Profile

David LaGraffe

Taking OLLI students to another level

They say you can’t teach an old dog new tricks. But for OLLI students it’s a different matter. David LaGraffe has proven this in his class “Improv for Everybody,” which, in many ways, is acting “without a script.”

David, a Syracuse native, came to Maine with a degree in philosophy from Georgetown University and started teaching at St. Francis College in Biddeford Pool. However, the Franciscan fathers soon closed the college, and it became the site for University of New England. So he took a job at a daycare center, an experience that led him to obtain a Master’s degree in early childhood education from the University of New Hampshire.

David became a part of the Portland educational system, where he taught in the third through fifth grades in what is known as the Many Rivers Program. This brought together pupils from all over Portland in a program that he describes as “an excitingly rich” educational alternative to the traditional classroom model.

All through these teaching years David also became enmeshed in the local community theater scene, in particular Portland Players where he met Claudia, his wife and co-actor 30 years ago. They were married on that very stage in 1987. He remembers some of his favorite roles: Willie in Death of a Salesman, Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof, Sweeney in Sweeney Todd, and Scrooge four times. David also played George opposite Claudia as Martha in Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolf? That, he said, was “a bear of a play.”

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January might be the start of the New Year, but here at OLLI everyone knows the New Year starts in September. And what a year this is shaping up to be! If you have seen the Fall catalog, you know OLLI is offering 71 courses and workshops.

At this point only a very small number of classes are in danger of cancelation due to low enrollment. This means enrollments were at an all-time high a month before the start of classes! If you haven’t registered yet, don’t delay. Classes are filling.

OLLI has partnered with the Muskie School of Public Service to offer an outstanding Speakers’ Series of politicians, including George Mitchell, Barney Frank, and Angus King. These Thursday talks will run from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. and are free and open to the public. Check out the entire series here: www.usm.maine.edu/muskie/politics-then-and-now

SAGE once again has a wonderful series of lectures lined up for the fall. SAGE is held Tuesday from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. in room 102 Wishcamper. Pre-registration is encouraged due to limited seating. Any seats that are empty at 9:25 a.m. will be sold on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Thanks to careful budgeting and your generous support through donations and the CLYNK program, we were able to replace all the computers in the OLLI classrooms this summer. The original computers came with the building, which makes them five years old — practically dinosaurs in the technology world! New computers will enhance teaching and learning in every class.

There’s so much happening — classes, lectures, workshops, special interest groups, trips. OLLI is an exciting place to be.

—Susan Morrow, Assistant Director for Program

**Reminder: Sept. 12 deadline for New Hampshire trip**

Call the OLLI office at 780-4406 if you wish to reserve a seat on the bus to Lake Winnipesaukee, the World War II Museum, and the Castle in the Clouds on Saturday, Sept. 28.

OLLI Excursions is promising an interesting trip to the lake, museum, and mountains — and if Mother Nature cooperates, it will be a beautiful fall ride as well. Lunch is on your own while cruising on the M/S Mt. Washington.

Cost is $77. For more information, call Liz Johnson (773-1904) or Gael McKibben (774-7177).

View of Lake Winnipesaukee in the autumn
Well, here we are at the end of a rainy and sometimes sunny summer, to begin the 16th year of OLLI.

There are tremendous courses to choose from, and I hope you have found something of interest and have been able to enroll. This was one of the biggest lotteries for courses in our history, and that is a good indication of student interest and the popularity of our courses.

Kudos to our Education Committee, under Joan Aldrich’s leadership, for creating a full term of outstanding courses, including our best-yet Thursday evening schedule.

The Resource Development and Marketing Committee, led by its new chair, Jim Thorne, is preparing for our November Book Sale. The committee hopes you are saving books to bring in at a later date. Look for details in the next Newsletter.

Jim would welcome volunteers to help with the sale. If you are interested in helping, leave your name and contact info at the OLLI desk in Wishcamper, and Jim will be in touch.

I was pleased to recently meet a new person to the Portland area: when I told her about OLLI, she enthusiastically enrolled for the Fall term. OLLI remains one of Greater Portland’s and USM’s treasures!

—Dick Sturgeon, Chair
Dicksturg13@gmail.com; 207-773-3174

Save the date for a new “Wrinkle”!

You are cordially invited to attend the 2014 Wrinkle in Time program. We will be exploring “The 1920s, Including Prohibition and the Harlem Renaissance.”

Wrinkle in Time is an OLLI special event — presentations and panel discussions on a single topic spanning three days.

Enrollment information will be included in the OLLI Winter course catalog.

So save the following dates in your calendar for 2014’s Wrinkle in Time: Tuesday, March 4 through Thursday, March 6, with Friday, March 7, as an inclement weather date.

