



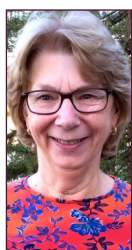
FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

ALFA—ADULT LEARNING IN THE FITCHBURG AREA

ALFA-BITS January 2017

ALFA President's Notes

I can't believe how fast the fall semester has flown by. ALFA had a banner year. We had well over 700 classes taken (many people take more than one) and 89 new stu-



dents who have joined us. We welcome all of these new people because they bring us fresh opinions, different suggestions for classes, and many with a whole different set of skills to contribute to ALFA programs. We are looking forward to the new course catalogue for the spring sessions, the Winterlude program, new trips, and getting together with our ALFA friends in 2017. I hope to see you when Session 3 starts on January 30.

Linda Kennedy

Mark Your Calendar

Jan. 9 — Winterlude, day of film screening with Dr. Joe Moser and Dr. Eric Budd. Free. Hammond Hall.

Jan. 12 — Bus trip to JFK Presidential Library (filled).

March 28 — Food for Thought, "Insects in the Garden" with Bruce Wenning. Free. 2:30 p.m., Hammond Hall.

April 18 — Food for Thought, "Historic Worcester" with Nicholas Langhart. Free. 2:30 p.m. Hammond Hall.

April 25 — ALFA Grand Finale, featuring humorist-storyteller Edie Clark and bird migration specialist Ray Brown. Free. Luncheon \$10. Hammond Hall.

May 1 — "Historic Architecture of Worcester," bus and walking tour led by Nicholas Langhart. \$45 cost includes transportation and lunch. Departs 8 a.m. from Entertainment Cinemas, Leominster.

Past Was Prelude To Today's University

From the first class of 46 prospective teachers in 1894, Fitchburg State University has grown to nearly 8,000 students. In conjunction with the installation of President Richard S. Lapidus in October, ALFA's own Dr. Shirley Wagner, professor emerita of FSU, presented an insightful and entertaining look back at the university's history.



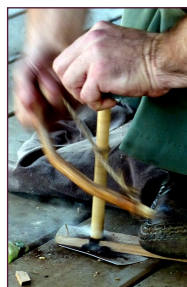
Dr. Wagner

Name changes over the years — normal school, teachers college, state college, university — have reflected the institution's expanding role, and Dr. Wagner showed how community needs helped shape that evolution. The growing need for teachers, for instance, prompted the college in 1910 to establish one of the first junior high schools for teacher training. The next year came the first practical-arts teacher-training course for men, a curriculum that would develop into a nationally recognized industrial arts program.

World events also prompted diversification of programs. The dire need for nurses during World War II fueled growth of a nurse-training course that would become one of the university's signature programs. For a time, the college offered a number of aviation courses to address the need for military pilots.

In our technocentric 21st century, that evolution shows no sign of slowing. — GRF

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American Elections in Historic Perspective, Conversational French, American Sign Language, Fusion Mix, Breathing and Health, Looking at Art, and more ... including making fire without matches.

Meditation Is Food for Thought

Helen Rainoff, founder and president of Getting Centered Meditation, says that practicing meditation, even for a short period of time, can have “profound physical, psychological, and performance benefits” — and that’s not just her opinion. In a Food for Thought presentation in October, she provided summaries of a number of scientific studies suggesting that meditation



Helen Rainoff

may improve brain and immune-system function, reduce heart-disease mortality, ease high blood pressure, and improve attention span and memory.

Ms. Rainoff herself exemplified the benefits of meditation, radiating a sense of calm and wellbeing as she led ALFAs in several basic meditation practices.

The connection between mind and body health has long been recognized by psychologists, physi-

cians, and mystics alike.

The idea received international attention in 1964 when *Saturday Review* editor Norman Cousins recounted how he used laughter to overcome a painful, stress-related degenerative disease.

Now, brain scans and other neuro-medical technologies enable researchers to study the apparent contribution of meditation to physical changes in the brain, including “the cerebral cortex responsible for decision making, attention and memory.”

For ALFAs who decided to attend, the presentation was memorable, indeed. — GRF

How to Get Involved

This newsletter and all aspects of the popular ALFA program could not function without the help of volunteers. If you would like to lend a hand, please contact the ALFA office, (978) 665-3706.

We invite ALFAs to submit articles, reviews, artwork, or poems for publication in ALFA-Bits. Send submissions via email to Editor George French at geo.r.french@gmail.com. For more information, contact me at (978) 345-6553.

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Teaching Under the Influence

By Joyce Ayadi Hinckley

Reading all the course reviews in ALFA-Bits got me to thinking. How come we review our instructors and not our students when journals, newspapers, and airways are crowded with student-performance reviews? Surely, the students deserve as much attention as the instructors? Why has no one ever written a review of ALFA students? They are the main ingredient, the heart and soul of the program.

Personal Essay

So here is one instructor’s evaluation of ALFA students. Don’t take notes; there’ll be no quiz later.

During the last class I taught for ALFA I told the participants that I was afraid that Campus Security was going to show up at the classroom door and take me away for “teaching under the influence.” No teaching situation I’d ever been in (and I’ve done first grade to graduate school) was as much fun, as exciting, or as rewarding. Could this really be legal?

