Lifelong Learning Institute at

Waubonsee Community College

President's Corner

Dear LLI Members,

As we move from fall into winter, I hope each of you has had the opportunity to enjoy the lovely colors and wonderful tastes that the fall season has brought. Although I enjoy pumpkin, I sometimes wonder if there is anything that has not had pumpkin flavor added to it. Hopefully, as you are reading this, hints of the winter season are in the air as we begin the month of December.

The Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI) has experienced an exciting and event—filled fall. Our facilitators and Curriculum Council have provided all our lifelong learning members with opportunities to fulfill their many varied interests. Facilitators and organizers deserve a huge thank you for their efforts and wonderful presentations. Lifelong Learning thrives due to the ongoing commitment of the volunteers who research, prepare, organize, and present the courses and activities. Take the time to let the volunteers know that they are appreciated.

The partnership and support from Waubonsee Community College is a strong factor in LLI's continued growth. We are thankful that WCC's professors are willing to share their expertise by presenting courses. Also, check the LLI website to view and register for joint activities which have been organized with the college. It is important to note that 2026 will be the 30th anniversary of the Lifelong Learning Institute at Waubonsee Community College.

I am honored to share the information that LLI has been selected by WCC as the Distinguished Contributor for 2025. LLI received the award at the November 19 Board of Trustees meeting. Our commitment will continue as we support the WCC scholarship fund through our donations.

Best wishes to everyone for a joyful holiday season with friends and family. Sincerely,

Mary Ann White, LLI Board President



Welcome to our new facilitators and organizer!

It is with great excitement that we recognize LLI members who are new facilitators and organizers for this fall 2025 semester. Facilitators create and lead courses, outings, and day trips; organizers bring in guest presenters who present the entire course. Please welcome Facilitators Wendi Barlow, Richard Calabrese, Denise Curts-Lueth and Lynn Diviak and Organizer Mary Ann White. A sincere thanks to you all!

Curriculum Council Corner



Greetings from the Lifelong Learning Institute Curriculum Council!

If you are interested or have considered facilitating a course, our next course proposal deadline is approaching—February 20, 2026—for summer offerings. To get you started, log on to the LLI website: www.waubonsee.edu/lli

Scroll down to More Information and click on "Facilitators Only" where our Facilitator Guide and many necessary documents are housed. Documents provide guidance for planning your course ideas for the next summer session. We encourage you to take a look and hope this will give you tools to begin the process. Remember, any Curriculum Council member can show you the easy way to put the documents together for your course. Please reach out to us (name and contact information on page 12)!

Spring 2026 will include a variety of courses the Curriculum Council is excited to present to our membership. We have, as promised, worked to balance the curriculum with a variety of categories including: Personal Development, Humanities, Technology, History and Geography, Social Sciences, Literature and Natural Sciences. Our focus remains on variance of course length to include single and multiple sessions and adding a second section of highly sought-after courses.

Our LLI organization is fortunate to collaborate with Waubonsee Community College on events. If you have not already done so, investigate "Banned Books to Movies," "Crafting Conversations," and "Artist Talks at the Arrowhead Gallery." All events are free opportunities to expand your learning experiences. You will have a chance to interact with LLI friends as well as WCC faculty, staff, and students.

We look forward to seeing you all at our LLI offerings this spring!



Walking/Hiking Special Interest Group

This fun Special Interest Group enjoyed walking the beautiful prairie at Dick Young Forest Preserve. Shown in front row are Pat McClelland and Beth Johnson; rear row are Jean Langlais and Jean Maffiola.

If you are interested in joining this group, please contact Jean Langlais at jhlanglais@yahoo.com

VAP

Someone You Should Know

Written by Mary Maiers

I am honored to showcase a dear friend and colleague—**Carl Hays.** He has done so much for our LLI chapter. Where do I begin? Carl joined us in 2001 after being a founding member of LLI at Northern Illinois University. For a short time, he facilitated at both chapters. When asked why he came to us, Carl said gleefully, "This chapter was larger and so vibrant!"

Carl grew up on a farm in Oklahoma and attended Oklahoma State University, where he earned a B.S. degree in Engineering. He then joined the Air Force where he earned a degree in Meteorology at Penn State and did weather forecasting for the Air Force. After his military service, Carl finished his M.S. in Engineering at Oklahoma State. Carl worked at General Electric, where he helped originate the first implanted pacemaker. He continued his career applying his engineering background. All of this education and training is reflected in the courses Carl facilitates.

Carl is a prolific reader and selects books and topics for his courses based on his many interests. He asks, "What will interest me and the LLI audience?" Carl also is a regular viewer of C-SPAN where he gets many ideas for courses. He feel their interviews are always so informative and professional and include excellent Q&A sessions.

