



News & Views

Volume 30—Number 2

February 2026

Wednesday, February 4 ----- LLI/NOVA FORUM on ZOOM (Link to be emailed)

Social Zoom: 9:30 a.m. Announcements: 9:50 a.m. Forum Presentation: 10:00 a.m.

Tell Steve Cohen if you have a joke to share for "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum"

Occoquan's Fascinating History



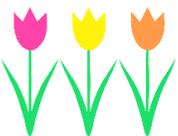
Join us on Zoom to hear **Earnest W. Porta, Jr.**, the mayor of Occoquan tell us about many interesting episodes in the 200-year history of the city. This includes major events leading to enactment of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote, and to the evacuation of most of its population when Hurricane Isabel hit in 2003.

Earnie has served as mayor from 2006 through 2014 and from 2018 to the present. He holds bachelor's, law, and doctorate degrees from Georgetown University, as well as an MA (History) from George Mason University. Much of his professional career has been in finance. He has been an active board member and officer of various civic organizations, including the Occoquan Historical Society, Historic Prince William, the Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation,

Patriots for Disabled Divers, Action in the Community through Service, and the Prince William County Historical Commission.

In November 2010 Earnie authored a book, *Occoquan*, in Arcadia Publishing's *Images of America* series. His latest work, *Hurricane Agnes* (about the hurricane hitting Occoquan in 1972), was released by History Press in 2024. Earnie is one of several local officials in Prince William County who have created podcasts to update residents on important happenings or to explain new developments that newspapers no longer have the space or staff to cover. With his extensive experience, Earnie promises to have many stranger-than-fiction stories to pass on.

Look at these Spring Classes!



We have many upcoming classes that you'll enjoy, some in person and some on Zoom. They include: What's Next, with former Supervisor Penny Gross; Search for Life in the Universe; Neuroanatomy; Communicating with Confidence (by a TEDx presenter!); World War II Internment of German, Italian and Japanese Americans; Everything You

Wanted to Know About Cults; Daylight Savings Time; Women and Incarceration; Estate Planning; Understanding Your Ears and Auditory Health; Hyperlocal Peacebuilding; Agriculture Meets Art; and several nature classes. Do sign up soon!

Inclement Weather -- If in doubt about whether an in-person class will be held when you wake up to icy/snowy conditions, check the policy [here](#). Also, in general, it's a good idea to check your email before leaving home on class day in case there is any change (room, instructor illness, etc.).

President's Corner



LLINOVA has an important task to accomplish in this short, cold month of February — that is, to establish a **Nominating Committee** to prepare for the election of our Board of Directors and Officers at the annual

meeting before the Forum on June 3. The committee is comprised of a chairman, two board members, and two non-board members. Their job is very short-term, ending when the nominations and bios are submitted to the editors for the May newsletter deadline of April 17. Please email me if you are willing to help with this task, which is critically important to our organization.

Great news: Our Forum and Curriculum committees now have enough members to do their jobs, although additional volunteers are always welcome. Contact: [Mary Alexander](#) for Forum and [Ellen Wallace](#) for Curriculum. We still have a critical need for help on Cultural Excursions (see article on page 4).

With Mary taking over as Forum Committee chair, we want to lighten her duties as chair of the Membership and Outreach Committee by finding a volunteer to take over her “outreach” functions — publicizing the benefits of joining LLI. This volunteer will work with fellow committee member Derick Malis, who handles the membership issues (contacting new members, welcoming them, and determining their interests to volunteer and participate). Please consider volunteering; contact Mary if you have any questions.

Despite the awesome job that the Membership and Outreach Committee does in attending fairs, making presentations to retirement groups, and advertising in a number of publications, we are struggling to regain the numbers we lost during Covid. Increasing our membership ultimately depends on you, our members. Talk us up at your neighborhood

meetings, social get-togethers, or at the gym. Post an LLI flyer in your community (see page 7 of this newsletter). Pass the word that prospective members can attend one class free and that our Forums are open to the public (bring a friend!). As Mary and Derick say, “LLI/NOVA is the best bang for your buck!”

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, Jan Pry (aroundtown@llinova.org) is poised to receive your input of community events (tour, choral/other concert, play, lecture, and more) that might be of interest to others. She needs a couple of weeks lead time, so please send them to her as early as possible, and we'll email an “Around Town” message to share these ideas.

