



News & Views

Volume 30—Number 4

April 2026

Wednesday, April 1 -- LLI/NOVA FORUM

LOCATION: Little River United Church of Christ, 8410 Little River Turnpike, Annandale

Book exchange starts at 9:15 a.m. Socializing starts at 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"

The Role of Native Plants in Restoring our Ecosystems



Charles Smith, an ecologist with 34 years of experience in natural resources assessment, will talk about the role native plants play in restoring, managing, and monitoring our ecosystem. He is particularly interested in how these plants disperse across land and water and in their reproductive strategies. They are highly impacted by the fragmentation of our landscape caused by human activities, land development, and climate change.

Charles grew up in Arlington and is a U.S. Army veteran. He worked for over 26 years for the Park Authority and Department of Public Works and Environmental Services. His work included public lands management, overseeing natural resource inventory, and planning and management of forested ecosystems, grasslands, and wetlands creation and restoration. Charles is a board member of the Virginia Native Plant Society, and a board member for the Large-scale Ecosystem Restoration Section and a Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner with the Society for Ecological Restoration. He supports numerous environmental organizations in Virginia as an advisor and educator. Join us for this interesting in-person Forum.

After-Forum Lunch — Join fellow LLI members for lunch and conversation at [Kilroy's](#), 5250A Port Royal Rd., Springfield. Patricia Brennan and Jan Pry will host.

Book Exchange at the Forum — LLI members are invited to bring up to five books to donate at the April Forum -- and take home up to five more that you might want to read. Starting at 9:15 a.m., we'll have a table where you can drop off your books and peruse what others bring. The book exchange will continue for a short time after the Forum program concludes.

If you have surplus book bags, cloth or paper, feel free to bring those, too. You or someone else may want to use them. Leftover books will be donated to the Fairfax County Public Library. However, note that the library won't accept textbooks or damaged books, even though they may be well-loved.

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

President's Corner



I'm very excited that this spring LLI has a chance to boast about its tremendous benefits at two 50+ Wellness Expos. During the events, we will have a table and will be able to talk to the general public about joining LLI. In the past, LLI

board members have participated in these Expos, but we very much want to include all members who are willing to talk us up! We can use the help! For details, see the article to the right.

Our yearly Expo presence is a much-needed effort to increase our membership, as our numbers have been slowly declining. But just think: if each member could recruit one new member, we would double our size! I thank those of you who are already pointing people our way. Let's ALL talk with people about joining LLI—when we go to community events, the library, health club or gym, or anywhere! Highlight our uniqueness. We are small, we're affiliated with a community college, and we provide one-session classes. Forums are open to the public. And we do tremendous community work. Those are just the tip of the iceberg. Let's make 2026 our year of growth! We can do this!

Last, the Board has approved funds to examine and update our website from both the technical and the design side. We have not done this for years. If you have comments about the content, "look," or usability of the website, contact the design team at llidesign@llinova.org. Please take advantage of this opportunity to weigh in with your ideas. Always remember: **Our strength is our members!**

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

LLI Invited to Speak at Wellness Expos

Please volunteer to help staff a table at wellness Expos in April and May.

Volunteers will get a chance to share with Expo visitors the many benefits of belonging to LLI. You can hand out LLI flyers, placards, and business cards; talk about and show a sample of the many LLI classes we offer; and explain the many opportunities within LLI to socialize and get involved. In addition to staffing the LLI table, volunteers are free to walk around, "working the crowd," and to distribute flyers. The Membership Outreach Committee will provide the materials you need. **Please help us recruit new members by covering a one-hour shift at the LLI table on either April 10 or May 8.**

We are excited that our own Derick Malis has been invited to speak at the Fairfax Village in the City "Home for Life Expo," Friday, April 10, at the Sherwood Community Center.

LLI will also participate in Vienna's Wellness and Safety Expo on Friday, May 8, at the Vienna Community Center. Both Expos will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. These Expos target the needs of seniors, helping them to stay independent and to age-in-place successfully. Expos usually draw a few hundred attendees so are ideal opportunities for promoting LLI. Lunch will be provided at the April Expo. Please contact [Derick Malis](#) or [Mary Alexander](#) for more information and to sign up to help!

