



# News & Views

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December 2025

## Winter Luncheon



**Friday, December 5, 11:00 a.m.**

**Country Club of Fairfax, 5110 Ox Rd., Fairfax**

**November 25 is the NEW deadline** to purchase tickets ([here](#))

No refunds for cancellations nor for no shows



**11:00 a.m.** Reception/cash bar

**12:00 noon** Enjoy camaraderie with fellow LLI members over sit-down lunch (choice of entree).

We'll collect new, unwrapped toys for children under the care of [Artemis House](#)

Questions? Contact [JoAnn Ackerman](#)

## Upcoming Forums

There will be no Forum in December, but here is a sneak peek of the next six Forums. Two will be on **Zoom** (avoiding winter driving) and the rest will be in person at the usual location (Little River United Church of Christ in Annandale) on the first Wednesday of each month:

- January 7, Zoom: Mary Bauer, Executive Director of Virginia ACLU
- February 4, Zoom: Mayor of Occoquan, Earnie Porta
- March 4, in-person: James Ross, Music Director of Alexandria Symphony
- April 1, in-person: Charles Smith, a certified ecological restoration practitioner, will discuss restoring ecosystems with native plants
- May 6, in-person: David Meyer, former Fairfax City Mayor, will discuss the Beacon Landing Affordable Housing project
- June 3, in-person: Dr. Diane Mucci, Provost of Northern Virginia Community College, Annandale campus

**The Winter/Spring 2026 class catalog** is full of 41 exciting classes and will be out shortly! Subjects include history, biology, music and the arts (including an excursion to the Renwick Gallery), brain and auditory health, nature classes, estate planning, women and incarceration, cults, life in the universe, and more. Former Fairfax County Supervisor Penny Gross will be back to talk about what's new in politics, and we'll even have a class about S&H Green Stamps (remember those?). Please take a look, and sign up early!

**Extra note from the Curriculum Chair, Ellen Wallace:** we are still looking for volunteers to serve as class coordinators. It's easy, takes very little time, and is rewarding!

In our newsletters, you will see underlined names of people who are points of contact (POCs). Click on a name to sign into our website and find the POC's email in our member directory.

## President's Corner



I was invited by Betsy Pugin, our Community Outreach chair, to the recent John R. Lewis Leadership Fair at John Lewis High School in Springfield, and that **fabulous** experience jolted me out of my usual cautiously-hopeful attitude into one of unqualified hope in our future

leaders. Their Exhibition of Learning spotlighted 160+ students, with support of faculty and many partners, including LLI members who contributed nonperishable items for the program's field trips.

Most students were showcasing projects still in progress, but they were nevertheless prepared to answer our questions. With trifolds and posters they described why they chose their project and outlined their objectives/vision, methodology, progress, barriers, and their understanding of our community's needs. Topics included civic issues (how to address fentanyl/drug use, community action, education standards, human rights), governance issues (democracy, immigration, justice and law, Congress), and science and math challenges (astronomy, space exploration, AI).

This fair allowed teachers to celebrate their students' progress and for the public to speak to the students. I was blown away by the standard of these projects and by the students' recognition that they will face these issues in the future. I look forward to the exhibition in May when the students report the results of their work. If you want to work with this program, contact [Betsy Pugin](mailto:Betsy.Pugin). I am also looking to further LLI/NOVA's involvement.

Wishing you a happy winter season, and I thank you for your support. See you at our Winter Luncheon! And never forget:

**Our strength is our members!**

Patti Volz ([president@llinova.org](mailto:president@llinova.org))  
President, LLI/NOVA

## Thanks from NOVA Foundation – Five LLI/NOVA Scholarships



At our November 5 Forum, Scholarship Committee chairman Steve Cohen (on the right in the photo) presented a \$24,000 check to Marc Westenburg, Director of

Development at the NOVA Foundation. After a record-breaking scholarship fundraising drive, this year's awards will cover five scholarships:

- The Knox Singleton Leadership and the Lorin Goodrich Academic at \$5,400 each
- One additional leadership and two additional academic at \$4,400 each.

LLI/NOVA also presented a letter thanking the NOVA Foundation for its partnership and good work. Mr. Westenburg thanked LLI/NOVA and read a moving letter of appreciation from a previous scholarship winner. The Scholarship Committee wishes to thank all of the generous contributors to this year's successful campaign.

