

Lifelong Learning INSTITUTE

at Waubonsee Community College

Est. 1996

WAUBONSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ROAD SCHOLAR® Institute Network

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Celebrating 30 Years
Lifelong Learning
INSTITUTE
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Est. 1996

A LETTER FROM DR. KNETL

Members of the Lifelong Learning Institute,

As Waubonsee Community College celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2026, it is a tremendous pleasure to also recognize the 30th anniversary of the Lifelong Learning Institute. Though it is half as old as the college, the LLI has consistently delivered exceptional value to the adults it serves across our community. The LLI is aligned with the very best of Waubonsee's mission to create opportunities for discovery, connection, and the sharing of knowledge.



The LLI stands out as a model of engaged, high-impact learning. Its peer-led structure reflects a powerful dynamic in education: environments in which individuals are both teachers and learners. This exchange demonstrates mutual respect for everyone engaged in the learning process while enriching participants and strengthening the broader community. The LLI has been and continues to be a distinctive extension of the college's work.

Most importantly, the LLI has not remained static. Like all the best educational programs, the LLI continues to evolve in response to the interests and energies of its members. That willingness to evolve is a hallmark of its success, growth, and a strong indicator of its continued relevance.

With this foundation, there is every reason to expect that the next 30 years will be as impactful and inspiring as the first. Congratulations to the Lifelong Learning Institute on 30 incredible years!

Dr. Brian Knetl
PRESIDENT, WAUBONSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT

Just think…over 30 years ago in 1995, persons with foresight at Waubonsee Community College (WCC) long recognized the unique educational needs of seniors in our local community explored possibilities offered through the Elderhostel Institute Network! As awareness of this visionary effort spread throughout the community, five Founding Members Kally Klose, Ray and Dorothy Libner and Don and Jane Schennum stepped up to work with WCC to meet the requirements of obtaining an Elderhostel Charter. Granted in 1996 and originally known as the Institute for Learning in Retirement (ILR), it was opened to seniors 55 years and older. Charter Members Lin Bargemann, Bernadine Greiter, Adam Holtz and Ellen Neupert then joined ILR to spearhead early development of curriculum offerings and administrative processes.

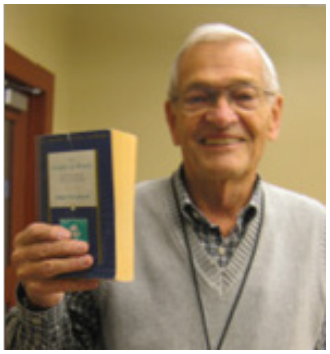
We started with 34 members, annual dues of $20 and course fees of $5 each. In 2003, ILR was renamed the Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI) and the owl became our logo; in 2006, the first Constitution was written and adopted; and in 2010, Elderhostel was rebranded as Road Scholar. In fall 2023, the course fee increased to $10.

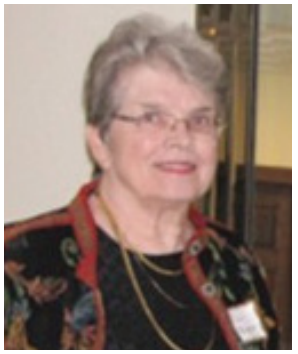
Our founders believed in the value of lifelong learning and carried the torch forward. Where would we be without their vision and perseverance? It isn't by chance that we are here today!

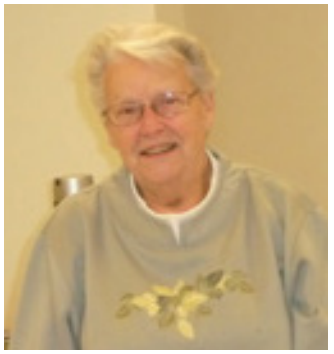




Above, founding members (left to right) Don and Jane Schennum, Ray and Dorothy Libner. At right, founding member Kally Klose.







Charter Members who continued to contribute so much to our continued growth (left to right) are Adam Holtz, Lin Bargemann, and Ellen Neupert.

