

## Community Comment

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### OLLI and other local bright spots

The OLLI program is having a positive impact on the north coast. You don't know what OLLI is? Let me tell you. It is an opportunity for those of us over 50 to take classes of interest to us at very reasonable rates. And the variety of classes available is amazing.

OLLI is the name for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institution. The Osher foundation had this idea to set up programs to offer classes for people over 50. They are associated with Universities and there are 118 of them across the country. We are indeed lucky to have one through Humboldt State but it wasn't really luck. The foundation thought we had too small a population to make a go of it but we not only received a 1 million dollar grant to get started, but ten years later we competed for and received a second million dollar grant. The staff and board members have done a great job of setting up this program. Membership has been steadily growing and we are now up to 12 hundred plus members. OLLI at Humboldt is well on it's way to being a long term asset on the north coast.

If you think the classes probably are not for you, just take a look at the variety being offered this spring. There are classes with an international bent to better understand the issues of a global nature. There is a class on the middle east, and a class on ISIS. There is a class on gene ancestry and one on the Mediterranean.

There are travel classes that include classroom tours of distant places. We have the Armchair Traveler and a tour of Turkey. We have a class called deep travel and one on the Italian Dolomites. There is another class on England and Ireland by foot and by train. We also have classes that allow you to sense non-traditional travel experiences such as Wilderness canoeing in Canada and Walking the Camino in Spain.

For those that are more practical, there are classes for self improvement or for personal interest. Take a class on Sea Kayaking, 30 minute cooking, knowing your iPad or iPhone better, or healthy diets. There are drawing classes and yoga classes. There are art classes and classes on social interaction. There are classes on exploring your spiritual nature and learning about creativity and even regional wines. Writing, movies, preserving nature and knowing more about Redwood National Park are some of the many and varied topics offered.

The teachers are knowledgeable and eager to share their passion for their topic. Each teacher chooses the topic they want and know their material well. They range from University Professors who get to teach their favorite subject to experts in the activity they love. They are writers and artists and travelers and researchers and thinkers. And they live in our community.

OLLI is one of many jewels in Humboldt County. These classes are bargain priced and accessible. Most are taught at the Aquatic Center on the waterfront in Eureka. Some are offered In Trinidad and other outlying areas. Classes are small and not intimidating.

Take a look at what OLLI has to offer. I think you'll be surprised at what you've been missing.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.