[Steven Cohen](#), Scholarship Committee Chair

## Welcome, New Members

- Lisa O'Donnell
- John Sullivan



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## Connecting During the Holidays

If your upcoming holidays are not as booked with family and friends as you would like, LLI has a suggestion on how to get together with other members who feel the same way!

I have agreed to serve as a conduit for members to indicate their interest in some sort of a meetup. Email me by December 15, and I'll create a group email and then send it to all who have indicated interest. The group can



then chat and email among themselves to see what will work for the majority of the group. It might be getting together for drinks, a holiday

lunch or dinner, a coffee, meeting at someone's house, or whatever else the group decides. Could be fun!

Patti Volz ([president@llinova.org](mailto:president@llinova.org))

## Greeting Cards for our LLI Friends

Do you know an LLI member who might appreciate receiving a greeting card with get-well wishes, sympathy, "thoughts of you," or other supportive words from LLI? If so, contact [Arlene Gribben](#).



## Foodies & Friends

Tuesday, December 9 – 12:30 p.m.,

[Ciao Osteria](#)

14115 Saint Germain Dr., Centreville



Chef Di Nicola says to never underestimate the power of a home-cooked Sicilian meal. Come experience one with Foodies & Friends as we feast at Ciao Osteria in Centreville. The restaurant is an authentic Italian eatery featuring delicious entrees and Neapolitan wood-fired pizzas made completely from scratch. For 13 years the restaurant has been turning out traditional Italian recipes made with the freshest, most authentic ingredients available, and guests are treated as family. Chef Di Nicola says the restaurant's roots are deep in Italian soil. "Where we come from, food is a big deal. For us, meals are a celebration of family, good food and culture." Many of their recipes have been in the family for generations.



The restaurant has garnered 4.5 stars on Yelp and Trip Advisor and has many vegan and gluten-free options. It is accessible and conveniently located in a shopping center with plenty of free parking. RSVP by December 6 to our host Rita Daley ([ritadaley@gmail.com](mailto:ritadaley@gmail.com)) and join us for great food and great company!

## Special Interest Group (SIG) Meetings at a Glance

**KPL** = Kings Park Library, 9002 Burke Lake Rd., Burke

**POC** = Point of Contact

**Bridge** – Thursday, December 4, 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., and Wednesday, December 17, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. (note start and end time) at Mason District Governmental Center. All levels of players are welcome. For more info, click [here](#). POC Martin Stutsman, [bridge@llynova.org](mailto:bridge@llynova.org)

**Cinema** – We'll skip December and resume meeting at the movies on January 28.

Let Patricia Brennan ([cinema@llynova.org](mailto:cinema@llynova.org)) know to add you to the email list.

**Favorite Books** – No meeting in December. Favorite Books will resume in January.

POC Lynne Smaldone, [favoritebooks@llynova.org](mailto:favoritebooks@llynova.org).

**Foodies & Friends** – Tuesday, December 9, 12:30 p.m. See article on page 3 for details.

**Mystery Books** – Monday, December 1, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. at KPL

We will discuss "The Spy Coast" by Tess Gerritsen. January's book is to be determined.

POC Mary Lu Bednarsky, [mysterybooks@llynova.org](mailto:mysterybooks@llynova.org)

**Photography** – Friday, December 19, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at KPL. New members are always welcome. Cell phone cameras are fine. POC Buck Myers, [photo@llynova.org](mailto:photo@llynova.org)

**Tabletop Games** – No meeting in December. See you next year!

POC Mary Lu Bednarsky, [tabletopgames@llynova.org](mailto:tabletopgames@llynova.org).

**Visual and Performing Arts** – Discounted Tickets

LLI members can purchase seats for \$15 (plus \$4 fee), a mere fraction of the regular price, with access to orchestra, balcony, or box seats. Also, pre-show chats begin an hour before curtain, offering a glimpse into compositional craft. For more information contact [Anna Dixon](#).

**Winter/Spring 2026**—Mark your calendars for these; click on (hyperlinked) titles below for detail.

- [Mark Morris Dance Group & Music Ensemble](#) – Saturday, February 7, 8:00 p.m.
- [Virginia Opera: Intelligence](#) – Sunday, February 15, 2:00 p.m.
- [Les Ballets Africains](#) – Friday, February 20, 8:00 p.m.
- [Mnozil Brass](#) – Sunday, March 1, 4:00 p.m.
- [Circa: Humans 2.0](#) – Sunday, April 12, 7:00 p.m.



Images captured by Photo SIG members Doug O'Boyle (left) and Kathy Dillon (right).