

# Lifetime Learners Institute News Events Summary



# LLInes

Fall 2019

[www.lifetimelearners.org](http://www.lifetimelearners.org)

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## YOUR NEW LLI PRESIDENT: GLEN OSBERG



Bernie Weiss Photos

Early in his life Glen Osberg set two goals: to become the first college graduate in his family and to serve his country. He was an only child – born during the “year of infamy” – in a family in which no one had more than a high school education. College became a family obsession.

Meanwhile, his immigrant grandparents had been affected by three wars, so the belief of peace felt like “an illusion at best.” He vowed to serve his country even during the era of the draft.

By attending Norwich University, a private military college, Glen obtained both a college education and an officers commission. On active duty he served as a tank platoon leader and later as an infantry instructor. His military service gave him leadership and management experience, which he looked to apply in the business world.

Seeing an ad for a professional recruiter position in IBM, Glen made a cold call. Glen got the job and ended up having a 44-year IBM career in various management and leadership positions.

Glen first became aware of LLI at a Darien Men's Association meeting. He became “hooked” on the unique educational experience offered at LLI after taking his first class, *Walking on the Wild Side*. Glen joined the Board in 2017 and now serves as its president, while also chairing three committees. He also volunteers as a mentor in NCC's “REAL” program, a role he'd encourage all in LLI to consider. See page 2 for details.

## MEET LLI'S NEW OFFICE MANAGER: PATTY SCHLEGEL



Bernie Weiss Photos

On June 24 of this year, Patty Schlegel took over as LLI's office manager, replacing Jackie Barchilon.

Why was Patty attracted to this position? In her own words, she thrives on “tasky” work, as she prefers to be busy. The part-time hours on the job also allow her to remain active in her Norwalk community. Working recently as an elementary school substitute teacher, Patty has also been a Girl Scout leader for the past 11 years, a fund-raiser chair for her son's Boy Scout Troop and the recording secretary for the Brien McMahon High School PTA—all while raising three children!

Why not stop by the LLI office to say hello. Patty is never too busy to enjoy a visit and some conversation.

*Morgan Corrigan*

Glen has been married for 55 years and is happy that his four children and thirteen grandchildren all live in Fairfield County. Among other benefits, they can go fishing together. Glen is also an avid reader who also writes poetry and is penning a memoir on being a male caregiver.

Glen has been a lifelong volunteer: the Darien Boat Club (Commodore), United Way (General Manager), Boy Scouts of America (Executive Board), Darien YMCA (basketball coach) and member of both the Darien Men's Association and Silvermine Golf Club.

A lifelong golfer, at LLI Glen “finally found four folks who play as badly as I do,” so they can be lifetime learners of golf together, too!

*Glen Osberg and Amy Ewing*

**Board Members**

Glen Osberg, President  
Larry Fox, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Douglas Fine, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Vicki Phair, Secretary  
Ann Bello, Treasurer  
Barbara Cartsounis, NCC Liaison  
Rita Koenig  
Jacqueline Labatt-Simon  
Roman Lascuk  
Gary Lishnoff  
Diane Donohue Nichols  
Frank Phillips

**Newsletter Committee**

Morgan Corrigan, Editor/Chair  
Gil Herman, Associate Editor  
Amy Ewing  
Bea Friedman  
Arlene Yolles

**VOLUNTEER MENTORS NEEDED!**

The Norwalk Community College (NCC) Reaching Excellent Academic Levels (REAL) is a program that provides support services for students transitioning from high school to college. The program puts students on the path towards graduation. Students receive a comprehensive array of year-round resources delivered through collaboration with NCC faculty and staff, LLI members and local community professional to help them with their personal, academic and social needs, all of which are critical to academic success and graduation.

The mentoring component of the program is designed to enhance and broaden the academic and social experiences of the students by partnering them with professionals. Mentoring will provide students with the opportunity to connect with professionals in a one-on-one and/or group setting at Norwalk Community College. The mentoring component will focus on college readiness, academic success, community involvement and the importance of graduation.