Founded on its guiding principles of Values, Mission and Vision, LLI is a self-governing and self-sustaining organization continuing to evolve and keep pace with an ever-expanding landscape. In the last five years, LLI has grown through several innovations and improvements.

Online registration was launched in spring 2022 (more information to follow). LLI spirit wear was introduced in 2024 and is proudly worn to broadcast affiliation with our organization. Also, the Coffee House Crawl was piloted as an avenue to broaden social opportunities and was the springboard for the introduction of Special Interest Groups. To further broaden social opportunities, LLI introduced international travel tours through Collette Travel.

Throughout the years, LLI's organizational and operational infrastructure has expanded and adjusted to meet the ongoing membership needs and organizational functioning. The LLI Board has diligently updated governance documents and policies and procedures to meet the needs of members to reflect the current and future direction of the organization. The Board, Curriculum Council and various committees all contribute to this work.

LLI is in good hands! LLI is on a trajectory of growth! May we continue to grow, learn, socialize and have fun! Hooray for 30 years!

INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY –

On this 30th anniversary of the Lifelong Learning Institute of Waubonsee Community College, we celebrate the impressive evolution of LLI's curriculum from that founding group of retired teachers who established an original core curriculum of academically-oriented classes to the current wide diversity of both academic and special interest continuing education programs, and the inclusion of travel and tours, social outings and events, and increased interaction with both Waubonsee faculty and students.



LLI helps me keep my mind active by challenging me with fresh perspectives and topics I never explored in my younger years. - Gary Krueger

In that 1996 inaugural term, 34 initial members took four classes offered by five facilitators at Sixth Street School in Geneva: Shakespeare's Julius Caesar: Ramifications for Modern Man; World Geography: Culture in Conflict; Great Decisions; and Native Americans: An Overview. From that beginning and the boost from Waubonsee Community College starting in 1998, by 2019, pre-COVID pandemic time, over 950 courses had been conducted, not including guest presentations, trips, or outings.





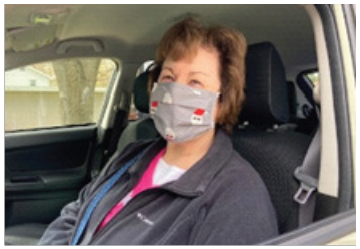


Over the years, LLI has offered a wide range of courses. Highlighted here are Open Art Studio (left), The Roaring Twenties (right), and Elementary, My Dear Watson (bottom right).

OUR FOUNDATION







There were so many innovative facilitators who offered courses via Zoom during the pandemic. Highlighted here are The Day the Midwest Burned with Jan Mayer (left); School Reform with Ruth Harmon (middle); and You're Only Old Once (right), a discussion group led by Kim Carew, who got the idea while going through drive-thru at Chick-fil-A!

As the 25th Anniversary Commemorative Newsletter stated fall 2021, *"Since the beginning, LLI leadership and the various committees have built a solid pathway for providing learning opportunities to improve our daily lives. In our 25-year ongoing journey together, we have overcome challenges, even adapting to provide Zoom courses to continue lifelong learning in the midst of COVID-19."*



LLI has helped me rediscover and nurture a deep hunger for learning at this stage of my life. – Laura King

So much of the development of LLI in these past five years relates to the foresighted response of LLI as a whole to that severe interruption of "regular" life by the pandemic. Fortunately, LLI survived the shutdown through the immediate action response, solid teamwork within the board, council and membership, including that rapid development and implementation of Zoom technology to keep the course offerings active and available.

INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY –

And like many of us individually, the LLI Board and Curriculum Council took this significant break in what had become "normal" life to rethink, refresh, and renew. While online learning itself has led to an expansion of adult courses, once again our in-person courses and activities still predominate in our curriculum offerings and special events.

