



Chrissy Watson: A welcoming face at Arsht Hall

By Jean Youkers

Everyone has been eagerly waiting to meet our new administrative assistant, who will be the point person for answering questions, finding answers, making sure members have what they need, the first face we'll see when entering the Arsht Hall office.

Chrissy Watson received an odd welcome on her first day here because the place was closed, with Open House postponed by the snowstorm. But after the snow day, Open House was in full swing, Chrissy had arrived and was easily settling into her new routine, meeting staff and members.

Located at the desk previously occupied by Pam Vari, Chrissy can be found from 8 am to 4:30 pm. Stop in to say hello and you'll see from her friendly response that she clearly belongs at OLLI. She is "looking forward to getting to know everybody."

Chrissy grew up in Wilmington and Chadds Ford, Pa. She graduated from the University of Delaware with a major in Secondary English Education, and a minor in Fine Arts.



Chrissy's previous employment included work in two private schools, Wilmington Friends School and Westtown School, where she dealt with elementary and secondary students. She also opened and operated a restaurant called Goat Kitchen and Bar, where an innovative menu featured vegan and vegetarian offerings.

With her background in education and hospitality, transitioning from school-age children to adult lifelong learners seems natural for this people person. She is interested in our special population and

says, "the whole program resonates with me and it's exciting to be a part of it, and to be in a workplace where values align with mine."

She has a son and daughter, who are twins, and a stepdaughter. All three children are 13-year-olds. In her spare time, if she has any, Chrissy pursues many interests, some of which mirror the variety of OLLI courses. She enjoys yoga, playing the piano, watercolor painting, and all things related to the outdoors. She and her husband have been cultivating a native pollinator garden.

When Chrissy began work at OLLI, it was the first time that her mother had heard of the program – now she is a member while Chrissy is also encouraging her father to join!

"We are thrilled to welcome Chrissy to OLLI," says OLLI Director Karen Asenavage Loptes.

"She brings a wealth of experience, ideas, and organizational skills. Chrissy has already won our hearts!"

OLLI-W Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

Phil Weinberg, Council Finance Chair

The next fiscal year (FY2026) begins on July 1, 2025, and ends on June 30, 2026.

Overview

This past fiscal year (Fall 2023 and Spring 2024) we had two successful semesters and an excellent 2024 summer session. In Fall 2024 and Spring 2025, we continued to offer classes (many new ones), both online and in-person, and continued to add more hybrid classes each semester. Sharing classes (on-line and hybrid) with the Kent and Sussex County OLLI groups has benefited members of both OLLI organizations. We also had a very successful January Explorations session.

FY2026 vs. FY2025

Budgets are usually developed in late Fall. This lead time requires some long-range predictions. Forecasting expenses for FY2026 has not been easy, considering the current need to obtain more UDel staff to manage our activities. In addition, we have been engaged in implementing many new ideas to enhance our operation and increase the success of our organization. Nevertheless, we have finally prepared a budget that we think is workable and reflects our best thinking of what we expect for the coming year.

FY2026 (see Pie Chart and Table)

Revenues — Attendance and revenues are still lower than prior to the pandemic, but as a result of our marketing efforts, we have seen some significant gains in enrollment. OLLI-Wilmington (OLLI-W) had 1,833 members in the Fall of 2024 vs. 1,659 in 2023. **To reach the pre-pandemic higher levels of about 2,400, we very much need our current members to encourage others to join and increase our enrollment, thereby maximizing the portion of our revenue that comes from membership fees.** The current fee of \$260/semester has been the same for the past two years. Because of inflationary pressures, we may need a small in-

crease in the enrollment fee. Anyone enrolling in the fall for the full year will continue to receive a discount.

Next year for OLLI-W, total fee-based revenues including summer are estimated to be about \$948K, or about 62% of our total budget. Additional revenues from all other sources are budgeted at \$563K: gift and scholarship funds-\$157K; other annual giving funds-\$100K; endowment income-\$306K (not including scholarship funds and miscellaneous-\$26K); resulting in total revenue of approximately \$1,537K. We should note how fortunate we are at OLLI-W that such a high portion of revenue comes from gifts and endowment income. However, we need more members, as we cannot assume that gifts and endowment income can forever be available to balance our budget.

Expenses — Our major expense will be personnel (this is our wonderful UD office and technical staff). It is estimated to be \$686K, or about 45% of our budget. The next largest expense is for maintaining Arsht Hall and its surroundings. This includes custodial, snow removal, utilities, grounds and maintenance expenses, etc., and is expected to cost about \$419K. Other expenses of \$332K cover printing, advertising, postage, credit card, food, audio/visual equipment, office supplies, misc. other expenses, and \$50K for more new chairs. Finally, we have budgeted \$100K to replace some of the worn-out carpeting on the first floor.