Since the inception of the program, Glen Osberg has been willing to share his knowledge and expertise with a mentee. He is mentoring his second student and provides motivation and inspiration to help his mentees reach their fullest potential.

If you are able to give 1 hour a week and are interested in helping to shape the future of our students at NCC, please contact the Program Coordinator, Denise Rawles-Smith at

[drawles-smith@norwalk.edu](mailto:drawles-smith@norwalk.edu) or call 203 857-7361. Mentors must have completed an Associates Degree or higher.

**FYI:****Try an LLI course for free!**

Every LLI member, as well as a non-member, is entitled to attend one class from one course each fall and spring term. Invite a friend to one of your classes! Just show up at the class and fill out the guest form.

**LLI Office Hours**

Monday through Thursday  
10:00 AM to 3:00 PM  
Friday: Closed

Our LLI office manager is Patty Schlegel  
phone: 203-857-3330.  
email: [llearner@ncc.commnet.edu](mailto:llearner@ncc.commnet.edu)

We welcome any suggestions you have about LLI including course subjects, Brown Bag Lunch 'n' Learn topics. Please email them to [llearner@ncc.commnet.edu](mailto:llearner@ncc.commnet.edu)

**NAME CHANGE**

Please note that the PepsiCo Theater has been renamed the David Levinson PhD Performing Arts Community Theater in honor of the former president of NCC.

## **INSTRUCTOR PROFILE: GILDA SIMPKIN**



Bernie Weiss Photos

Perseverance has played a large role in Gilda Dangot Simpkin's life. Few know that her parents were Holocaust survivors and that she survived September 11 at the World Trade Center. Gilda notes that she uses the same words as her mother did to describe her reaction to her experience:

"I was there but I still can't believe it happened." These horrific events have left Gilda a little cynical about authority and fairness, but still she has found much happiness in her life through her work, teaching and especially through her children.

Gilda was born in the Bronx, where her parents met and married after escaping Poland. As she grew up, the survivor community served as an extended family to replace the dozen of lost family members. (Her grandmother perished along with eleven of her thirteen brothers and sisters. "The only photo I have of my pre-war family is on my mother's side. I never even saw pictures of my father's family at all.") Her background made her a political activist at a young age. Starting in her twenties, she was a founding member of the first Children of Survivors group in the US. Gilda believes very much in pursuing your dreams and seeing that trauma can be "overcome."

Gilda earned a M.S. in Counseling and Human Resource Development and was trained as a community and divorce mediator. She enjoyed a 30-year career starting with community advocacy in NYC government and then as a corporate trainer, both in her own consulting firm and for a number of corporations. Gilda taught at Fairfield University, Marymount College and NCC, and has led personal development, management skills and leadership programs—with a strong focus on negotiation and conflict resolu-

tion—all over the world. "If we all – in public and private life – were better at conflict resolution, this would be more peace in the world," she observed.

Well into her career, she and her husband decided to have children. It took great persistence to complete two international adoptions, an ordeal Gilda chronicled in a book entitled *My Baby Chase: Our Roller Coaster Ride from Infertility to Parenthood*. She ultimately became the mother of two girls, one from Romania and the younger one from Russia. Gilda says that being a mother—even as a single mother for the past ten years—is "the best thing ever in my life." She "kvells" (Yiddish for "beams with pride") that her daughters are very bonded sisters, so close that they chose to live together at college. (One completed a degree in social work, and the other finished with school and is now a new mother.)

Gilda found LLI through her twenty-five years at NCC (starting in the old factory building in Rowayton), where she taught teaching supervision, negotiation and time management courses. Gilda loves LLI, which she calls "a community of older people willing to expand their horizons and get out and do things!" After taking an LLI course in relationships, she was persuaded to offer her own course entitled, *Dating After 50*. She next suggested course topics that would leverage her work experience, including *Conflict Resolution*, *The Benefits of Stress*, *Dealing with Difficult People* and *What Do You Want to Do with the Rest of Your Life*. She was surprised when LLI chose to offer her Yiddish course, *So, You Want to Speak Yiddish*.