Carl has served on the LLI Board, Curriculum Council and several committees, in addition to attending regional conferences where he has presented papers. What does Carl love most about LLI? "The LLI system is the most flexible I have seen. Its composition is created by the members—quite remarkable! I have seen LLI flourish. The possibilities motivate and amaze me." Yes, Carl. We couldn't agree more!

And now, you have met my friend and Master Facilitator (facilitator of 20 years), Carl Hays!







LLI Fall Kickoff Open House

Held on August 8, 2025 on Sugar Grove Campus

This was our second annual Fall Kickoff Open House—a time to socialize, learn all about LLI, and register for membership. A total of 149 members and guests attended this fun event, welcomed by our smiling volunteers! We recruited 58 new members and welcome you all! Of course, we couldn't have done it without help from so many volunteers and assistance from Waubonsee Community College. A special thank you to Emily Rollins, Community Engagement Manager, who assisted with marketing and so much more.



Shown above are Beth Johnson and Ann Hastert who assisted with sign-in, Nancy Modery and Ann Butcher at registration, and Jean Langlais assisting with refreshments. So many others worked behind the scenes.



Members and guests were encouraged to circulate among the various information tables. Pictured above are Ruth Harmon at *Welcome to LLI*, Karen Christensen at *Let's Get Social*, and Kent Hayward at *More Information*. Handouts included a wide array of materials, as well as a list of the Fall 2025 offerings. This provided a preview of what's to come.



LLI Scholarships

Exciting news about our LLI scholarships! This year the Board voted to create a \$25,000 endowment to the Waubonsee Community College Foundation. Two \$1500 scholarships will be awarded to WCC returning students each year, beginning with the 2026-2027 scholarship year. For the current 2025-2026 academic year, we awarded one \$2000 Founder's Scholarship and two \$1500 LLI Scholarships. Our operating budget and member donations fund these scholarships. We thank you for your generosity!

This Year's Scholarship Recipients

Founder's Scholarship—Lilyana

I am studying as a history major with hopes of transferring to a four-year college and later pursuing a career in secondary education. Specifically, I would like to become a high school social studies teacher with a focus on history, civics or sociology. I am the child of a single mother, am of Mexican descent and have wanted to be a teacher since I was nine years old. I have been on the Dean's list. Last year I received the Kathleen Randall Education Scholarship. Receiving the Founder's Scholarship will bring me closer to accomplishing my educational and career goals and make my mother proud.

LLI Scholarship—Troy

I am studying economics and trying to get my associate or bachelor degree. I am planning to transfer to a university in the spring. I have worked for a year and a half as a dietary aide at an assisted living facility. Through that time I have managed to save the majority of the money I was earning. I live with my mother. My father lives in Ghana. Growing up, I was taught and raised to believe that education was very important to my future. This belief created a foundation for good work and learning habits. This scholarship makes me realize that my hard work and efforts are paying off.

LLI Scholarship—Bryan

I am pursuing a degree in nursing as well as an associate degree in applied science. I am a second-generation immigrant, have three siblings, and am the only one to pursue a college education. I was diagnosed with a serious illness during high school. This experience provided me with a "special lens" into the medical world. I have completed Waubonsee's certified nursing program. My choice of a major in nursing is a reflection of my identity and passion. This scholarship will help me fulfill my ambition and desire for a career in nursing.

Congratulations to you all! We extend our support in achieving your life's dreams and educational goals!



Partnered Events

Understanding the Higher Education Landscape

with Dr. Brian Knetl



This was truly a "conversation" with Waubonsee Community College (WCC) President Dr. Knetl, as he highlighted the changes, challenges, and choices facing Higher Education. While we discussed the topic in general, there was an emphasis on Junior Colleges and WCC specifically.

In general, challenges include rising costs, alignment of job opportunities, lower birth rate, and adjusting to student needs. We are in the midst of a "great upheaval," with technology (AI boom), globalization and demographics being the major factors. Interestedly, a recent survey showed a higher confidence in Junior Colleges—good news for Waubonsee!

WCC is working hard to meet student needs, witnessed by the opening of its new Technical Education Center. Dr. Knetl shared the college's 2025-2030 RISE Strategic Plan: Redefine our relationship with the community, Invest in academic innovation, Strengthen the student experience, Enrich the employee experience. How proud we are to be part of this WCC community!!