Let’s face it. What’s better than teaching something you love to folks who want to know about what you’re sharing? Holy higher education, Batman! This is academic freedom as it might have been if imagined by Plato, described by Thomas Jefferson, and implemented by Walt Disney. It’s a serious educational theme park where the best rides last for an hour and half and you get to go once a week for five weeks. There are no lines — no requirements, tests or grades either. It’s a learning environment with both welcome and wisdom. It’s a classroom where teacher and students learn and grow together.

Here’s what ALFA students have taught me. Learning and teaching are two halves of the same joy. When both sides of the instructional equation are equal, all participants own the outcome of the class and share in its success. Willing participants provide many minds to make lighter work of difficult topics.



Joyce Ayadi Hinckley

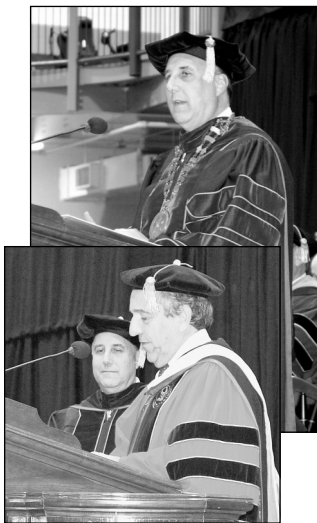
ALFA students will let you know how best to teach them and listening only makes classes better. In the very first session of my very first ALFA class, a participant asked a question that made me realize that some things had to be experienced, not just talked about. Hands-on has become part of what I do as a result. In the second session of my most recent ALFA class, another student noted I’d only been focusing on aging and America. What about the rest of the world? Hadn’t really planned for that, but including it added a needed perspective.

In every session of every class, participants have asked questions that have been thoughtful, insightful, and demanding just a bit more of me.

Research shows students’ performance will meet their teachers’ expectations. ALFA has shown me that that works two ways — teachers’ instruction also has to live up to students’ expectations. ALFA participants bring out the best on both sides. With them you get to “teach under the influence.”

Fitchburg State University Welcomes President Lapidus

Dr. Richard S. Lapidus, (right) was honored in a formal installation ceremony Oct. 13 in the university's Athletics and Recreation Center. Before delivering an inaugural address in which he outlined his vision for the university, Dr. Lapidus was presented with the Presidential Medal by his predecessor, Dr. Robert V. Antonucci (inset), an early and enthusiastic supporter of the university's ALFA lifetime learning program.



They Speak Out for Children

CASA, Court Appointed Special Advocates, was the topic at September's Food for Thought program.

Robb Zarges, executive director, and Monica Blessington, court and case coordinator, described the invaluable, vital, rewarding role CASA volunteers play in the lives of children in need. CASAs represent and advocate for children involved in the court system, providing eyes and ears for judges as they make critical decisions in the best interests of children.

Food for Thought

With the support of CASA, children are less likely to bounce from one foster home to another, the program officials said. They are 60 percent more likely to graduate from high school, and their chances of incarceration or homelessness decrease.

The program has a five-year goal to provide a CASA volunteer — a “guardian ad litem,” — for every child in the court system. If you would like more information about this volunteer opportunity, go to <https://www.casaworcestercounty.org/>.

By Emily Norton

Weather Cancellations

When Fitchburg State University cancels classes or has a delayed opening, no ALFA classes will be held that day. This policy, intended to avoid confusion about weather-related cancellations, applies to all ALFA classes, both on the FSU campus and at remote locations, such as the Fitchburg Art Museum or Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary in Princeton.

Seven Gables, No Waiting

With an autumnal chill in the air, Columbus Day was a perfect time for 85 ALFA participants to head to Salem for the day. With less traffic than anticipated, two buses arrived at the House of the Seven Gables well before the 10 a.m. time of the tour. We appreciated being allowed inside early, away from the stiff ocean breeze!

Bus Trip to Salem

Docents detailed the history of the house. It was interesting to learn that when Nathaniel Hawthorne lived in Salem, the seven gables had been removed and were not restored until much later. After the tour we were able to independently tour Hawthorne's birthplace, receive “retail therapy” in the gift shop, and enjoy the gardens.

Then it was off to lunch. Despite the spectacular setting of Finz Restaurant on Salem's historic harbor, the highlight was Dr. Ben Railton's presentation during dessert. Dr. Railton, a professor of English and American Studies at FSU, discussed the ramifications of the Salem witch trials in today's society.



Dr. Ben Railton

The final stop was the Peabody Essex Museum where ALFAs were escorted through the trove of treasures and antiques housed there. The long ride home in heavy holiday traffic afforded an opportunity to rest after a very full day.

By Diane E. Putnam

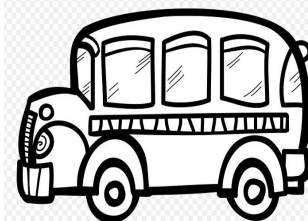
Hop a Bus to ALFA Class

Concerns about parking or transportation shouldn't prevent potential ALFA students from signing up for classes and special events.

Seniors who live in Fitchburg can call the Fitchburg Senior Center (978-829-1790) to register for MART Transportation Services. The Senior Center calls in the information to MART, and you can then call the MART to schedule transportation to and from ALFA classes at Fitchburg State University. The MART website (www/mrta.us/services/coa-services) has details as well as information about service to communities beyond Fitchburg.

Parking on campus can be quite difficult, but there is always ample, free parking at the Wallace Civic Center. FSU provides free campus shuttle transportation, serviced by MART. It is easy to use and gets you from your car to your destination without much walking. Two shuttles run on a continuous loop, which means there usually is one every 10 minutes or so.