Perspective — As mentioned in previous budget statements, our budget reflects the nature of our cooperative. Since our instructors are volunteers, their services do not constitute a budget expense. We should pause to note how fortunate we are at OLLI-W to attract many members (but we need more) and to enjoy such a high portion of

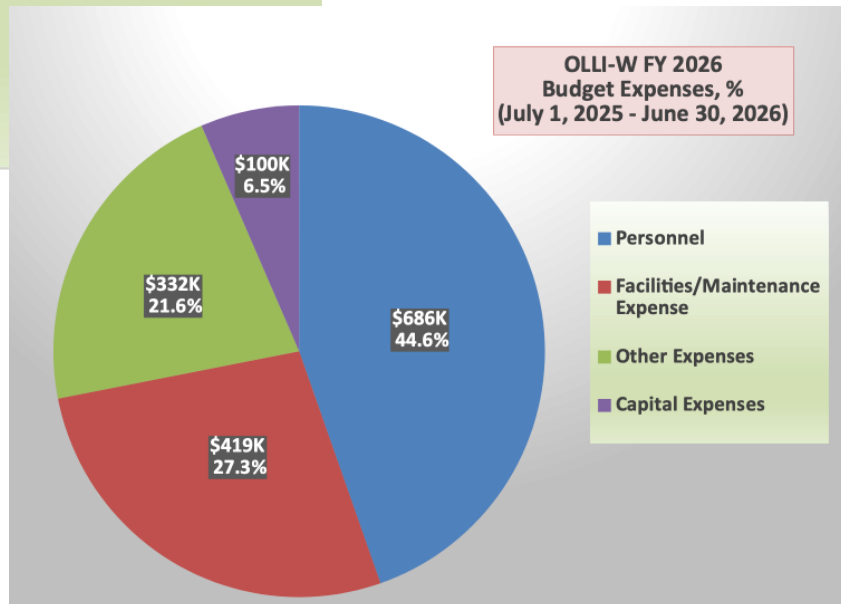
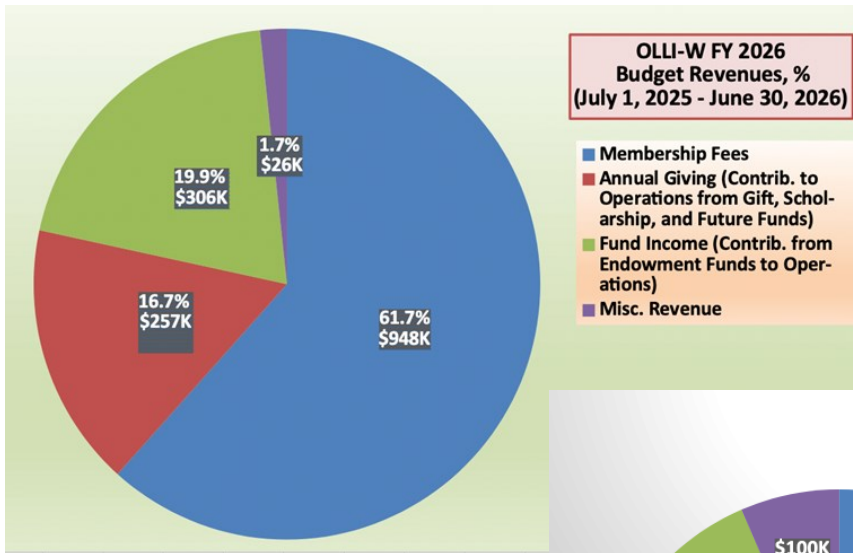
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revenue coming from gifts and endowment income. Most comparable cooperatives have fewer members and depend almost solely on enrollment fees. We, on the other hand, partner with a major

university, have our own building, offer a large number of courses and social activities, have a relatively large endowment, and enjoy the philanthropic support of most of our members. We are fortunate indeed.