Last, please register for classes! We issue What's Happening each week so you can sign up for anything you may have missed before, or simply tune in to Zoom classes. Participation in our classes is critical. Our instructors give of their time and expertise for no compensation. Let's show them we appreciate their efforts. And, speaking personally, I know I have been introduced to subjects I never thought I'd be interested in. Hey, it's winter! Join us and exercise your mind via Zoom in the comfort of your own home (we won't judge your outfits) or in a warm classroom. As always, **Our strength is our members!**

Patti Volz (president@llinova.org)
President, LLI/NOVA



New Members:

- Sharon Babcock
- Priscilla Hoffman

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

Spies and Statesmen Seminar

(Fort Hunt World War II History)

Saturday, February 28, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. (Zoom)

Our friend **Daniel Blier** of the National Park Service, who has previously been an LLI instructor and Forum speaker, invites us to this free, virtual World War II history seminar that he will be hosting. Join authors Michael Warner and Jörn Happel for a special presentation of World War II and Cold War history. The seminar will end with a Q&A session during which attendees can ask the presenters questions. For more information and to register, click [here](#).

Community Outreach – Support Read and Feed This Month

“Read and Feed” is an annual outreach program by the Fairfax County Public Library (FCPL) for local food pantries. During January and February, each library branch collects food for their selected charity. Supported organizations include several that LLI has supported in the past – FACETS, ACCA, and Food for Others – as well as others that serve those in need. Information on specific food items and which branches are supporting which charities may be found [here](#).

Drop off unexpired, non-perishable, commercially-produced food items to any FCPL branch during regular hours through the end of February. No glass packaging, please.

Since LLI does not meet in person for our February Forum, this is a great opportunity to continue your charitable giving.

– *Betsy Pugin and Debbie Omori*



Foodies & Friends

Tuesday, February 17 – 12:30 p.m.,

[RT's Restaurant](#)

3804 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria



***Laissez les bons temps
rouler! Repeat***

performance! Foodies & Friends first celebrated Mardi Gras at RT's in 2023. Those who attended last year said we should

do it again in 2026. So once again we will enjoy the colors, decorations and traditions of Mardi Gras while dining on the distinctive flavors of southern Louisiana's Cajun and Creole cuisine.

For more than 30 years, RT's has offered the specialties of New Orleans, providing a unique dining experience by offering selections rarely found at other area restaurants. While focusing on Cajun/Creole specialties such as crawfish, shrimp, oysters, jambalaya, red beans & rice, crab, andouille, gumbo, and étouffée, the extensive menu offers many additional choices prepared in the distinctive New Orleans style. Click [here](#) to see the menu.

RT's has been highly rated by many publications, including Forbes and Washingtonian magazines, and has been recognized for its seafood in the Zagat Survey. Ratings on Yelp, Tripadvisor, and OpenTable give high marks to this restaurant, too.

In honor of this special day, consider wearing your finest Mardi Gras colors of purple, green, and gold with some beads. For fun, bring a festive mask if you have one. Ample parking is available on the street or in a parking lot almost directly across the street near the pedestrian crosswalk. (The website includes a map clearly identifying this lot.) RSVP to [Bev Portman](#) no later than February 12 to reserve your seat for this festive celebration. Space is limited, so please reserve early.

Cultural Excursions

The Cultural Excursions committee is seeking additional members. It is easy to arrange an excursion and it takes very little time. You simply need to search online for information on a museum, historical home or site, park, or special event or exhibit. We have a spreadsheet of about 100 ideas of places to go. Once you've picked a location, a quick phone call or email will coordinate the date and time. Contact [Carol](#), committee chair, with any questions.

The following excursions are in the planning stage:

- Late April trip to Thompson Wildlife Management Area to see the trillium and other spring ephemerals
- Pohick Church in Lorton
- Huntley Meadows Park in Alexandria
- Milken Center for Advancing the American Dream in D.C.

Afternoon Tea at [Lily's Chocolate & Coffee in Vienna](#)

Tuesday, March 17, 12:30 to 2:00 p.m., \$48

See detailed information [here](#). Maximum is 14 members and guests. Carpooling is highly encouraged due to limited parking. Limited accessibility (two steps and small bathroom).

Annual Winter Luncheon Photos

Gosh, that was a fun party! Photos from our Winter Luncheon, held on Friday, December 5, at The Country Club of Fairfax, are now available for viewing on our website [here](#). (Scroll down the website page and click on the "+" next to "Winter Luncheon December 2025.")

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](#).



Photo by Photo SIG chair Buck Myers in Wales

Thinking About Traveling? Share Your Travel Plans in the Newsletter

Are you considering traveling this year or in 2027? Although LLI no longer has a Study/Travel Committee, many members continue to enjoy exploring new places. By sharing travel plans in the newsletter, members can discover trips that may interest them and connect with others who would enjoy traveling together. Members who are open to travel companions are encouraged to send a brief description of upcoming trips to us at Newsletter@LLINOVA.org. We'll share those plans in future issues to help spark informal travel connections among LLI members.