More information about topics and speakers will be provided in the November OLLI Newsletter.
David began to be more interested in improvisation for its own sake than in acting, so he turned to improvisation after studying with world-famous improv guru Keith Johnstone and his protégée, Patti Stiles. In 2005, after retiring from teaching in the Portland Public Schools, David set up his own school of improvisation, Lights Up Improv. In 2006, he founded Portland Playback Theatre, a group of talented improvisers/actors who perform every first Friday of the month at the Community Television Network (CTN) station at 516 Congress St.

David teaches a number of Lights Up classes for kids at a variety of locations; he also teaches an adult class Wednesday nights on Munjoy Hill.

As artistic director of Portland Playback, David leads two monthly rehearsals and often “conducts” (emcees) or acts in the monthly first Friday performances. The company is also hired to perform privately by various organizations and individuals.

How does playback work? “We usually have an audience of maybe 40 to 50 people. We ask one [person] to come up and tell a story from their life, which is related to that night’s theme. If I’m conductor, I will give the actors certain improvising directions. Then they ‘play back’ the story. In improv theater, it’s without a script, so no one knows what comes next. That’s what keeps the audience on edge. Playback is also fundamentally a form of honoring the stories that form our lives. There is a definite spiritual element to it.”

Thanks to OLLI teacher Fred Brancato, David discovered OLLI several years ago. “I looked at all these gray-hairs, all of whom were genuinely and passionately into philosophical issues, and I thought, ‘This is a philosopher’s paradise.’” His life-long philosophical interests have drawn him to courses taught by Fred Brancato, David Morton, Bob Hanson, Mike Berkowitz, Ken Hamilton, Bill Jose, Ed Schwartz, and Joan Aldrich, eliciting his comment “Wow, I’ve become an extremely enthusiastic participant.” As a result of his enthusiasm, he is entering his third year on OLLI’s Education Committee.

It’s only natural that David would bring improvisation to OLLI students, and he’s found the classes he’s taught to be a great success. He says that OLLI students bring certain wisdom to class with them: “They are intensively and physically effectively engaged in what they are doing. The results can be comical, serious, and poignant. It’s like Liza jumping from one ice floe to the next as she flees across the Ohio River to freedom. The challenge is to keep saying ‘YES’ to the given moment, with each actor supporting the other until they reach the shore. It’s a willingness to trust each other as they enter the unknown.”

—Don King

LaGraffe (cont’d from page 1)

Welcome new students!

An orientation for new OLLI students will be held Tuesday, Sept. 10, at 1 p.m. in Wishcamper Center, Room 102.

After a brief PowerPoint presentation, OLLI members Sue Gesing, Jack Lynch, and Ann Landsberg will be on hand to answer any questions you might have about the OLLI experience. Parking is free in the nearby parking garage. The entrance driveway is on Bedford St.

If you plan to attend, please RSVP at the OLLI office: 780-4406.

Passages:

John Stebbins

John Stebbins, 85, passed away July 25, 2013, after a courageous battle with lung cancer. He was the husband of Janet Stebbins, a member of the OLLI Advisory Board.

Mr. Stebbins was a devoted teacher, having taught astronomy, Latin, English, and history. His obituary notes, “Despite his classical education and his ubiquitous bow ties, John never took himself too seriously.” He also founded a school, coached shot-put and discus, and created many beautiful inlaid objects in his woodshop. A complete obituary is available by clicking on this link.

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us, drop a note in our office mailbox, or e-mail the chair at aldrich1822@gmail.com. We work in support of the OLLI administration and try to carry out their goals. We are provided a lot of creative freedom and feel supported by their enthusiasm for new ideas.

One course format idea is for one facilitator to arrange for eight different people to participate in a single course, (offering eight perspectives related to one or two topics), as in the Portland Press Herald class last spring, or the upcoming Fall term’s Portland Stage/Portland Symphony course, organized by Henry Warren and Bob Bahm. The popular “Great Decisions” course, arranged by Michael Wygant and the World Affairs Council of Maine, has followed this concept successfully for many years.

Our dream of introducing a Socrates Café at OLLI has come to fruition this Fall term, Val Hart will facilitate discussions on Thursday evenings. OLLI is also fortunate to have a Thursday evening course offered by the Confucius Institute.

Please take a careful look at all of our Thursday evening courses and help us to spread the word to friends who may not yet be OLLI members. This is a great way for working people over 50 to have their first introduction to our OLLI!

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**Education Committee news**

The Education Committee’s charge is to shape the curriculum and recruit faculty, in order to provide a variety of educational opportunities for OLLI members. With 71 courses being offered during Fall term, we want to take this opportunity to thank the OLLI community for supporting our programs.