Visit fitchburgstate.edu/alfa for more information.



Take a Walk Through History

Put on your walking shoes and join ALFA on May 1 for an architectural tour of historic Worcester. Nicholas Langhart has planned our route and will provide commentary throughout the day. He has taught Historic Architecture in New England for ALFA and has taught at Clark University and Worcester State.

May 1 Bus Tour Of Historic Worcester

The bus will stop five or six times for walking tours of about a quarter-mile. Stops include Worcester Common, the Massachusetts Avenue Historic District, and the Crown Hill neighborhood. Portable amplification will be used so we can hear over the traffic noises.

We also will have outside tours of Salisbury Mansion, one of the best-documented historic house museums in New England, and Salisbury House, a Greek revival building that was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. Nick will inform us of the styles and historic contrasts.

The All Saints Episcopal Church will be viewed as a sample of the many churches of Worcester. We will be treated to inside tours of Union Station and Mechanics Hall (and possibly Higgins House at WPI). Lincoln Square will be viewed from the bus with commentary.

Step back in time to the Prohibition era for lunch at the speakeasy-themed Luciano's Maxwell Silverman Restaurant in Union Station. To enhance the tour experience, there will be a Food for Thought program with the topic, "Historic Worcester" at 2:30 p.m. April 18. This free program will feature a slide show of Union Station prior to restoration. Join us for both if you can.

Cost will be \$45, which includes a hot buffet lunch with dessert. We will depart Leominster at 8 a.m. from Entertainment Cinemas, 45 Sack Blvd., Leominster.

By Sally Hens

Thank You, Volunteers!

ALFA runs on the involvement and diligent efforts of dozens of volunteers. In plain fact, without help of volunteers the program could not run.

Class aides take attendance, greet newcomers, deliver ALFA alerts, assist the instructor, answer students' questions, and much more.

Class aides for Session 1 were: Thelma Desrosiers, Richard Olson, Linda and Donald Gurney, Jane McFadden, Donna Foley, Gail Stewart, Joanne Schreiner, Margaret Woovis, Mary Alice Girling, Linda Kennedy, Charles Huse, Karen McNall, Ellen Duval, Debra Faust-Clancy, Linda Olson, Judith Caouette, Marie Stansel, Elaine Page, Claudette Williams, Judy Normandin, Alice Ward, Nancy and Wayne Gates, and Janet Ragusa.

Class aides for Session 2 were: Linda Norman, Nancy Fillip, Sue Nelson, Maxine Pincott, Marie Stansel, Kathleen McGuigan, Gail Hoar, Carole Borja, Lynne Pinsoneault, Mary Alice Girling, Rhonda and Michael Golden, Mary Waight, Diane Putnam, Bill Ayadi, Lorna Sulin, Carol McShane, Ann Trodello, Jane Egan, Linda Olson, Diane Rouleau-Gardula, Carol DeCarolis, Aldo and Joanne Bianco, and Kathleen French.

ALFA greeters provide ALFAs with parking information, directions to classrooms, and other information.

Session 1 greeters were: Judy Normandin, Marie Stansel, and Linda Olson.

Session 2 greeters were: Karen Pick, Sharon Donahue, Marie Stansel, and Betty Gelinis.

If you would like to volunteer for one of these important roles, please call Linda Olson (978) 632-5523.

Special Programs on Tap for Spring

ALFA is presenting a variety of programs at Fitchburg State University in the coming months, all free and open to the public.

WINTERLUDE: The season kicks off on **Jan. 9** with the second annual Winterlude, a day of film viewing and discussion led by FSU faculty members Eric Budd and Joe Moser. This year's movies, "Brooklyn" and "Who Is Dayani Cristal?," will be springboards for discussion of the immigration experience. The program, free and open to the public, will be from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Hammond Hall, Room, G01. For more information about this event and to register, go to info.fitchburgstate.edu/alfa-winterlude-2017 or call (978) 665-3706. Snow date is Tuesday, Jan. 10.

INSECTS IN THE GARDEN: Soon it will be time to prepare the soil and plant your garden. Lots of insects will help your garden grow, but there will be others that might chomp it to the ground. Bruce Wenning, a member of the Ecological Landscape Alliance, will provide timely advice about how to recognize and appreciate the roles played by the creepy-crawlies in your backyard. "Insects in the Garden: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" — part of ALFA's Food for Thought series — will be held at 2:30 p.m. **March 28** in the Ellis White Lecture Hall.

TALES OF NEW ENGLAND: ALFA's Grand Finale, begins at 11 a.m. **April 25** with a Shirley Pick Spring Series presentation of humorist Edie Clark. Edie Clark is a

storyteller with warmth and humor who has been writing about New England for Yankee magazine for 30 years and is the magazine's senior editor/writer. She often writes about ordinary lives changed by an extraordinary act or circumstance. For two decades, she has written "Mary's Farm," a popular column rooted in the place where she lives in the Monadnock Region of New Hampshire. This free event in the Ellis White Lecture Hall, will be followed by an optional luncheon (\$10, preregistration requested).

BIRD MIGRATION: After the Grand Finale luncheon, learn about the amazing feats of bird migration, the how's and why's, the dangers and distances. In 2006, radio and television broadcast veteran Ray Brown combined his radio career with his lifelong bird passion by creating "Talkin' Birds," a live, interactive radio show about wild birds and the beauty of nature. His mission: to encourage the appreciation of the natural world and promote the preservation and protection of the environment. (For the past 15 years Ray has been a program host on Boston's classical music station, WCRB, and he's the voice of the Pimsleur language-learning programs.)