Gilda has been bilingual since she could speak, but the class, which has now run for four semesters, is not just for Jews or former Yiddish speakers. It starts with an assumption of no knowledge and helps participants hold basic conversations. "The Yiddish class is great fun. It's amazing how people are able to suddenly recall phrases and expressions not heard since childhood."

*(continued on page 7)*

The following article appeared in the *Katonah/Lewisboro Times* newspaper.

## **CAMPUS LIFE**



Last week I started teaching a new six-week series of writing classes for adults on the campus of Norwalk Community College. I experienced a feeling of déjà vu as I parked in the way back of the college parking lot and walked a few blocks to the building entrance on the West Campus.

My alma mater, Queens College, was a four-year commuter school. I remember taking two city buses to that sprawling campus from my childhood home in my freshman year. The following year when my brother joined me at Queens College, we shared our first car, a Pontiac Grand Prix, coordinating our schedules as best as we could. (Nice idea but not practical, especially when I had an 8am class and my brother did not need to be on campus until 10am. We sold that first car and each bought our own set of wheels.)

It's interesting to see how some things remain the same, all of these years later. I am still walking along college campus sidewalks in jeans and sneakers. I still have long curly hair. The difference this time is that I am leading the classes and my students are all above the age of fifty. The Lifetime Learners Institute at NCC began in 1992 offering continuing education courses on a wide range of subjects for working and retired adults.

Lifetime Learners Institute members from Fairfield and Westchester counties can find many different ways to continue learning in a vibrant and social environment on a suburban college campus. Besides my fiction/ narrative nonfiction writing class this fall, adults over age fifty can sign up for courses including ukulele, world history, watercolor painting, film and literature. The fall session also offers *Cole Porter's Life and Music*, *The Golden Age of Rock 'n Roll* and *Bad Girls of the Bible*.

On this sunny fall afternoon, I notice how quiet

and clean the campus looks. Crisp fall leaves and acorns scatter along the ground in the breeze. Brightly colored banners stating "NCC Proud" feature smiling students from all different backgrounds in front of the East and West Campus buildings. A large sign positioned near the cross walk proclaims, "Your path to success starts here." Inside the West Campus building, as I navigate the long carpeted hallways to my classroom, I notice boldly painted walls with motivational phrases – Plan Ahead, Access Resources, Think Critically.

Students of all ages quietly walk down the carpeted hallways, clutching their cell phones on the way to and from classes. There is a comfortable feeling; an upbeat, positive vibe. I notice the culinary center, the cafeteria, tutoring center, veterans extended studies and workforce education offices. I know that Lifetime Learners (and instructors) can use the campus gym and library, too.

My class is over-registered. So many adults were excited to take my writing class that some were closed out. By the time I find my way to the last classroom, I wonder if I should have left a trail of bread crumbs for my students to find their way. But here they are, all prepared with notebooks and pens. We move the chairs into a lop-sided circle. As I glance around the room, I see five adult students who have taken my writing classes before at other locations. That immediately adds a level of comfort. Their enthusiasm is soon broadcast around the room.

As my new students introduce themselves, I meet artists, attorneys, dentists, architects, engineers and teachers. Lots of retired teachers with a zest for learning and new experiences. The active participation in intentional learning experiences keeps minds sharp and personalities engaged. Keep learning and trying new experiences – there is no age limit!

*Kim Kovach is a new instructor at LLI. Her course, **Writer's Voice**, was offered this semester. She teaches writing and creative non-fiction writing for adults in Fairfield and Westchester counties and writes a weekly column for Halston Media. Please visit her website [www.kimkovachwrites.com](http://www.kimkovachwrites.com)*



## **REMEMBERING RHODA SOLOWAY**

Rhoda Soloway, a long time member and volunteer at LLI and a resident of Norwalk, passed away last September at the age of 100. She was the long-time editor of *LLines* and wrote most of the profiles. Below are some reminiscences of her by some current and former LLI members.



