIGs may also meet at a private home or other space.
* We have information about all the SIGs on the OLLI web site, which is one of the ways we try to promote and let our members know about the wide variety of SIGs available.
* If you are thinking about starting up a SIG, all you need to do is contact the OLLI Office, or the SIG Coordinators (Bruce Cohen or Monica Sinclair). Both Bruce and Monica have experience in starting up and running SIGs and can give you lots of advice.
* When starting a SIG, we often have the first meeting as a public OLLI event announced in a membership-wide email so that interested members can sign-up and you will get a good idea of who is interested and can collect their emails easily.
* Thereafter, meetings are usually published on the OLLI Calendar, but participants don’t have to register each time. The SIG Leader(s) should maintain email lists of their SIG members so that you can communicate within the group.
* Agendas can be set in advance or decided on a meeting-to-meeting basis.
  + Some SIGs rotate responsibility for meeting topics to be shared amongst many members
  + Some SIGs set their agenda a year at a time – and usually publish that agenda on the OLLI website
  + Some don’t have a particular agenda at all!
* SIGs can be any size. We have some that have only 2-3 members and some that have 30+ members. Most SIGs start small and grow. In most cases, SIG members don’t all attend every meeting.