Ray Brown

This Food for Thought program will be at held at 1:45 p.m. April 25 in the Ellis White Lecture Hall.



Dani Langdon, Coordinator of Professional Studies (left), and Lisa Moison, Director of Extended Campus Programs and Professional Studies, explain Bridges Together to prospective volunteers.

What Generation Gap?

If you would like to share your time and life experience with thoughtful and energetic 8- and 9-year-old children, consider becoming an important part of the unique program called Bridges Together!

This program, which is in its second year, is coordinated by Lisa Moison, Ed.D., Fitchburg State University Director of Extended Campus Programs and Professional Studies. Older adults, many of whom are in the ALFA program,

Bridges Together

met for six-week sessions with groups of four or five third-grade children at the McKay Campus School in Fitchburg. Children and adults prepared and participated in learning activities that explored the differences between the two groups and created a “bridge” between them. The weekly lessons included: Getting to Know You; School Experiences Then and Now; Ethnicities, Heirlooms, and Traditions; Lifelong Teaching and Learning; How Are You Smart?; and How Old Is Old?

In November 2015, I participated in the first Bridges Together program and so thoroughly enjoyed my experience, that I volunteered for the next session in January 2016. About one month after the final session, volunteers reunited with their classes for a Celebrations Reunion, where everyone shared a holiday or celebration that had special meaning for them. There was an air of excitement as children and the adults reunited!

The children presented each partner with very thoughtfully designed handmade gifts that highlighted their experiences with their Bridges Together partners. Volunteers gave a globe to each classroom.

Participating in Bridges Together was a very important and enjoyable experience for me, as I learned what life is all about for an 8- or 9-year-old child and compared that to my experiences at that age. The children were inquisitive, fun, and honest. I gained an even greater respect for the elementary school teachers — Sue Tetrault, Ritta Cote, and Joyce Chapman — as I watched them performing so professionally in the classroom and observed how they valued each individual child’s ideas and voices.

It was such a rewarding experience for me and my fellow volunteers. Each week, the children excitedly greeted us as we walked down the hall to enter their classroom, and this was just a part of what made this such a rewarding experience for me and my fellow volunteers!

By Jane Crocker, GRF photos



Lisa Rigopoulos demonstrates a pastel blending technique.

Into the Art of Darkness

If you were looking for a “fun, relaxing, and creative” class, then painting nocturnes in pastel would be the right class for you!

Our instructor, Lisa Rigopoulos, has a talent for capturing natural beauty in her landscapes, seascapes, and florals, and shares her knowledge freely with her students.

Painting Nocturnes In Pastel

I have taken a couple of pastel classes in the past, but never attempted a night scene. I knew that this would be a challenge for me. Lisa began each class with a brief demonstration and basic information about pastels. She urged us to start planning our pastel with a “Nolan,” a small black-and-white thumbnail drawing, to establish placement of light and dark elements in the composition. It is much easier to correct errors on a thumbnail, she pointed out, than it is on a large painting.

When creating a painting, Lisa said she picks her pastels ahead of time and keeps them in a small tray. This gives her a limited palette, and she does not have to stop while creating her painting to choose pastels. Here is another “helpful hint” that I learned: Store your pastels in a box along with rice or cornmeal to help keep them clean.

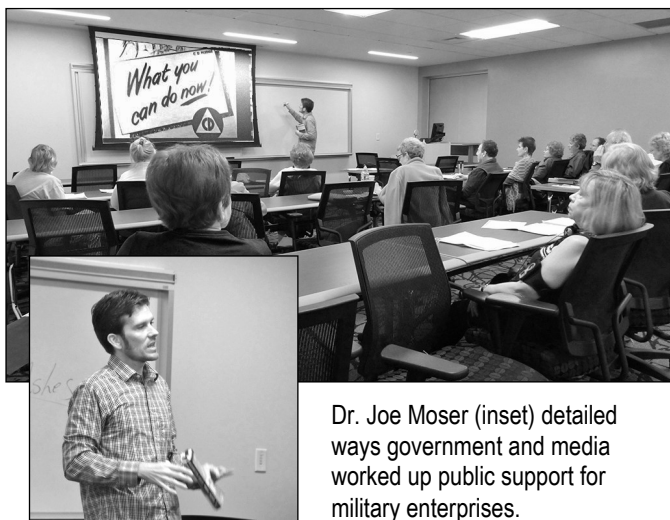
Did you know that there are different types of light — neon, incandescent, fluorescent? I didn’t! And did you know that the sky is almost always lighter than the subject matter on land? She also explained the differences between hard and soft pastels and how to use them.

We were given some ideas for interesting nighttime paintings and asked to bring in our own nighttime photos to work from — or use the photo from her demo. I chose a twilight sunset, which was very colorful. There was a wide variety of subject matter chosen by the class. Before we knew it, we were all creating our own unique masterpieces!

By Elaine Page

Shutterbugs Wanted

ALFA-Bits is looking for camera-savvy volunteers to help document ALFA’s courses and special events. Photos add dimension and interest to the news items and course reviews that are the staples of ALFA’s newsletter. If you’ve ever wondered what it would be like to be a photojournalist, here’s your chance to find out. Interested? Shoot an email to ALFA-Bits at geo.r.french@gmail.com.