Nancy Gluck:

I met Rhoda in the 1990's when we both worked to develop Lifetime Learners from its small beginnings in 1992. We served together on the Board and on several committees. Rhoda was a writer and an editor, and she gave freely of her talents for LLI. She improved the content and appearance of our catalogs and newsletter, but her principal interest was in writing. Over the years she wrote a series of profiles of members who were contributing to LLI in some way, as facilitators or through committee work. Her interviews resulted in accounts that captured the essence of the person.

Rhoda's late husband, Sidney, should also be remembered. Sidney led some courses and also loved to participate in any course related to math or science. He was a scientist and his mind favored the abstract. Rhoda once said to me with a laugh, "Sid married me so that he would no longer have to remember my name. He could just say 'My Dear'."

Her full name was important to Rhoda. She insisted on the K. in Rhoda K. Soloway, because before she was Rhoda Soloway she was Rhoda Kahn.

Charles Lamb:

Rhoda and I met in an LLI writing class. We both had extended careers that prevented us from nourishing our desire to write. She started out in the field of publishing after college and later switched into more meaningful work during WW2 as an Engineering Aide for the Charlestown Navy Yard and later for the Bureau of Ships. With marriage, children and a subsequent M.A. in Education she turned to a teaching career and shelved writing until retirement. At that time she wrote, "Life has its own agenda with and without our control. But now I want to go back — to the stories, musings, observations — the magic and importance of the printed word." She joined a group of Lifetime Learners that met at my house weekly and shared stories we had written. For two years we listened to each other's manuscripts and then decided to publish the work. Rhoda's stories are now part of the book entitled *Lives: A Soundwriters Anthology*.

Gil Herman:

I had the distinct pleasure of serving on the Newsletter Committee when Rhoda was editor/chair. She was a joy to work with. She specialized in doing the interviews of LLI instructors and volunteers for the newsletter and had a way of eliciting relevant details of people's lives and expressing the essential elements in the profiles. I know because I was one of her interviewees. Toward the end of her term as editor we held our committee meetings in her townhouse in Norwalk. Her beautiful home had artifacts from her and her husband Sidney's travels around the world. She had that old fashioned sense of hospitality and warmth and would always serve tea and cookies.

## **SPOTLIGHT ON OUR LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES: NORWALK**

I recently spent a few enjoyable hours exploring the Norwalk Historical Society Museum and its companion property a few minutes away, Mill Hill Historic Park. Diane Jellerette, Executive Director, greeted me at the door and provided much information, background and history as she graciously led me through the museum and its many exhibits.



Norwalk Historical Museum building was built in 1970 by Norwalk's first female architect, Margaret Hoyt Smith, and designed in the Colonial Revival style. When Manice DeForest Lockwood decided to give a museum to Norwalk to house his collection, he stipulated that Smith was to be the architect. The original museum for the city of Norwalk was moved to South Norwalk to be closed in 2012. The archives are now in the Norwalk Public Library on Belden Ave in the Norwalk History Room but NHS Museum got all the objects, many of which are on display.



Celebrating Four Historic Collections

The exhibits are skillfully executed and beautifully displayed. Upon entering the first floor, my eye was drawn to the "sculpture" of old street signs in the hallway. Two expertly curated exhibits are on this floor. One, "Norwalk Collects: Celebrating Four Historic Collections" features thirty objects selected as samples of the range of the collection, including items from the Norwalk chapter of the DAR as well as some from the Lockwood family. The other, "Norwalk: A Portrait of Diversity" is especially relevant today as it features the many immigrants who have defined the city.

Hallways are utilized to showcase many interesting objects. Along the staircase, three tall clocks are on display; one, decorated in the Chinoiserie style from 1765, survived the battle and burning of Norwalk by the British in 1779.