As the "bread and butter" of LLI since its inception, much of the rethinking of curricula from the council, has been to respond to continued membership growth by responding to member needs and desires. The "refreshing" was stimulated by a post-pandemic survey to solicit member feedback in areas of interest. Among other learnings from the survey, over 90% of respondents listed "In-Person Classes" as the primary factor in member satisfaction.



Serving on the Curriculum Council is a small role in an organization that continues to celebrate the practice of learning, the cultivation of reason to sustain a youthful heart – and is one of the highlights of my life. – Jerry King



In-person classes like Socrates Café with Jerry King (above), Alternate Realities with Joe Dvorak (right), and How to Read Poetry with Phyllis Deerinck (inset) have been our most popular facilitation method.

OUR FOUNDATION





Partnered programs about banned books offer lively multigenerational discussion and opportunity to connect LLI members to WCC alumni, staff, and students. Featured here are from the Bless Me Ultima (top) and Captain Underpants events (bottom and inset).

Meanwhile, the Curriculum Council has strengthened the repertoire of class offerings by enlisting Waubonsee Community College faculty and other outside speakers. Partnering with Waubonsee also includes opportunities to interact with WCC students, through such programs as "Banned Books to Movies" and "Crafting Conversations."

Finally, none of this would be possible without our amazing cadre of volunteer facilitators, who offer us education, stimulation, and socialization. New facilitators from the membership are welcome and necessary, and the council offers excellent support for facilitators through mentorship, roundtable discussions, and technical assistance. Open your imagination to what you might consider facilitating!



Curriculum Council has been a wonderful way to get to know committed worker bees on a deeper level with their committed, creative and cooperative spirit. – Mary Hauge

With gratitude to the Curriculum Council and their efforts, we welcome the beginning of Waubonsee Community College's Lifelong Learning Institute's next 30 years of growth!

AN EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES

For those who are fairly new to LLI, it is easy to take our seamless registration process for granted. But its effectiveness is only due to the hard work of LLI members who worked behind the scenes to make it appear that way.

Originally, Waubonsee handled the entire process. To encourage registration, a social event was held each semester so members could learn about course offerings from the facilitators. A separate spreadsheet was created for each course, and registration, payments, and receipts were manually recorded. The process worked, but it was time-consuming and made effective communication with the members nearly impossible.

Learning and innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow. - William Pollard

By 2003, LLI's growth required a new methodology. Bob Goetz, with a background in database development, spent countless hours collaborating with Waubonsee staff to create a database compatible with the college's requirements. In 2004, LLI assumed registration responsibility using Bob's database.



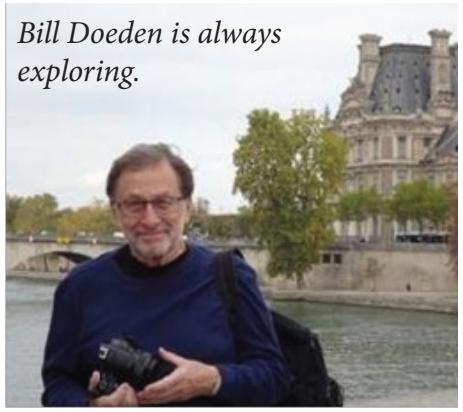
Volunteers took a leadership role in this process which was still largely manual. As LLI membership grew, more volunteers were needed to process registration and enter data. Bob continually modified the database to eliminate many time-consuming tasks.



Bob Goetz (top) laid the foundation for our current registration process. LLI used to host in-person registration help.

Since the process remained largely manual, LLI Technology Manager Bill Doeden and his team began to search for an online platform that would meet our requirements. They evaluated several platforms, and, in the Fall of 2021, identified CourseStorm as the product of choice.

Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future. – John F. Kennedy



Bill Doeden is always exploring.

After months of preparation and training, LLI opened the platform for its inaugural registration in spring 2022. Thanks to the support of Waubonsee Community College and the effort of the Technology and Registration Committees, the Curriculum Council and LLI volunteers, the platform's performance exceeded expectations. While this has been a learning curve for our members, they are quick to agree that "life is now simpler!"