Banned Book to Movie Club

Written by Karen Christensen

Why, you might ask, would a book like *Captain Underpants* be banned? According to Waubonsee Community College Librarian Nate Wagner, books are challenged because of language, subject matter, perceived conflict with religious and political beliefs, or portrayal of LGBTQ+ characters, among other reasons. Yes, *Captain Underpants* certainly featured rude language, potty humor, underwear jokes, and 4th graders' disregard for authority figures, but it also highlighted the power of friendship, creativity, and teamwork.

Two important messages were conveyed by the book and film as well: "No matter what, don't lose your sense of humor!" At this particular moment in history, rather than following the motto emblazoned on the front of Principal Krupp's desk—"Hope Dies Here"—we'd recommend adopting Captain Underpants's signature cry, "Tra la laaaaaaaaaaaa" (with 11 "a"s!)

Pictured at right: Ann Hastert and grandson Oliver; Kim Carew, grandson August and Laura King





Fall Offerings

How to Read Poetry Continues

Facilitated by Phyllis Deerinck



You might think you know all about this class because you have seen it listed previously in course offerings. It is true it has been offered before, and that is because it continues to be an enjoyable and popular class. Hopefully, it will be offered again in the future. Each time it is offered, course facilitator Phyllis Deerinck has a new batch of poems for participants to explore.

Each session, Phyllis shares poems she selects to illustrate aspects of poetical form and techniques used by poets. In the current session, for example, we learn about imagery, figurative language, and paradox by reading and discussing such poems as John Donne's 17th century "Batter my heart, three-person'd God" and Billy Collins's "The History Teacher," first published in 1991. These two poems generated quite a discussion, as many poems do. Participants often find that reading or listening to poems and discussing their meanings and emotional impact are valuable and satisfying.

To give you an idea of how stimulating discussions can be, take a closer look at Billy Collins' poem "The History Teacher." This poem raised so much discussion that it continued into the next session. And the best thing about this class is that you can discuss and disagree and you will not be judged or graded!

"What is New"

A poem by member Karen Christensen

With each season's passing we may find ourselves thinking: what have we lost? what's our fate as an elder?

But we know a secret: we can reminisce—then, we can look forward the promise of learning

No matter our age, no matter the number of years that are gone our diary pages can quickly be filled: new questions, ideas, chances for wonder

Gifts gained once we're older; time and discovery curiosity piqued, rabbit holes opened—
the blessing that comes:
new journeys planned with our LLI friends

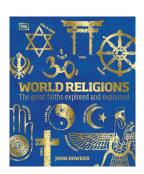


Exploring the World's Wisdom Traditions

Co-facilitated by Donna Sue Blankenship, Karen Christensen & Evelyn Porter

All three co-facilitators come from different faith backgrounds. The idea for this course came a year ago at a Roundtable where the three shared this common interest and created this class together. The four-session class was designed to explore the various world religions: histories, beliefs, practices and unique aspects. Members walked away seeing the many commonalities, especially the teaching of the Golden Rule. Local resources were shared: foods and artifacts and houses of worship. This is an incentive to broaden our experiences, using the many local resources available to us without the need to travel great distances.

The required text used in the course, *World Religions* by John Bowker, included a wealth of information, in addition to beautiful art work. The sessions were rich in discussion and content, including an overview of ancient religions and timelines; Chinese, Japanese and Native religions; Hinduism; Buddhism; and those most commonly known to us—Judaism, Christianity and Islam.



Members shared their personal experiences and insights, which enriched the course. The main takeaway-"Just be a good person!"

Schingoethe Center at Aurora University Outing

Co-facilitated by Sue Foody and Carolyn Hopkins

LLI members were given the opportunity of viewing the *Eye to Eye* exhibit, which "explored portraiture as a vehicle to share personal, historical, and mythological stories about identity, cultural memory, and contemporary life." More than 40 artists were displayed, with works spanning over 180 years.

Trey Ambrose (shown at right), Schingoethe Center Fellow gave members a tour of this exhibit. Sharing personal stories of these artists truly made this an enriching cultural experience!





Registrar and Museum Manager Zachary Bishop (pictured at left), highlighted art work created by artists active in the Underground Railroad. This was of special interest to LLI members, since Zachary is a Guest Presenter at the fall course, "Freedom's Frontier: The History of the Underground Railroad in Northern Illinois."

An additional exhibit, *Pokagon Potawatomi Black Ash Baskets*, featured the artistry, tradition and importance of basket making among this band of Potawatomi people.

Fall Roundtable

Written by Jerry King

A most interesting feature of the Curriculum Council Roundtable is the atmosphere of conviviality and mutual help.

At the Roundtable held on October 24, everyone was warmly welcomed and encouraged to freely share their best practices. A key point was made early in the session that facilitating a course does not mean that one is an authority. What is called for: "Be the guide on the side, not the sage on the stage." I loved hearing that tagline and was quick to write it down. The pressure feels less to know that everyone who registers for a class has a reserve of stories from experience, that learning at best is a shared project.