LLI member Anna Dixon recently traveled to Peru. During that trip, Anna and a former LLI member connected thousands of miles away on a senior-friendly tour to Machu Picchu and Peru's Sacred Valley. The tour was designed specifically for older adults, with a slower pace, flexible daily options, and time built in to adjust to the altitude, making the experience both accessible and engaging. Anna shared some reflections with us.

The trip offered a practical example of what "active aging" can look like. Even with the aches, joint concerns, and physical limitations that often accompany aging, meaningful travel remains possible. Well-planned trips can still stretch the mind, encourage curiosity, and gently push participants beyond familiar routines.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the journey was the shared experience. Traveling with someone who shared interests in art, history, and lifelong learning added depth and enjoyment to the trip. The experience also highlighted a familiar truth within LLI: connections formed in classes often continue beyond the classroom, sometimes over coffee or in museums, and occasionally on the other side of the world.

Members planning future travel who would welcome companions are encouraged to share their plans. A simple note in the newsletter may be the start of the next LLI travel partnership.



Photos provided by Anna Dixon. Bottom photo shows Anna (bottom right) with former LLI member Mamie Kam-Ng (bottom left).

LLI/NOVA Board of Directors

President: Patti Volz
Vice Pres: Patricia Brennan
Secretary: Bill Tuceling
Treasurer: Richard Sigman
Past President: Derick Malis

Administrator: Janice Viola—
Contact at admin@llinova.org

Members:
Richard Ackerman,
Mary Alexander,
Cathy Becker, Andy Butler,
Debbie Cohen,
Steven Cohen, Fritz Ernst,
Carol Fagnani, Ed McKnight,
Ellen Wallace

LLI Newsletter Committee

Chair: Cathy Becker, newsletter@llinova.org
Loren Brandman, Patricia Brennan

Special Interest Group (SIG) Meetings at a Glance

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

POC = Point of Contact

Bridge – Wednesday, February 11, and Thursday, February 26, 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., at Mason District Governmental Center. All levels of player are welcome. For more info, click [here](#). POC Martin Stutsman, bridge@llynova.org

Cinema – Wednesday, February 25, approximately 12:00 p.m. at Cinema Arts Theatre in Fair City Mall, Fairfax. Let Patricia Brennan (cinema@llynova.org) know to add you to the email list.

Favorite Books – Thursday, February 19, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at KPL.
Our choice for February is "A Pair of Wings" by Carole Hopson (historical fiction).
POC Lynne Smaldone, favoritebooks@llynova.org

Foodies & Friends – Tuesday, February 17, 12:30 p.m. See article on page 3 for details.

Mystery Books – Monday, February 2, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. at KPL
We will discuss "Stranger in the House" by Shari Lapena. Our March book is "The September Society" by Charles Finch. POC Mary Lu Bednarsky, mysterybooks@llynova.org

Photography – Friday, February 20, 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

Tabletop Games – Tuesday, February 24, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. at KPL
Our game is to be determined. POC Mary Lu Bednarsky, tabletopgames@llynova.org.

Visual and Performing Arts – Discounted Tickets

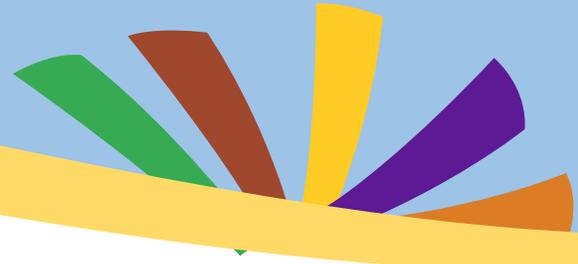
LLI members can purchase seats **for \$15** (plus \$4 fee), a mere fraction of the regular price, with access to orchestra, balcony, or box seats. Pre-show **chats begin an hour before curtain**, offering a glimpse into compositional craft. *For more information contact [Anna Dixon](#).*
Click on the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



Photo by Photo SIG member Mike Hamilton

LLI/NOVA



Lifetime Learning Institute of Northern VA at NOVA Annandale Campus

Meet new friends and enrich your life! Interesting classes, regional excursions and travel, and special interest groups (SIGs), such as **Bridge, Book Clubs, Tabletop Games, Foodies, Photography, & Cinema** are available.

LLI/NOVA is a non-profit, member-run organization offering stimulating virtual and in-person activities for adults 50+. Visit us online to see everything LLI/NOVA has to offer, including 130+ mostly single-session courses. Register for as many as you wish for a modest annual membership fee of \$125.

Join us for FREE
at a SIG event or at our monthly Forum

Have questions? Contact us via email, the web, or phone!

- admin@llinova.org
- <https://llinova.org>
- (703) 323-3746

Come Join Us!