Dr. Joe Moser (inset) detailed ways government and media worked up public support for military enterprises.

In War, Truth Is First Casualty

American Propaganda with Dr. Joe Moser was my fifth and most interesting ALFA course. For those of us of the 1940s-birth vintage, it covered many of the events which we have lived through.

Dr. Moser has prepared a series of take-home readings, and films which, along with class lectures and discussions,

American Propaganda In 20th, 21st Centuries

brilliantly cover our government's and media's involvement in convincing the public to support our participation in a variety of enterprises: the Spanish-American War, WWI, the overthrows of elected officials in Iran and Guatemala in the early 1950s, the non-existent missile gap of the late '50s and early '60s, and the disastrous wars in Vietnam and Iraq.

Dr. Moser introduced us to the ultimate American propagandist, Edward Bernays, who was involved in consulting for government and private industry through most of the 20th century. We also had the opportunity to relive our school days with a homework viewing of "Dr. Strangelove," which is as funny and pertinent today as it was in the '60s.

This is a must-take course for all of us. This grateful student hopes that Joe will repeat it so that every ALFA student will have the opportunity to attend.

By Michael Golden, Joanne Schreiner photos

Exorcising Fusion Confusion

What is fusion? Why would I want to try it? Will I hurt more when done? Is it going to be fun or (literally) a pain? We who took the class didn't know the answers to these queries, but we knew that if Judith Lindstedt was the leader it was definitely worth a try.

Fusion Mix

So, we came with assorted complaints: shoulders, backs, knees, hips, feet — everyone had some kind of problem that Judith met head on. We had so many that she joked she should put sticky notes on us to highlight the problem areas. As we stretched, bent, and manipulated our bodies, safety was always her mantra. Judith knew just how to have us move so that we would be helped, not hurt.

At the end of the session our questions were answered. We were glad we were there; we felt better at the end of the sessions; and it was a lot of fun. So, don't be afraid to try Judith's next class. She is a wise, patient, caring teacher who tailors the class to the needs of her students.

By Carol DeCarolis

The Selling of the Presidents

As the 2016 presidential campaign was heating up last fall, Katherine Jewell, assistant professor of history at FSU, gave the class a historical perspective through which to view this rather unusual and controversial election.

American Elections In Historical Perspective

Starting with the election of 1896, she explained how the presidency has been shaped, how political parties have changed over time, and how elections have been affected by Hollywood and the media. The "front porch campaigns" of William McKinley, the "whistle-stop campaigns" of Harry Truman, the fireside chats of FDR, and the television commercials that sang "I like Ike" all had a role in shaping the political process of today.

Particularly interesting were the political maps used to show how the country has changed in its political views. The "red" and "blue" states of today have made some dramatic changes over the past decades.

The influence of Hollywood and celebrities goes back many decades. In 1928, for example, Will Rogers ran a "bunk campaign," promising that, if elected, he would resign. Later, the candidacy of JFK, with its "Camelot" theme, brought the glitz and glamour of Hollywood to the White House.

The topics Katherine brought to our attention, especially the influence of the media, led to lively discussions and interesting comments. Her classes left us eager to learn more about our political process.

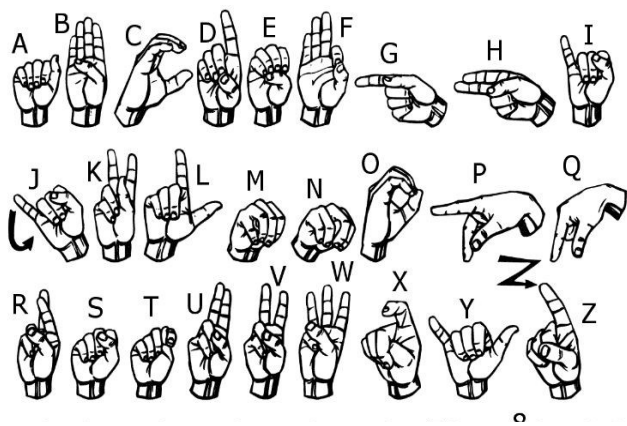
By Barbara McGuirk



Do You Have an Idea For an ALFA Class?

We welcome your suggestions about how we can make ALFA even more responsive to your interests and needs.

If you have ideas for a new course or special event, contact the ALFA Office, (978) 665-3706.



It's All About Communication

How can I communicate with my infant grandchild? What can I do so I can communicate with someone who cannot hear? What about an elderly neighbor or relative who has difficulty hearing? How can I get my message across to them, and vice versa?

Intro to Sign Language And Deaf Culture

Professor Kelly Morgan has a solution for those questions: Learn American Sign Language.

For five weeks, this class was immersed in ASL. We learned the fundamentals, such as

how to sign the alphabet, days of the week, family members, manners, feelings, emotions, and seasons.

We also learned how to sign a sentence and why it is important to use expression and body language to further enhance what we are communicating. Two ASL-proficient student assistants were available to support all the new learners.

Since this class was so engaging, Professor Morgan is investigating the possibility of offering additional classes in the near future.

By Maxine Pincott



Carol Pedigree's students are breathing easier.

Inhale ... Exhale ... Repeat

Everyone knows how to breathe, right? Maybe, but *how* one breathes can make all the difference.

Mouth breathing and breathing too fast or from chest rather than the diaphragm, instructor Carol Pedigree emphasized, can keep one's body in a continuous mode of nervous anxiety. Proper breathing not only brings an abundance of oxygen into the blood, but also develops a calm mind.