The wide variety of courses and workshops comes about in many ways: through efforts on the parts of Susan Morrow and Rob Hyssong; one-to-one encouragement from member to member; Ed Committee efforts (including Brown Bag Lunch events that promote teaching opportunities), and also through plain old kismet, when someone who has taught at another OLLI moves here “from away” and joins our faculty. We owe great thanks to our all-volunteer faculty, including several who have recently taught for the first time at OLLI. It is a joy to be part of such a vibrant and responsive community.

We welcome two new Education Committee members this year: Janet Stebbins and Ruth Story. Continuing on from last year are Matt Goldfarb, Val Hart, Ken Hamilton, Anita Jones, David LaGraffe, Joy Larrabee, Rich Maclin, David Morton, Peter Stead, Mary Jo Steckevicz, Barbara Sturgeon, and Henry Warren.

We are a very approachable group, open to ideas from OLLI members. Speak to any one of us, drop a note in our office mailbox, or e-mail the chair at aldrich1822@gmail.com.

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**Special presentation and docented tour for OLLI members**

We invite OLLI members to join us for a free, docented tour of the Osher Map Library’s new exhibition by Arthur Dunkelman, guest curator and Director of the Jay I. Kislak Foundation. Based in Miami Lakes, Florida, the Foundation was established in 1984 to foster greater understanding of the cultures and history of the Americas.

The tour will take place Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2013, from 11:40 a.m. to 12:40 p.m. in the Cohen Educational Center at the Osher Map Library.

Using maps, charts, books, and artifacts from the Kislak Polar Collection, Mr. Dunkelman will present an overview of polar exploration and the process of globalization. The story begins with the Greek and Roman concepts of Terra incognita (unknown land), as the polar regions were called, and continues with the search for the Northeast and Northwest Passages to Asia and the ultimate challenge: to reach the South Pole, the end of the earth.

NOTE: Gallery capacity is limited to 25. Please RSVP by Monday, Sept. 23. Call 780-4406 or e-mail olli@usm.maine.edu.
Introducing the OLLI Lending Library

The OLLI Advisory Board has voted to turn the OLLI library in Wishcamper into a lending library. Starting the first week of fall classes, OLLI members may drop in and check out a book using the check-out clipboard found in the right rear corner of the room. Books may be checked out for 30 days.

This summer we have gone through the entire book collection, discarding some that have seen better days and adding others that have been donated. Thanks to volunteer Dick Budd, all the books have now been catalogued and placed on appropriate shelves according to Dewey Decimal System classifications.

Please do not re-shelve books. This applies to any book you have checked out and any book you have been reading in the library. Please place all books in the Return box near the check-out clipboard so that OLLI volunteers can return books to their proper shelves.

Wanted: Volunteers and Books for the OLLI Library

We are looking for a few volunteers to help out in the library—each person working about an hour one day per month to put returned books back on the shelves and contact people whose books are overdue. Please e-mail Sue Gesing at susangesing@gmail.com if you’d like to volunteer.

We’re hoping to continually update our current collection and are interested in adding books that have been used in OLLI classes over the past two years or books that have been read by either of the OLLI book groups.

If you have a book to donate, please leave it in the designated box in the OLLI office. If multiple copies of a book are donated, or if we receive books that do not seem appropriate for the library, they will be saved for the OLLI book sale or donated to the Portland Public Library sale.

—Susan Gesing

USM Library welcomes the Portland Public Library Bookmobile

Every other Wednesday beginning Sept. 11, the Portland Public Library will make a stop at the USM Portland Campus.

The USM Library is partnering with Portland Public Library to bring the USM community public library offerings and services while the Bookmobile is on campus. The brightly colored Bookmobile will arrive on campus at approximately 11:15 a.m. and will remain until 12:00 noon, parked conveniently near the Glickman Library.

The Bookmobile is a 24-foot vehicle housing 1,500 items including audio books, large print books, fiction, and nonfiction. If the Bookmobile doesn’t have what you need, staff members will be happy to try to fill your requests on their next visit.

If you don’t have a Portland Public Library card, the staff can register you on the spot.

Remember to pick up a CLYNK bag at the office for your deposit bottles and cans!
Walking Club

Wednesday, September 11: The Group will try a new walk in Cape Elizabeth near the Ram Island Farm property.

Tuesday, September 24: We will walk on the Eastern Trails near Scarborough Marsh in Scarborough.

For both of these walks, we will meet at Back Cove parking lot across from Hannaford at 10 a.m. to carpool. Bring your lunch, water, and health aids if needed. If you want to meet us at a walk, please call Rae Garcelon at 846-3304 for directions.