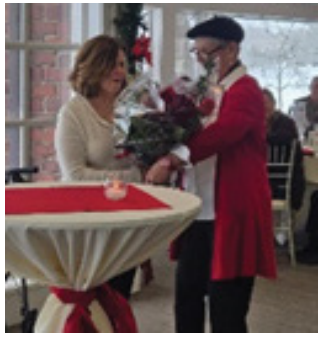
As we enter our fifth year of online registration, we continue to be sensitive to our members' needs. As our founders taught us, we must always look toward the future. We are certainly open to upgrading the platform if that is what is needed.

Our LLI at Waubonsee Community College does indeed have an embarrassment of riches. We are thankful for our amazing facilitators and for the smooth registration process that allows us to learn.

SOCIAL INTERACTION –

At LLI we both value and promote social interaction. This personal connection with other members is so crucial in both personal development and developing a nurturing environment in which to learn. Through course interaction and volunteering, we get to know each other on a more personal level. We find that we share common interests, hobbies and often backgrounds. Many of us have formed lifelong friendships, which we so cherish. Where else but LLI can we find opportunities for both intellectual stimulation and personal growth? We welcome all!





The 2025 Holiday Luncheon held at Stonebridge Country Club in Aurora was enjoyed by all. Dr. Melinda Tejada, Waubonsee's former Vice President of Community Engagement, accepted a floral arrangement to honor her retirement (right). God speed, Melinda!

Our Social Committee is responsible for planning two annual social events: the Spring Luncheon (and Annual Business Meeting) and Holiday Luncheon. These are festive occasions held at local country clubs, offering delicious dining and lively conversation. We even have entertainment at our Holiday Luncheons to get us into the holiday spirit, ranging from various choral groups to David Fraccaro, who entertained us with a wide variety of popular Elvis songs. Our facilitators also have the opportunity to display their upcoming courses. One thing is for certain – fun is always in the air!

A KEY LLI VALUE




SIGs like Eat Smart/Live Strong (left) and Book Discussions (right) are very popular.

Another way we have expanded opportunities for social interaction is the introduction of Special Interest Groups (SIGs). As mentioned earlier, the Coffee House Crawl was the pilot SIG in 2024 which grew into the establishment of a plethora of enrichment and the development of Special Interest Groups. SIGs are not courses; there are no facilitators, tuition or registration and are totally self-managed.

Those formed to date include Board Games and Other Fun Stuff, Book Discussions, Lunch and Dinner Groups, Current Event Discussions, Eat Smart/Live Strong, Volunteer Together, WCC Art Gallery Talks, Movie Club and Sing Along Choir.




SIGs Volunteer Together (left) and WCC Art Gallery Talks (right) celebrate our wide range of interests.

LLI to me means Learning, Laughter, and Inspiration – a place where learning never stops, friendships flourish, and curiosity keeps life fun. – Ann Butcher



TRAVEL

And who doesn't like to travel? This is always an opportunity to learn about other cultures, explore the unknown and visit interesting and historic sites. LLI has always promoted travel as an expansion of knowledge. The coach trips offered for so many years were based on courses taught at LLI – an opportunity to personally experience what was read in a book or discussed in a classroom. They were planned and led by LLI volunteers, often by those same facilitators who taught the courses!



Since the pandemic, we have modified our approach to multiday trips. For coach trips, we partner with Mayflower who designs the trips based on our recommendations. These tours are well received, offering an opportunity to travel with friends and meet new ones.

Recent coach trips include Kicking Around the Keystone State (pictured above) and a Route 66 Trip.

In 2025, we partnered with Collette Travel to offer international trips. That year, the choice was Iceland's Magical Northern Lights. In 2026, we are offering Spotlight on Northern Italy (both are pictured below). Great care is given to planning these trips, including activity level and the number of hotel accommodations. Welcome aboard!