The course covered the healing power of proper breathing, which, Carol pointed out, promotes heart and lung health — and may benefit people fighting chronic pain and even cancer.

This is a participation class where members sit on chairs in a circle rather than at desks, and there is a lot of interaction between the students and the instructor. It is a class on learning how to live successfully.

The wide smiles on the faces of ALFAs in Carol Pedigree's course on breathing and health say it all. As one student said, "This should be a required course."

Indeed, this course will change your life.

By Bob McDermott, Diane Thibodeau photo

Breathe Your Way to Health

A Moveable Artistic Feast

Want to sit on a metal chair for 90 minutes looking at slide after slide in a lecture hall while listening to a teacher drone on about art?

Me either!

Fitchburg Art Museum is a small but innovative regional museum. The Looking at Art class was led by Laura Howick, the museum's director of education.

Looking at Art

Laura is an energetic and skilled facilitator. No metal chairs and dull slides here. The museum's African, Egyptian, traditional, and "very modern" galleries were our classrooms. The ten of us perched on stools with clipboards while Laura briefed us on different techniques for looking at art.

We broke into groups, divided into pairs, or worked individually to try out what we had learned. Sometimes we chose a particular piece that appealed or we all worked on one. Laura had us sketch an item or list the details or try to determine the artist's goal. We tried different techniques and discussed how it worked for us and what insights we had. One class we worked in the very modern gallery, and even those of us who initially didn't understand the genre came to a new appreciation of the pieces.



Laura Howick (inset) discusses the sources of artistic creativity.

It was challenging, fun, and truly a master class in looking at art. Our class is hoping ALFA will offer it again for others and have an advanced class so we can hone our skills.

By Beverly McDonnell, GRF photos



Instructor George Mirjianian (left) explains board management, game strategy, and tactics to students in ALFA's Chess for Beginners course. The course explored chess fundamentals with an emphasis on openings, defenses, middle games and end games. George Mirjianian is program director of the Wachusett Chess Club at FSU. His weekly chess column ran for 33 years in the Fitchburg Sentinel & Enterprise. He also has a chess program on local-access FATV.

Chess for Beginners

Joanne Schreiner photo

Spaghetti Sauce and Other Choices

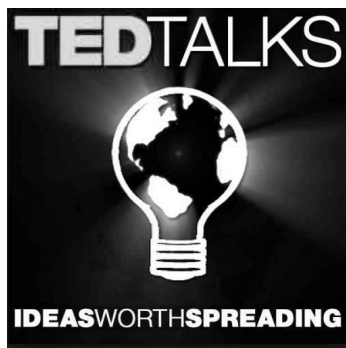
Not familiar with TED Talks? Let me explain.

First of all, there's no guy named Ted involved. TED is an acronym for Technology, Entertainment, and Design. TED is devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks that are 18 minutes or less. TED began in 1984 as a conference where these three topics

Ideas Worth Sharing: TED Talks

converged, and today covers dozens of subjects such as science, business, and global issues in more than 100 languages.

Lisa Moison chose five very inspirational and powerful talks for our classes. For instance, we began with Malcolm Gladwell who urged us to ask whether we were happy with the choices we make in life. Are we choosing Prego



spaghetti sauce because the industry says it's delicious or because we truly like the taste? During another class, we found out if we were more left-brained or right-brained. We had some surprising results.

After the talks, Lisa facilitated lively discussions among the students, asking thought-provoking questions. Lisa does an excellent job of initiating good conversation while creating a safe atmosphere for people to share. Between Lisa and the talks, we became more aware of the world around us.

By Nancy Fillip



An advertisement for the Bath Grinder Co. of Fitchburg in 1906.

The City and the River

Anyone who knows anything about the history of Fitchburg knows that paper mills and woolen mills flourished here because of the Nashua River.

Instructor Francis D. Morrison went a bit deeper and

Industrial Fitchburg In the 19th Century

explained that the

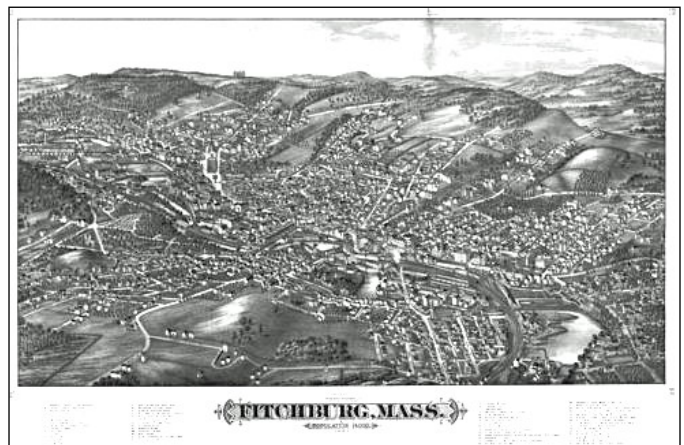
growth of these industries, especially in the latter half of the 19th century, depended on Fitchburg's smaller, but very important, machine tool industry, which supplied the larger paper and woolen factories.



Simonds Saw Co. saws.

Frank, an assistant professor in the Department of Business Administration at Fitchburg State and an amateur researcher of the history of industry, has a wealth of knowledge about machine tools. He also gave us students numerous handouts that filled in a lot of background of the human side of the industrial history of Fitchburg.

