



APRIL 2025

## New Council Chair Rose Greer: A textbook case

Fred Hosier

As Spring gets underway, it's time to welcome a new OLLI-Wilmington Council Chair: Rose Greer.

Most recently, Rose has been one of the Curriculum Committee co-chairs. (You can read an article Rose wrote about the Curriculum Committee in the April 2023 edition of OLLI News.) Before that, she was also a coordinator for the Culture and Social Studies and Extracurricular subcommittees.

But the way that Rose, a former middle school science teacher, first came to OLLI and then started to volunteer is a textbook case. A fellow teacher in Cecil County, MD, schools told Rose about OLLI-W. After hearing about it, she said to herself, "That's something I'm going to do when I retire."

When she joined OLLI-W, Rose took the memoirs-writing course, *Yesterday for Tomorrow*. The class was co-taught, and one of the teachers had to step away for health reasons. The other teacher asked Rose if she would step in and co-teach with her. Rose still teaches *Yesterday for Tomorrow* online each Fall and Spring semester.

If you talk to Rose, you soon find out that stepping in where something is needed and following through until the task is completed is a part of who she is.

### From soggy field to reclaimed wetland

Here's an example:

When Rose was teaching science in middle school, her classroom faced a challenge posed by the field where students would go for gym class.

Rose noticed that often students were coming in with wet clothes and sneakers. It was obviously a very soggy field.



Rose and a colleague did some research and found the school had been built on a former wetland.

They received a grant from the state of Maryland to restore some of the field to wetland status.

Rose also realized this was a learning opportunity for students. Out of the wetland restoration came an annual Wetland Day, in which students learned about wetlands via the newly reclaimed one right outside of their school. Wet-

land Day continues to this day.

It's no wonder that in 1996, Rose won the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. She was and still is the only Cecil County, MD, teacher to have won the award.

### Teaching passions

When Rose first heard about OLLI-W, she imagined lots of people from the chemical companies in the Wilmington area teaching about their workplace subjects of expertise. When she started taking classes, she found that wasn't necessarily the case.

"People were teaching their passions," Rose said. OLLI-W teachers' ideas for classes "can come from anywhere and are developed accordingly," she said. "So, when it comes to teaching at OLLI, the possibilities are endless – and so rewarding!"

Once again, Rose is a textbook case. She says when she started at OLLI-W, she didn't know anything about writing. Now she teaches a writing course every year.

And during the Fall semester, Rose teaches *Contemporary Idea Sharing*. Every week, Rose selects a

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# OLLI-W Council Welcomes New Members

Jean Youkers

I am delighted to announce that OLLI-W Council elected Rose Greer as Council Chair and Becky Varlas as Executive Vice Chair at the March 10 Council meeting. Their one-year terms are effective from April 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026.

Both Rose and Becky have been active members and co-chairs of the Curriculum Committee and Open House Committee, as well as being popular OLLI instructors. I'm grateful for their willingness to help enthusiastically in so many important ways and to take on their new leadership

roles in the Council.

Five new Council members were elected to serve three-year terms: Allan Wedgewood, George Drake, Karen Brugh, Andrea Westerinen and Suzanne Stone. Marcia Halio was elected to complete a two-year term and Jamie Cutler, a one-year term, to fulfill the remaining terms of Council members who had resigned during the previous Council year.

Thank you so much to our Nominating Committee, which included Chris Bassett, chair, along with Anita Sterling, Linda Kellogg, Rose Greer

and Becky Varlas. And to the Officer Nominating Committee – Sherry Rogers, chair, Bob Ehrlich, Karen Stanley and Phil Weinberg – thank you.

Our outstanding Council members whose terms ended this year are Bob Ehrlich, Karen Stanley, Shiela Smith, Sharon Rosen and Gerri Sanchez. Thank you for your participation in the Council and best wishes in your continuing endeavors on behalf of OLLI.

We extend a warm welcome to our new members. Thank you for volunteering to serve on OLLI Council!

## Rose Greer

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topic, and the class watches a TED Talk on the subject and then discusses it.

Rose appreciates the feedback she gets for the course. "People who re-enroll each year will often contact me with their reflections on class discussion." They even offer ideas for future classes.

### Just ask

Rose is impressed with the number of volunteers at OLLI-W. But as new Council Chair, she'd like to find more of them!

"People are just waiting to be asked," Rose said. An example is her own OLLI-W story, when she was asked to co-teach a class.

The 2024 OLLI-W Book Sale is another example. Rose said people told her that helping at the Book Sale was the first time they had volunteered at OLLI-W. (Mark your calendars: The next OLLI-W Book Sale is planned for Fall 2026.)

"People don't realize what they have to offer," Rose said. "We encourage people to volunteer not just to help, but also because of what you get out of it."