A Roundtable for someone like myself who is relatively new to facilitating provides a means of taking stock, hearing stories of how far LLI has come. I cannot imagine posting nearly 40 courses and conducting registration without the efficiency of CourseStorm. Others remember not so long ago when signing up for classes was a manual process. Technology saves all of us many volunteer hours of work.

Ideas were offered about the components of a successful learning experience. The focus is upon the students; LLI members make the class a success. A course is a composite of facts with analysis, critical thinking, and social interaction. A consensus seemed to be that social interaction is more important than we realize. Engagement with others and change go together.

The sharing jogged my memory of several interests, which could be shaped into a LLI course. More exciting—if another member happens to share the same interests, why not enjoy the challenge of co-facilitating? Two can tweak, polish an idea better than one!

I highly recommend attending the Roundtables!





LLI Election

LLI is an all-volunteer organization and we count on our members to help us thrive! Each year, the Nominating and Recruiting Committee (N&RC) reviews Board and Curriculum Council open positions and actively works to recruit candidates. A slate of candidates is presented to the Board in April for approval. If multiple candidates are presented for one or more positions, we have an election by the members.

The following positions are open for the 2026-2028 term (July through June):

President—one-year term

Vice President—one-year term

Treasurer—two-year term

Member Communications Manager—two-year term

Five Curriculum Council Members—two-year terms

Those serving on the N&RC are: Sue Foody, Kent Hayward (non-voting), Jerre Henriksen, Gary Krueger, Jean Langlais and Rebecca Wolverton. If you are interested in being considered for any of the above positions or have further questions regarding the associated duties and responsibilities, please contact Kent Hayward at kent.hayward@yahoo.com or (630) 567--6705.

In Memoriam

With our sincere condolences...

Charlotte Poplawski November 22, 1934—September 13, 2025



We will forever remember Charlotte's radiant smile and welcoming manner. She was active in LLI for many years and served as newsletter editor. Born in St. Louis, MO, she formed a special bond with her twin brother Charlie. Charlotte had great pride in her family: one son and two daughters, nine grandchildren and seven greatgrandchildren.

The first Mary Kay consultant in Illinois, Charlotte paved the way for others. She was very creative, proud of her paintings earning ribbons at the Sandwich Fair. Other interests were music and travel.

We will miss you, Char!

Lifelong Learning Explores Iceland

Written by Jean Langlais

This fall, members of the Lifelong Learning Institute embarked on an unforgettable visit to Iceland. We began and ended our trip in Reykjavik, Iceland's capital city. There we experienced some wonderful local food, learned about Iceland's culture and history, visited landmarks, and shopped for unique Icelandic souvenirs.

In Reykjavik we boarded a bus to explore more of the island along the Golden Circle. As we traveled, we learned about Iceland's unique geology, about its waterfalls, geysers, mountains, black sand beaches and glaciers, and heard about the Icelandic sagas that date back to the ninth century.

We walked on the crest of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, beside the fissure where the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates move away from but also rub up against each other, causing earthquakes and volcanoes. We visited when all was quiet and the fissure appeared to be no more than a beautiful, expansive marsh instead of a boiling cauldron of geological activity.

Once back in Reykjavik, we experienced the highlight of our tour. After five days of total cloud cover, we took an evening cruise in Reykjavik Harbor in search of the Northern Lights. We were able to look overhead to see the amazing aurora borealis. There is no way to describe the splashes of green across the sky other than to say it left everyone in awe.

If this article gives you a little travel fever, we have good news. LLI is looking into other tours for our LLI members.



Shown above: Seljalandsfoss Waterfall, Northern Lights, Thingvellir National Park and Glacier Lagoon





Lifelong Learning Institute Waubonsee Community College

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Our Values include continued learning, intellectual inquiry, social interaction, and active member participation in lifelong learning.

Our **Mission** is to provide our membership with a defined and member-generated framework for life-enriching, dynamic educational experiences through lifelong learning programs.

Our **Vision** is to be a self-sustaining and self-governing community of active mature adults offering a diverse and intellectually stimulating array of noncredit educational offerings in a wide variety of academic disciplines.

Waubonsee Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, national origin, veteran's status, marital status, disability or any other characteristic protected by law in its programs and activities. For more information on the college's nondiscrimination policies, contact the Executive Director of Human Resources at (630) 466-7900, ext. 2367; Waubonsee Community College, Route 47 at Waubonsee Dr., Sugar Grove, IL 60554-9454.

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