VOLUNTEERISM

We are an all-volunteer organization, something quite remarkable! As they say, "It takes a village." Throughout the years, we have relied on those committed members who believe how important it is to volunteer their time and talents towards achieving success. There are so many opportunities to volunteer: serving on the Board or Curriculum Council, facilitating, or serving on one of our many committees.

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." – Winston Churchill

We have both Standing Committees, which are permanent committees to oversee specific areas of responsibility; and Ad Hoc Committees which are formed to address a specific issue, then disband when that objective is completed. Examples of the former are Nominating and Recruiting, Newsletter, Social, Community Outreach, Registration, and Technology. Examples of the latter include Governance, Member Retention, and Summer Sampler. Each is important and often requires different skills and interests to serve. Serving on a committee also offers the opportunity to get to know other members on another level. This is where friendships are formed!



The Nominating and Recruiting Committee is a standing committee tasked with recruiting members to run for elective office (Board and Curriculum Council positions). 2026 members (LR): Kent Hayward, Jean Langlais, Rebecca Wolverton, Jerre Henriksen, and Gary Krueger.

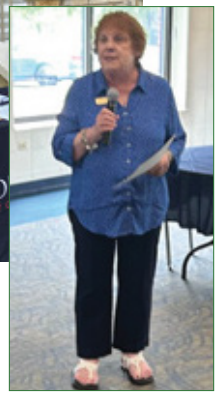
LLI IN THE COMMUNITY

The Community Outreach Committee is responsible for spreading the word about LLI in the community. This is done by attending various events, giving presentations to relevant organizations, and publicizing through newspaper ads and fliers. Our goal is to recruit new members who are a good fit for LLI – anyone 50 or older who has an interest in lifelong learning and socialization.



Our WCC liaisons, Emily Rollins and Carolina Gutierrez, offer so much valuable assistance in this effort. They help with marketing strategies and materials and with representing LLI at community events. This is truly a partnership that has been very successful!





Carolina Gutierrez and Gary Krueger at the Prisco Center in Aurora (top). Ceil Carey presenting at an offcampus event (inset). Donna Wawrzyniakowski & Emily Rollins at the Downtown Aurora First Fridays event (bottom).



Serving on the Board allows me to give back to an organization that brings me joy; to take part in the growth and long-term success of our LLI. – Andi Danis

OUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

The vision and leadership first displayed with our founding and charter members have continued over these past 30 years because of those LLI members who were willing to step up and offer their time and talents to our growth and success. Current Board and Curriculum Council members are shown below.



2026 Board members (L-R) Mary Ann White, Bill Doeden, Mary Maiers, Evelyn Porter, Kim Carew, Andi Danis, Ann Hastert, and Kent Hayward.

2026 Curriculum Council members (L-R) front: Karen Christensen, Beth Johnson, and Mary Hauge; Rear: Carolyn Hopkins, Evelyn Porter, Jerry King, Susan Foody, and Amy Stewart.