By Charles Huse



View of industrial Fitchburg in 1882, the year it became a city.

Paper Trails to the Past

The dozen members of Sara Campbell's genealogy class wanted to know more about where our Polish, German, Finnish, Irish, Italian, Armenian, and Russian grandfathers and grandmothers came from. Our knowledgeable instructor provided us with the keys to unlock some of the secrets of our ancestors' pasts. The two most important keys, Sara

Genealogy Without The Big Dot Com

stressed, are focus and organization. The internet provides limitless opportunities to go off on tangents, and organization and focus will help prevent duplication of effort.

We learned that primary records — marriage certificates, birth certificates, naturalization papers, and other documents written at the time of the event — are more likely to be accurate than secondary records written by other people, sometimes years after the fact.

Much information is available online, including vital records, federal and state census reports, the Social Security Death Index, passenger lists, naturalization papers, city directories, cemetery records, land deeds, and historic maps. Sara shared a number of free online sites, while reminding us that not all the information we need is online. Visiting or writing to bricks-and-mortar sources is sometimes necessary.

In examining my Irish grandmother's immigration records and marriage certificate I discovered that Nana Nellie shaved five years off her age, arriving at Ellis Island in 1901 at age 19, according to the official documents, and marrying in Fitchburg in 1912, 11 years later, at age 26!

Sara had cautioned us to question every record. Excellent advice.



Sara Campbell

By Kathleen French



Musicologist-performer Paul Luria (left) parses variant folk song lyrics during the Hootenanny Sing-A-Long course, and students lend their ideas and voices to the mix.

GRF photos

Fine Flighty Feathered Friends Flock Freely Forth

It's usually not nice to call someone a bird brain, but not in the case of Richard Knowlton.

Dick knows birds!

He talked about the habits of birds and their migrations, with a special emphasis on hawks.

Autumn Birds Of Worcester County

He gave us useful handouts and conducted walks around the Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary in Princeton, where we saw hawks, a heron, and many of those confusing sparrows. But not confusing to Dick Knowlton.

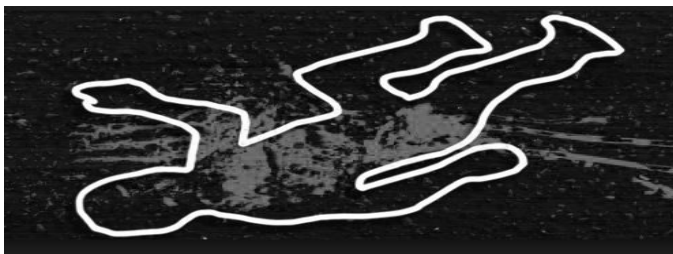
Currently president of the Forbush Bird Club and director of the Friends of the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge, his association with Wachusett Meadow dates to 1994, when he signed on as a volunteer. He later was resident caretaker at the sanctuary and for 11 years taught birding classes and led birding programs.

Look for his spring class as the birds return from their winter migrations.

By Joanne Huse, Jon Jones photos



Instructor Richard Knowlton uses a spotting scope (top) to get a close-up of a migrating bird, then explains how to use a field guide to make an accurate identification.



Channeling Your Inner Shamus

Not your average “book club” type sessions, this course is, rather, an overview of recommended mystery writers from foreign or exotic locales.

Our instructor, Dr. Shirley Wagner, highlighted a brief introduction to her favorite mystery authors from a region (such as Australia, Iceland, and Hawaii) each week and discussed how their works provide insight into the particular culture of those locations — as well as providing a really good mystery.

There were no required readings for this course, but the instructor brought in many of the authors’ books which students could borrow and read between classes.

Dr. Wagner, a professor emerita at Fitchburg State University, is an avid mystery reader when she isn’t playing bridge.

By Martha Kaulback

Reading Mysteries Can Be a Vacation



It’s a Jungle Out There

The course name was intriguing. I thought it would be very informational in helping me protect myself, my family, and my home. In the first class, one of the students asked the instructor if the content of the class was going to make him fearful of everything, in these times of terror talk. Others in the room had the same reaction.

Criminal Minds

The instructor, retired police Lt. Glenn C. Fossa, M.A. (specialist in risk assessment and mitigation), assured everyone that this class was to inform students about traffic safety, elder and financial fraud schemes, travel and personal security, and cyber-safety — and help them protect themselves.

In keeping with those general goals, the topics that were covered and discussed during the five weeks included: residential security; establishing a safe haven; home security while away; personal security while traveling and in hotels; fire safety at home and exit drills; security for children; letter and parcel bombs; carjacking; surveillance; and sexual assault prevention.

Everyone participated in the discussions around each topic and shared our own experiences. We all learned new techniques from the instructor and from one another. I feel better informed about ways to improve my own protection and I have a broader awareness around all aspects of safety.



Glenn C. Fossa

By Barbara McGuirk



Heritage chefs Chris Barnacoat, Bruce Goyette, Odette Harvey, Kathy Flynn, and Walter Kondig.

A Taste of Cooking History

I have taken other ALFA cooking classes, but this was my favorite! The instructors — Bruce Goyette, Kathy Flynn, Odette Harvey, Walter Kondig, and Chris Barnacoat — were well prepared, and eager to share their family recipes with us.