OLLI-W Budget FY2026

<u>Revenues</u>			<u>% of Total</u>
Membership Fees		\$948,125	61.7%
Annual Giving (Contrib. from Gift, Scholarship, and Future Funds)		\$257,195	16.7%
Fund Income (Contrib. from Endowment Funds to Operations)		\$305,964	19.9%
Misc. Revenue		\$26,250	1.7%
Total Revenue		\$1,537,534	100.0%
<u>Expenses</u>			
Personnel		\$686,200	44.6%
Facilities/Maintenance Expenses		\$419,444	27.3%
Other Expenses		\$331,890	21.6%
Capital Expenses		\$100,000	6.5%
Total Expenses		\$1,537,534	100.0%
Surplus/(Deficit)		\$0.00	



Birth of Lifelong Learning in Wilmington

From a November 2009 submission by Nan Norling with input from Bert Spivey in 2015

On Feb. 6, 1980, 45 members came for 21 classes in the mimeographed catalog. By the end of the week, attendance had grown to 85, and within a few weeks to 135. The dues (a bargain!) were \$45, and included access to all classes and programs, the right to audit a university class each term, and a library card for UD's Morris Library. The catalog suggested that "for maximum enjoyment and retention of subject matter," two or three classes should be enough for most students.

The Academy of Lifelong Learning's first home was at Wilcastle Center, the club house of the old Wilmington Country Club that stood across the driveway from where Arshat Hall is today. Its faded grandeur pleased members, and its higgledy-piggledy maze of rooms without corridors held no hint of institutional restraint. Some rooms were too hot, some too cold; restrooms were inadequate; some walls were so thin that lively discussions in one would interfere with a sober presentation in another. But it was here that Academy members began to create a place where adults with active minds could find intellectual stimulation, a sense of accomplishment, and daily social involvement. Some came to teach, some came to volunteer, all came to learn.

Then, as now, classes were the heart of the enterprise. They were taught at the college level. Ed Buxbaum, who retired from DuPont and then got a PhD in Anthropology, declared, "No bridge or macramé here!" He taught anthropology and archeology,



Wilcastle Center, first home of the Academy for Lifelong Learning.



Louise Connor (left) and Nancy Aldrich (right), two university representatives, and an academy volunteer greet members.

others taught Classical Greek, 20th century American writers, and the History of Tudor England. The Shakespeare class that appeared in the first catalog has been given every semester since.

In addition to classes and socialization, members contributed their own interests to the group. Someone brought the Delos String Quartet to play during lunch. A noted anthropologist from Penn came to talk about the Lenape Indians. Francis Leif brought Dr. E. Rosenberry from the university's English department to lecture on Shakespeare. One member started a newspaper. Others formed a travel group, and in a few weeks Academy members would be going in buses to Wolf Trap for a picnic supper and *Brigadoon*.

Bert Spivey added, "We thought it should grow within itself, so we were supposed to also elect officials [Bert was the first Chair of Council] and everything else to run the Academy. We opened it with steering committee members sort of divvying up who would do what, but within a couple of weeks, it was amazing how the people that joined took over. Members wrote by-laws, served on committees, poured coffee, and generally did whatever was required to keep things going."

Some Highlights of 2024 at OLLI-W

Winter/Spring

January Explorations 2024 enticed many new members to join OLLI.

Membership has increased significantly following the post-pandemic slump, with fall semester 2024 registration going up to 2,331 members statewide.

Food Service arrived in with daily selections, plus special events like grilled cheese sandwich days.

Earth day was celebrated with plant giveaways, information table and electric vehicle demos.

I Heart UD Day funds allowed purchase of new equipment and new classroom chairs — TWO HUNDRED CHAIRS have been ordered!

Summer

UD by the Sea was another popular program that returned.

The new flexible format of Summer Session was a success.

OLLI's Solid Gold Singers sang "God Bless America" on the field at a Blue Rocks game.

Fall

The return of the Book Sale raised both funds and enthusiastic teamwork, bringing excitement to the entire building for the week before and during the event.

The Speakers Bureau continued with talks and musical performances at four libraries and two retirement communities.

The Welcome Aboard program was initiated to welcome and help new members learn about everything at OLLI-W. There was also a very nice new member event to orient newcomers.

Arts and crafts sales and social events returned to the Lobby.

The semester ended on a great note — performances in the Lobby and Room 105 by more than a dozen vocal and instrumental groups (including Orchestra, Chamber Choir, Chorus, Madrigal Singers, Recorder Ensemble and Flute Choir just to name a few).

OLLI Monthly News in Wilmington

<https://www.ollidel.edu/wilmington/newsletter/>

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Submit articles to rehrlich@udel.edu.

Spring 2025 Schedules

13-week classes, Feb. 3-May 9, Wilmington in-person

11-week classes, Feb. 3-April 25, Kent/Sussex in-person and OLLI Online

1st 5-week classes, Feb. 3-March 7, Wilmington in-person, Kent/Sussex in-person and OLLI Online

2nd 5-week classes, March 31-May 2, Wilmington in-person, Kent/Sussex in-person and OLLI Online

Spring Break, March 24-March 28, no classes

UD by the Sea (Rehoboth Beach), May 20-May 23