



Photo by Theresa Dama-Douglas

Osher Foundation supports lifelong learning

The Bernard Osher Foundation has continued its commitment to the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Nevada, Reno, with an additional \$100,000 in grant funds in 2009. Affectionately called OLLI by its now-600+ members, the University’s institute for older adult learners is guided by a volunteer board and administered by Extended Studies. OLLI is based off-campus at the University’s Warren Nelson

Building in downtown Reno and, as part of an annual membership fee of \$45, offers free noncredit educational programs to adults age 50 and over.

Andrea Turman is a marketing specialist for Extended Studies at the University.

“We’ve gone from fewer than 300 members to more than 600 in just two years,” says Pat Zimmerman, president of the OLLI board. “It’s been really exciting to see such support among our community seniors.

We’re looking forward to increasing classes that meet the needs of our members, and increasing the number of active volunteers.”

OLLI members take an active role in daily planning and running of the organization, while Extended Studies provides administrative support. Shera Alberti-Annunzio, assistant director of professional development programs in Extended Studies, and OLLI’s University liaison, says, “OLLI is set up to be a member-driven organization and the structure of the board and committees allows it to sustain itself successfully. Extended Studies is proud to provide support to OLLI, but without the dedicated volunteers the institute would not be as successful as it is.”

The Bernard Osher Foundation has provided annual grants of \$100,000 to 123 Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes on university and college campuses in 49 states. Once a lifelong institute is launched, the foundation considers an eventual endowment

OLLI members and invited guests take part in dozens of courses a year in the arts, humanities, the sciences and more.

gift of \$1 million, should an institute demonstrate potential for long-term success and sustainability.

“When the Osher Foundation began funding us in 2007 in our previous program, ElderCollege, the organization’s members had really been stepping up their course offerings,” Alberti-Annunzio says. “We haven’t gone about aggressively increasing our membership—and we even anticipated slow growth—but the increase and quality of the OLLI programs, as well as the increase we’ve seen in exposure throughout the region, has resulted in very quick growth for us here.”

Zimmerman adds, “The Osher Foundation is pleased with our OLLI program at the University of Nevada, Reno. And they’re very impressed with the level of support provided by Extended Studies and the University as a whole. We’re planning a recruitment drive this year we hope will increase our membership to 700 by 2010. It’s an exciting time at OLLI.”

Award-winning jazz artists—and generous sponsors—headline the Reno Jazz Festival each year

For the past 47 years, the best jazz musicians in the world have traveled to the University of Nevada, Reno each spring to perform and teach at the Reno Jazz Festival.

In addition to evening concerts by guest superstars, the three-day festival offers competitions, workshops and clinics by scores of professional jazz artists, educators and adjudicators for more than 9,000 student jazz musicians from throughout the West. The festival culminates in a showcase concert and awards ceremony to honor the best and brightest young standouts, who range in age from middle school through college.

This year, pianist, composer, Guggenheim Fellow and educator Geri Allen, and legendary

percussionist, trumpeter and bandleader Jerry Gonzalez and his Fort Apache Band will share their talent and expertise with the festival's young musicians and attendees.

For Larry Engstrom, the University's festival director and director of the School of the Arts, planning and logistics play important roles as well in an event that serves so many participants in dozens of venues throughout the campus.

"The Reno Jazz Festival owes much of its success to our generous sponsors, including Maytan Music Center in Reno, as well as instrument companies Sabian, Pearl and Roland," Engstrom said. "For more than 45 years, Maytan's support has been

particularly important; especially their help with drum, amplifier and piano rentals and purchases. Not only does their staff work with us to find reliable suppliers and good rates, they help with the actual delivery and set up to more than 20 competition rooms on campus each year."

Festival coordinator Cathy Walters agrees. "The festival couldn't exist without the generosity of our sponsors, in particular Maytan, who has been supporting us for as long as the festival has been in existence. Their commitment to music education is extraordinary."

—Andrea Turman



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