Heirloom Family Cooking

The class featured dishes from the years after World War II when comfort food was in vogue: fried chicken, mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, and more. Classes were held in Fitchburg High School’s spacious cooking-instruction room, giving the chefs a professional setting in

Walter Kondig’s Tuna Casserole

This recipe for tuna casserole, a perennially popular comfort food, was offered by instructor Walter Kondig in the Heritage Family Cooking course. Recipe serves 6-8.

Ingredients:

- 1 12 oz. package of wide egg noodles
- 1-2 cans of cream of mushroom soup
- 2 -3 cans chunk-style white tuna in water
- 10 oz. frozen mixed vegetables
- 1/2 cup of cashews
- 1/2 cup of shredded cheese

Preparation:

1. Combine tuna (drained), cream of mushroom soup, and defrosted mixed vegetables in a large bowl and mix well.
2. Boil egg noodles until done (5-6 minutes), drain, and add to tuna mix.
3. Place in 9x9-inch casserole, cover with shredded cheese, and top with cashews.
4. Bake in a 350-degree oven for 20 to 30 minutes.

which to work their magic.

The instructors related to the students on a very friendly basis. They encouraged us to be spontaneous and ask questions. The relationship between the instructors is adorable!

I recommend this class highly to anyone who may be interested.

By Susan Laaksonen, Joanne Schreiner photo

Poetry in Emotion

Our five-week exploration of the poetry of the British Romantics under the leadership of Barbara McGuirk was sheer poetry in and of itself as we read, digested and discussed these giants of 19th century English literature — Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats.

Poetry of the British Romantic Period

Barbara's many years of teaching high school were revealed throughout as she shared her knowledge of the poets' lives and her enormous appreciation for their poetry. One could not help but be caught up in her enthusiasm.

The impetus for enrolling in the course differed from participant to participant. For one it was convenience; for another, a love of the poetry of her homeland. One woman sought to recover her familiarity with the learnings of her college years, while another was simply curious about why so many love poetry.

And so it went ... a diverse group of individuals, with open minds and an appreciation for good poetry.

Thanks to Barbara, it was a great learning experience.

By Mary Waight



Nancy Fillip (in scarf) and some of her beret-clad students.

In a Word: Merveilleux!

Bonjour! This 10-week course was a marathon — but incredibly productive and we had a marvelous time.

Madame Nancy Fillip is an enthusiastic, patient, and passionate educator who used many creative techniques to help us learn Parisian French. It's not easy to learn a new language. We received dozens of helpful handouts, played French BINGO, sang songs, and had lots of conversation with each other.

Conversational French

Nancy has such a nice way of motivating us and improving our confidence to try and speak correctly. She created a very safe environment in the classroom so we could really improve. In addition, she generously gave us three books so we could work on our skills.

We even got to wear French berets and ended the course with a fun event, indulging in tasty French cuisine while watching a movie in French. I would highly recommend this class to anyone who wants to further their speaking skills in French. Au Revoir!

By Gail Stewart



Joe Choiniere

Joe Choiniere, property manager at Mass Audubon's Central Sanctuaries, took ALFAs on an intriguing exploration of useful plants that native peoples and early settlers used for food, shelter, dyes, baskets, thread, rope, medicine, and more. Among other activities, ALFAs learned (above) how to make fire using friction generated with an improvised bow-and-drill setup.

Useful Wild Plants

Jon Jones photos

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But Wait, There's More!

ALFA offered some four dozen courses last fall, many on topics new to ALFA's curriculum.

Several innovative courses were not reviewed in this edition of ALFA-Bits, including Teresa Fava Thomas' course on Italy's five best travel cities; Emily Norton's examination of water issues, which she termed the "second most critical environmental problem" after climate change; Joyce Ayadi Hinckley's romp through the garish world of Turkish soap operas; John Paul's overview of the often overlooked Middle Ages, which laid the foundation for the world we live in today; six presenters in turn shared their experiences with armchair travelers.

A tip of the ALFA-Bits hat to these and all the hard-working ALFA instructors. — GRF

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ALFA: What's It All About?

ALFA, Adult Learning in the Fitchburg Area, offers dozens of non-credit daytime classes and special events organized by its member-volunteers in partnership with the professional staff at Fitchburg State University.

Among the course offerings during the coming spring 2017 sessions are: Zumba Fitness, Gender Identity, Drama in the Decline of the Indian Raj, Snow Tracking, America's Love Affair With the Automobile, "Hamlet," Pastel Painting, Japanese Flower Arranging, iPads and iPhones, Modern Italian History, Cooking Mediterranean, Faith in Film, and more.

Classes run for 90 minutes over five weeks. Some classes are held off-campus, but most are at FSU's McKay Campus School. We welcome your suggestions for new courses, programs, and special events.

The idea of creating a local adult learning program originated 12 years ago with Shirley Pick and Dr. Philip Fallon. Enthusiastic support from Dr. Robert Antonucci, former FSU president, and Dr. Shirley Wagner, now professor emerita at FSU, helped to make the idea a reality. ALFA is directed by a volunteer Executive Board and advised by Dr. Lisa Moison.

The community response has been gratifying. Course enrollments in fall 2016 totaled a record 717, including 89 first-time ALFAs. For more information, or to be added to ALFA's mailing list, contact ALFA's Office at (978) 665-3706.

ALFA Class Schedule, Spring 2017

Session 3: Jan. 30-March 6
Session 4: March 20-April 24

Class Days 
No Classes 

January 2017							February 2017						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fri	Sat	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
29	30	31					26	27	28				
March 2017							April 2017						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fri	Sat	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4							1
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30						