LETTER FROM LLI PRESIDENT

Members of the Lifelong Learning Institute,

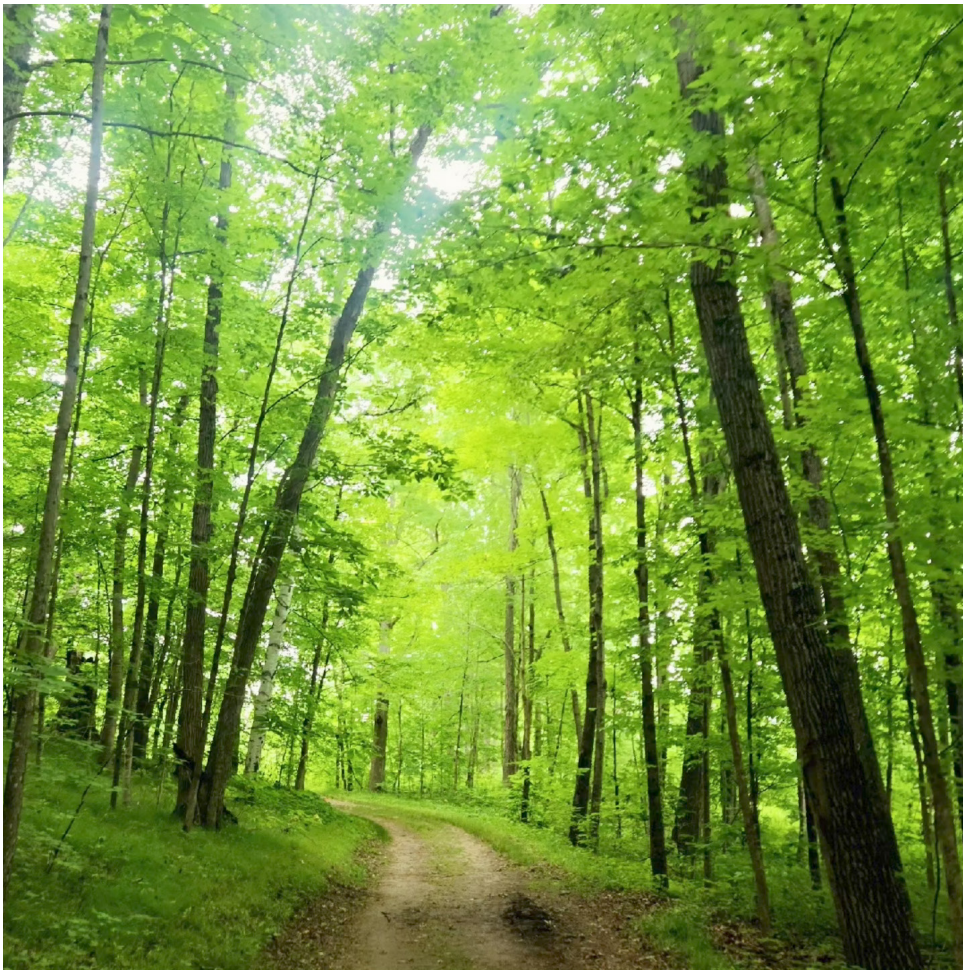
The Lifelong Learning Institute, partnered with Waubonsee Community College, is celebrating a milestone event – 30 years of providing varied intellectual and social opportunities for its members. From its inception in 1996 as Institute for Learning in Retirement, the organization has maintained its self-governing and self-sustaining philosophy. Those involved with the administrative functions and the development and presentation of the organized activities are dedicated to the continued growth of LLI. Our existence is dependent on these volunteers. A special thank you to all members who so willingly share their time and talents.



Following the pandemic LLI has seen a positive resurgence. Membership has slowly increased. Online registration is being used. Courses have become more varied with the ability to offer honorariums to outside speakers. WCC has also partnered with LLI by developing joint activities and WCC's instructors have offered their expertise to present additional courses.

The changes which have been instituted are exciting and who knows what the future will bring. One thing is definite. The exceptional qualities of our members will lead LLI to an outstanding level in the years to come.

Mary Ann White
PRESIDENT, LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE
AT WAUBONSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Lovingly created by Newsletter Committee: Mary Maiers (editor), Roger Breisch, Diana Fischer-Woods, Margie Groot, David Hett, and Jean Langlais.

Our dedicated team works tirelessly to gather inspiring stories, community updates, and important announcements to keep you informed and engaged throughout every issue of our newsletter.

LLI's low membership fees and course fees are made possible to a large degree by the support provided by Waubonsee Community College, including use of classrooms, office space, technical support and staff support at no cost to LLI. *Waubonsee does not discriminate on the basis of any individual's actual or perceived race, color, creed, religion, gender, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, ancestry, veteran's status, military status, unfavorable discharge from military service, marital status, order of protection status, pregnancy, disability, citizenship status or any other characteristic protected by law in its programs or activities. Inquiries regarding this policy may be directed to: Diana Torres, ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, or Jami Hinshaw, Title IX Coordinator, Route 47 at Waubonsee Drive, Sugar Grove, IL 60554, compliance@waubonsee.edu.*