Rose believes the reason why OLLI in Delaware is the

second largest OLLI program in the country has to do with several factors, such as proximity to four states and having its own building, Arsht Hall.

"It is primarily about the people," Rose said. "I think there's a lot of loneliness out there. OLLI helps that. It gives people an outlet."

Rose notes that was particularly important during COVID lockdown when people became isolated. She was teaching *Yesterday for Tomorrow* when everything shut down. She was able to continue the class through OLLI-W's quick adjustment to online learning via Zoom.

After classes resumed in-person, Rose asked her students whether they would prefer online or in-person, and more chose online, so that's the delivery method she has been using.

Rose sees a benefit in offering *Yesterday for Tomorrow* online. "Everyone got to know each other better online. Before, it was one person standing upfront, reading to the class, whereas this seemed so much more interactive."

Rose was born in Rising Sun, MD, in Cecil County, one of five children. Today she lives in Newark, Del. She has a B.S. in Biology from College of Notre Dame of Maryland; an M.S. in educational leadership from the University of Delaware; and an M.S. in guidance and counseling from Loyola College.

# New Member Spotlight

## Susan Flook

### Cynthia Morgan

More than 150 new members joined OLLI for the Spring 2025 session. Among them was Cynthia Morgan, a Wilmington native who has resided in Chadds Ford, PA, for many years.

Cynthia received her associate's degree from Penn State University, Lima, PA, campus and her bachelor's degree in business administration (marketing) from West Chester University.

Cynthia enjoyed a 33-year career at Delmarva Broadcasting (owned by the Steinman family during her tenure) which she extols as a "wonderful company."

When she was interviewing, Cynthia was encouraged by the president to go into sales. She took his advice and later rose to the position of senior vice president of sales, programming, marketing and administration for their 12 radio stations in Delaware and Maryland.

She clearly loved her rewarding career, colleagues, and clients and the communities they served.

Even though she's retired, energetic Cynthia is still very active in local non-profits. She's a member and past president of the Rotary Club of Wilmington and a board member and past chair of Easter Seals (DE & MD Eastern Shore).

Cynthia is also a member of the Forum of Executive Women (FEW)/Emeritus Group. The Emeritus Group



offers retired executive women a chance to participate in programs designed for their needs (grief support and downsizing, for example) in addition to the programs offered for all FEW members.

After completing a major volunteer project at one of her non-profits, she will have more time to consider volunteer opportunities at OLLI.

Cynthia was married for 38 years. Before her husband died 11 years ago, the couple enjoyed boating. They took day trips to places such as Annapolis, MD, Cynthia still owns and pilots an '87 catamaran power boat with twin OptiMax 300xs engines. Boating adventures are still important to her.

She also loves to take nature

walks and is thinking about learning golf. Cynthia mentioned a recent South African safari as a wonderful experience. A very active retirement!

At OLLI, Cynthia enjoys participating in the Tai Chi Chih moving meditation class, an acting course, and a card-making class. She looks forward to taking courses in Current Events, AI, and perhaps Buddhism next semester.

Recently Cynthia's acting class went to see the dress rehearsal for the adapted play *Tuesdays with Morrie* at the Delaware Theater Co. She was delighted to have had that opportunity.

Cynthia relates a positive story about OLLI which involves unexpected hospitality. One of her classes was canceled at the last minute, so she decided to see if there was another class she could drop in on for the day. Daniel Flynn happened to be standing outside his classroom and invited her to join them. The class is called "Near Death Experiences and You." Cynthia was impressed at how engaged the students were and is looking forward to taking his course in the future.

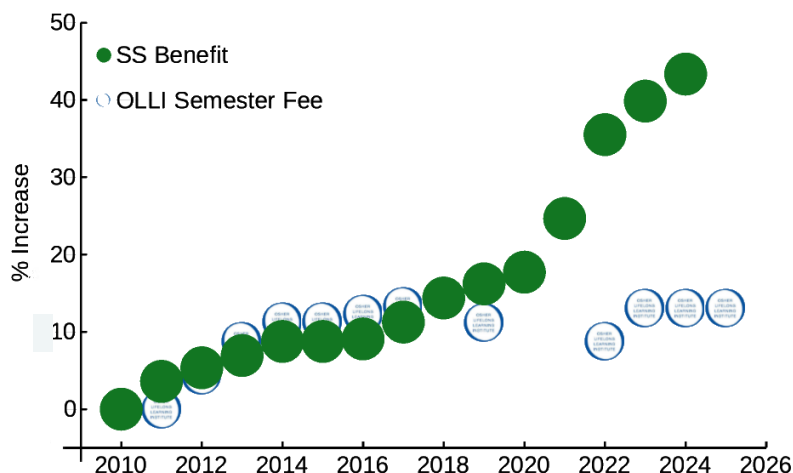
Asked why she joined OLLI, Cynthia said, "To exercise my brain and to do and learn new things." She finds everyone here to be super friendly and mentioned security guard Tom Wentz and OLLI Council member Shiela Smith as being especially welcoming. Cynthia noted that the New Member reception held last month made her feel valued as a part of the OLLI family.