OLLI Singers start new life

In recent years the OLLI Singers class has provided a way for OLLI members to sing together for enjoyment and then share their music with audiences at our Ninth Week celebration as well as at other locations like the Salvation Army and the Atrium.

After leading the OLLI Singers for many years, Terry Foster and Faith Varney have retired from their roles, and the members have formed a Special Interest Group to keep on singing during the upcoming term.

Starting on Thursday, Sept. 19, at 3:00 p.m., the group will meet for two hours and have fun singing while re-learning some music from the archives and starting on some new pieces as well. In the meantime, we will welcome suggestions for potential teachers leaders in the community who might be interested in reinstating the OLLI Singers as a regular OLLI course in 2014.

All OLLI members who enjoy singing are welcome to join us at any time. Contact Henry Warren at hewarren3@outlook.com or 653-1198.

The OLLI Wine Club

The first meeting of the OLLI Wine Club was held at Caiola’s Restaurant on August 19 with eighteen members attending. Led by Zara Edwards, Caiola’s bar manager and wine guru, new-world and old-world examples of three white-wine grape varieties were sampled. Wine Club members were also treated to an unbelievably delicious appetizer made especially for our group — a Smoked Haddock Brandade topped with seared hake and mussels.

The next wine tasting will include red and white wines. Please e-mail Jack Lynch to be placed on the mailing list and to learn about the Wine Club: jlynch001@maine.rr.com.

The Good Table next for OLLI Night Out

We’re back! Now, to welcome Fall, we’ll meet for dinner on Thursday, Sept. 26, at 5 p.m. at The Good Table, located at 527 Ocean House Road, (Route 77) in Cape Elizabeth.

This small family place dates back to 1986 and garners its food from local farms and producers of dairy products, maple syrup, chickens, lobster, and more.

Reservations close Friday, Sept. 20, so be sure to sign up early.

Call Barbara Bardack at 865-2009 or e-mail her at lascala2@comcast.net.
Speakers listed for OLLI-Muskie political series

OLLI at USM and the Muskie School of Public Service have joined forces to offer an outstanding Speakers’ Series this fall. Politics Then and Now, In Maine and the Nation is the theme the eight high-profile politicians will address.

All lectures will be held Thursdays from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. and are free and open to the public. The lectures will be held in the Lee Community Hall (room 133) in the Wishcamper Center, with the exception of George Mitchell, Barney Frank and Olympia Snowe, which will be held in Hannaford Hall in the Abromson Center. Mark your calendars. You won’t want to miss this series.

Sept. 19—Former US Congressman Tom Allen
Sept. 26—Former US Senator George Mitchell
Oct. 3—Former Maine Governor Kenneth M. Curtis
Oct. 10—Former Maine Senate President and House Speaker Elizabeth (Libby) Mitchell
Oct. 17—US Senator Angus King
Oct. 24—Former US Senator Olympia Snowe
Oct. 31—Former US Congressman Barney Frank
Nov. 7—Closing Panel Discussion featuring Former State Senator Cynthia Dill, Maine House Republican Leader Kenneth Fredette, and University of Maine Professor of Political Science Amy Fried

For more information, check the website at: www.usm.maine.edu/muskie/politics-then-and-now\n
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Fall term reminders

- OLLI Fall term classes begin Monday, Sept. 16. To see what classes are still available, call 780-4406 or visit the OLLI office. If your class calls for required or recommended readings, check the USM Bookstore in the Woodbury Campus Center across Bedford Street from the Wishcamper Center.

- SAGE lectures will resume Tuesday, Sept. 17. To register call 780-4406, visit the OLLI office, or send your registration to OLLI SAGE, P.O. Box 9300, Portland, ME 04104. All lectures except Oct. 1 will be in 102 Wishcamper.

- OLLI has negotiated a deal with USM whereby OLLI pays for parking in the garage so members don’t have to. Simply push the button to gain access to the garage. The exit gates will open automatically as you leave. To park in a handicap space anywhere on campus, you must have a State of Maine handicapped placard or license plate. There are 20 handicap spaces in the parking garage and eight in the parking lot directly behind the Wishcamper Center.

- As a courtesy to your instructor and fellow students, please wear your nametag to OLLI classes and events. If you don’t have one already, please pick one up at the OLLI office. Note: Your nametag is not the same as your OLLI/USM student photo ID.

- Please turn off your cell phone, pager, or any similar device when you come to class. And please don’t come to class wearing perfume, after-shave, or other fragrances. Some students are allergic to them.

Check your e-mail, OLLI Newsletter, and the OLLI website (www.usm.maine.edu/olli) for details about OLLI events, trips, and special interest groups.