Upstairs, there are 3 more exhibits: one on 19<sup>th</sup> century photography and how it relates to Norwalk; another on the WPA, which boasts a beautiful mural depicting a scene from a book by Mark Twain; and a third covering the story of the Norden Bombsight (on display), which is called "The Secret Weapon of WWII."

Much more can be found in this lovely house/museum including a gift shop, a display providing information on the architect (along with some of her tools) and silverware and dishes.

A word about its location: it is one of three buildings that share the large parking area behind Norwalk City Hall, the other being the Norwalk Health Dept. The parking area can be accessed from Sunset Hill Ave just off East Ave.

Entrance fee to the museum is \$3 for Seniors. At this time, it is not in ADA compliance but an elevator and ramp are scheduled for Phase 2 of their growth.

**SPOTLIGHT ON OUR LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES: NORWALK***(continued from page 6)*

Mill Hill Historic Park, the other property of NHS, is located at 2 East Wall St and encompasses three original buildings: Thomas Fitch's law office (he was Governor of the Colony of CT from 1754 to 1766), a little red schoolhouse (built in 1826) and the Norwalk Town House, built in 1835. On site are also a cemetery and a colonial herb garden. The buildings are currently open for special events only.



Mill Hill Historic Park

For more information, including visiting hours, see the website [www.norwalkhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.norwalkhistoricalsociety.org). And plan to spend a few pleasant hours learning a great deal about the history of the city of Norwalk!

*Arlene Yolles*

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO LLI/NCC FUNDS – TAX BENEFIT OPPORTUNITY**

Many of you probably no longer take a tax deduction for charitable contributions because the standard deduction is larger than your itemized deductions. However, there is a way for some of you to get an equivalent tax benefit for your charitable contributions.

If you have a traditional IRA and you are age 70 ½ or older, then, by law, you must make required minimum distributions (RMDs) from your IRA each year. These RMDs constitute income that is taxable, unless they are made to qualifying charities up to a maximum total amount of \$100,000 each year. If you are required to make RMDs and if you have the right to write checks from your traditional IRA, you may wish to consider making contributions to the LLI General Fund, the LLI Scholarship Endowment and/or the NCC Foundation General Fund from your IRA. If you do so, those contributions will help satisfy your annual RMD requirement and you will not have to include them in your taxable income; this will provide you with a benefit that is equivalent to a tax deduction in the amount of your contributions.

If you have any questions, please consult with your tax advisor.

If you wish to make a contribution, please make the check from your traditional IRA payable to “Lifetime Learners Institute” and mail it to:

Lifetime Learners Institute at Norwalk Community College  
Room W102  
188 Richards Avenue  
Norwalk, CT 06854-1634

Please include a brief note indicating which fund or funds you are contributing to and in what amount:

LLI General Fund: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
LLI Scholarship Endowment: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
NCC Foundation General Fund: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTOR PROFILE: GILDA SIMPKIN** *(continued from page 3)*

Now, when Gilda isn't teaching, she is often painting; she was recently in her second art show. When not teaching or painting, she makes jewelry and swims here in the summer and in Florida in the winter. At the end of our conversation for this profile, Gilda was headed to the beach to paint!

Gilda plans to offer future LLI sessions in interpersonal skills and Yiddish. Look for them. You will learn new skills and enjoy unlocking old memories.

*Amy Ewing and Gilda Simpkin*

## LLI VETERANS DAY PROGRAM

On November 8 LLI presented a special program in honor of Veterans Day. Presentations were given by State Senator Carlo Leone, Norwalk Mayor Harry Rilling and Chief Master Sergeant Jeffrey R. DeWitt. Emphasis was on benefits available to Connecticut veterans and their families. Entertainment was provided by the Serendipity Chorale. Here are some scenes from the event. Our thanks to Bernie Weiss for the photos.



Left to right:

Mayor Harry Rilling,  
Chief Master Sergeant Jeffrey R. Dewitt,  
SFC Joseph Colavito,  
Sgt. Tucker Barney,  
State Senator Carlo Leone,  
LLI President Glenn Osberg