# OLLI Membership Fees Remain the Same for 2025-2026

Robert Ehrlich

As the budget for OLLI-Wilmington published in the February issue of the Newsletter indicates, fees will remain the same for Fall 2025 and Spring 2026. In fact, fees have remained the same for three years and are lower than before the pandemic. This stability in the cost of our program has been made possible by member giving and endowment income.

The graph shows the semester fee relative to Social Security payouts, adjusted for cost-of-living increases. There is a gap in the OLLI fees shown because of the membership class plus class fee model used when in-person classes were limited by restrictions on use of Arsht Hall.



Relative percentage increases for OLLI membership compared with Social Security payments adjusted for cost-of-living increases. The semester fee of \$230 in 2010 is used as the baseline.



Become a champion for OLLI-W on I Heart UD Giving Day. Watch the weekly updates for challenges, matching opportunities and this year's goals.

Last year, OLLI-W raised over \$50,000 to purchase comfortable chairs for Room 108/109 and wall-mounted screens for the art rooms. At right, Isabelle Fugedy (left) and Patricia Scarpitti are admiring one of the new large screens that have been installed in the art rooms as a result of the 2024 I Heart UD campaign. Art instructors frequently use the screens to show programs in which professional artists demonstrate watercolor painting techniques, supplementing the instructions they provide to their classes.



# Introducing the OLLI Scholars program!

Rebecca Worley

Whether it's history, music, science, literature or another of the myriad courses OLLI offers, members can continue to learn what they love. And, come fall, we're extending our reach with the OLLI Scholars program. This new initiative will allow UD graduate students and post-doctoral researchers to teach what they love.

This UD-OLLI collaboration allows students to acquire teaching experience while offering instruction about a subject close to their hearts, while OLLI members will learn the latest research in subject areas that we have not previously been able to offer. It's a win-win for both parties.

And it's an intergenerational effort as well. Steve Thaxton, executive director of the Osher National Resource Center at North-

western University, introduced the idea when he came to visit in December 2023 and explained why OLLI Delaware is one of the organization's benchmark programs. He suggested we consider offering such a program because the "combination of passionate graduate researchers/teachers with intellectually ambitious OLLI students is genius. It allows institute members to support both their host university and the scholars, all while learning from impressive new generations as their academic careers are launching."

Graduate College Dean Lou Rossi agrees, as does Mark Clodfelter, dean of the Division of Professional and Continuing Studies, and Associate Dean LaRuth McAfee, manager of OLLI Scholars within the college.

Applications from grad students and postdocs are due May 15; we plan to accept two applicants to teach for us this coming Fall 2025. If you would like to assist with the selection of candidates, and with mentoring those applicants selected as they begin teaching, please contact Rebecca Worley at [rworley@udel.edu](mailto:rworley@udel.edu).

Our fund-raising committee has selected the OLLI Scholars program as one of the projects your donation will support during the I♥UD Day campaign on April 30. Your contribution will support not only OLLI but a new generation of scholars as well.

For more information about the OLLI Scholars program, please visit <https://www.udel.edu/academics/colleges/grad/current-students/olli-scholars-program/>



## Spring Is Blooming in Goodstay Gardens

The gardens are located behind the Goodstay Mansion and can be accessed from the back of Arsht Hall.

# Drum Circle Class Is Really ‘Beating It’

Susan Flook

If you happen to be in the hallway near classroom 124 on Monday afternoons, you might feel as if you’ve been transported to the continent of Africa. That’s because you’ll hear the distinctive sounds of the goblet-shaped West African “djembe” drum being tapped and slapped by members of OLLI’s Drum Circle class.

This popular performing arts participation course is deftly taught by talented musicians Peter Popper and Sid Datskow who have been instructors at OLLI for many years. Music from other cultures is also explored in the class (Celtic, Latin, classical, etc.). The group loves to play along with the videos of musicians from around the world.

The history of djembe drumming and the origins of the OLLI Drum Circle are quite interesting. A Nigerian by the name of Babatunde Olatunji, known as “The Father of African Drumming,” brought djembe music to the United States. His performances and recordings became very popular in the 1960s. Many people have been inspired to learn drumming ever since.

OLLI’s own drum circle began several decades ago when Martha Newlon, an Academy Concert Band member, became interested in starting a drum class here. The original instructors were Charlie Campagna, Fred Noel and Peter Popper. Sid Datskow joined as an instructor in 2010. One other stellar teacher was Roberta Washington, a former OLLI member and classically trained professional drummer. The group used to play for the residents at the Kutz Home from time to time.

During one session, members made their own drums similar in size to the djembe using concrete cylindrical forms to shape it. After the form was removed, the exterior material of the drum was painted, and skins were stretched over the playing surface.

**Peter Popper** was born in Vienna but moved to the United States with his family during WWII to flee



Peter Popper (left) and Sid Datskow share their love of drumming with their Drumming Circle class.

the Nazi regime. They settled permanently in New York City. Peter received his B.S. degree from the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, as well as an M.S. and Sc.D. in Mechanical Engineering at MIT.

His 36-year career was with DuPont in fiber technology. He worked on such projects as space suits and sports bras. For 20 years he also had a consulting business in the area of medical

implants. Peter was also in the Air Force where he played bass drums in the marching band. He enjoys many hobbies, especially travel, music, and photography.

Besides the djembe, he plays piano, sax and clarinet. Peter and his late wife had three daughters (one daughter died in 2017), seven grandchildren, one great-grandchild and another on the way. Peter likes the range of courses at OLLI which now include such new topics as Artificial Intelligence.

**Sid Datskow** was born in Philadelphia and still lives in Pennsylvania. He received his B.B.A. (Accounting) at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Sid worked as a CPA for the U.S. Treasury Department for 34 years doing IRS audits of large corporations. He was also in the Army from the mid to late 60s where he served as the main assistant to a Brigade Commander in Germany.

Sid got his first introduction to music from attending the annual Philadelphia Folk Festival. He eventually learned to play many percussion instruments – drum kit, djembe, Latin, Celtic and Middle Eastern drums. He also plays classical guitar. As a member of a Celtic band called “String Theory,” Sid played the bodhran, an Irish drum, as well as other drums. The group practiced at Cokesbury Village and sometimes gave concerts at OLLI for St. Patrick’s Day.

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## Drum Circle

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Sid and his wife learned about OLLI many years ago at the Settlement Music School in Pa. They decided to become members, especially for the musical opportunities.

Peter and Sid used to play in the OLLI jazz band (Peter, tenor sax and Sid, conga drums). Some years ago, Peter's wife played percussion in the band and Sid's wife played the cello in the orchestra. Sid's daughter plays electric bass guitar.

Both men have unique teaching styles, but that's the strength of the class. The biggest challenge for some new drummers is syncopation. Class members enjoy trying out supplemental instruments that Sid and Peter bring to the class such as the Middle Eastern tambourine called a "riq" and a drum called a "doubek."

Fun facts: During the last Drum Circle class of the Spring session, Peter takes videos of the group



Members of the OLLI Drum Circle class get comfortable with syncopation on their West African djembes and the use of supplemental instruments provided by instructors Sid Datskow and Peter Popper, such as the riq, a Middle Eastern tambourine, and a drum called a doubek.

playing drums together; then it is put on YouTube for all to see. A few years ago, the most viewed video of the group was entitled "The Drum Circle You Don't Want to See Naked."

Sid appreciates the OLLI motto, "Curiosity Never Retires." He was no doubt referring to lifelong learning, but if you're "curious" about

Peter's intriguing videos, be sure to check out YouTube!

Some links to those YouTube videos are:

<https://youtu.be/TmoZBtm1u3A?si=9SXX9musnsM2xa83>

<https://youtu.be/A9zsLNx8rI0?si=XjSdkaFBPAV0vQsM>

[https://youtu.be/fs\\_DZIJnO2s?si=z\\_zXIZeIMx7ziDsp](https://youtu.be/fs_DZIJnO2s?si=z_zXIZeIMx7ziDsp)

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## FALL 2025 SCHEDULE

**OLLI Kent/Sussex** In person at Dover, Lewes, Ocean View, partner locations (hybrid optional)  
11-week session, Sept. 2-Nov. 17  
1st 5-week session, Sept. 2-Oct. 6  
2nd 5-week session, Oct. 14-Nov. 17

**UD OLLI Online** Zoom only  
11-week session, Sept. 2-Nov. 17  
1st 5-week session, Sept. 2-Oct. 6  
2nd 5-week session, Oct. 14-Nov. 17

**OLLI Wilmington** In person at Arsht Hall, Newark, partner locations (hybrid optional)  
13-week session, Sept. 2-Dec. 5  
1st 5-week session, Sept. 2-Oct. 6  
2nd 5-week session, Oct. 14-Nov. 17

**NO CLASSES** Nov. 25-28 (Thanksgiving Break)