LLI/NOVA Board of Directors

President: Patti Volz	Members:
Vice Pres: Patricia Brennan	Richard Ackerman,
Secretary: Bill Tuceling	Mary Alexander,
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Contact at admin@llinova.org	Ellen Wallace

LLI Newsletter Committee

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

Spring Classes



Don't miss registering for and attending our spring-class listings! Topics for the remaining classes include Communicating with

Confidence (by a TEDx presenter!); Everything You Wanted to Know About Cults; Women and Incarceration – The Hidden Impact and Pathways to Justice; Estate Planning; Neuroanatomy; The Story of H. H. Leonards, Founder of the O St. Mansion and Museum; Understanding Your Ears and Auditory Health; Hyperlocal Peacebuilding; How Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven were Influenced by Turkish Military Music; National Park Grab Bag; nature classes; and more!

Recorded Zoom Classes

Did you know you can view a recording of past Zoom classes and Zoom Forums? Log in, click [here](#), then click Zoom Links to Spring 2026 Classes/Forums.

Community Outreach

At the April 1 Forum, we will be collecting for the John R. Lewis High School pantry. Located in Springfield-Franconia, the high school is especially proud of its Leadership Program.

Our collection will provide students with snacks for local bus trips, workshops, and other events. Adequate food is so important for students to focus and socialize.

Food items especially appreciated are non-perishable snack foods like cheese crackers, granola bars, boxed juice drinks, Motts fruit snacks (which are halal), and other similar foods. Let's help the next generation of leaders as they make their way through school.

Thank you, *Betsy Pugin and Debbie Omori*

Welcome, New Members

- Christina Hess
- James Hildreth
- Anne and John Lonam
- Nate Rosenbaum



Who Needs College Anymore?

Thursday, April 9, 6:00 – 7:45 p.m.

Location: Barbara Wyles Auditorium

Bisdorf Building, NOVA Alexandria Campus
5000 Dawes Ave., Alexandria

LLI members are invited to attend a panel discussion: *Who Needs College Anymore? – The Changing Landscape of Postsecondary Learning*. It will cover how the College is exploring innovative learning models to meet the needs of all learners. You can find out more and register for the event [here](#).

Think on Your Feet!

Wouldn't you like to improve your ability to think better on your feet and to communicate effectively, especially when under pressure?

And to learn how to do that from an instructor who has performed standup comedy, and given a TEDx talk?

Here's your chance! [Register](#) for “Communicate with Confidence: Presenting, Connecting, and Thinking on Your Feet,” an LLI class/workshop to be given



by Meducate Global principal Lawrence Sherman. This session will be held on **Wednesday, April 15, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. in CA 302.**

Mr. Sherman has helped those in medicine, EMS, emergency management, rescue, and disaster response to learn, teach, and translate knowledge into practice, especially when the stakes are high. However, for LLI members, he will focus on communications skills we can use daily, even in retirement.

You'll leave this LLI class with new insights into why people tune in or tune out, and how to connect more effectively in every setting, whether it's a presentation, a conversation, or a moment that catches you off guard.

Foodies & Friends

Friday, April 24, 1:00 p.m.,
[Lazy Dog Restaurant](#),
11963 U Fair Oaks Shopping Center,
Fairfax



Foodies and Friends' visit to Lazy Dog Restaurant was a big hit last year.

Join us again to try something new from its extensive and creative menu! Lazy Dog serves handcrafted American food and drink with seasonally-inspired ingredients. The restaurant has a small mountain-town vibe, with warm, caring service and a rustic setting. They source ingredients from loved and respected places and farmers. Every meal is made by hand each day, including all sauces, marinades and dressings. The café has a seasonal menu, which is an ode to the current season, and where they celebrate Mother Nature's beautiful bounty. [Rita Daley](#) is our host for this event. Please respond to her by April 20 if you plan to attend. Individual checks will be provided and parking is easy. The restaurant is accessible. It is located next to Dave & Buster's.

Special Interest Group (SIG) Meetings at a Glance

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

POC = Point of Contact

Bridge – Wednesday, April 8, and Thursday, April 23, 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@lilnova.org

Cinema – Wednesday, April 22, approximately 12:00 p.m. at Cinema Arts Theatre in Fair City Mall, Fairfax. Let Patricia Brennan (cinema@lilnova.org) know to add you to the email list.

Favorite Books – Thursday, April 16, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at KPL
Our selection this month is “Emma” by Jane Austen (classic).
POC Lynne Smaldone, favoritebooks@lilnova.org

Foodies & Friends – Friday, April 24, 1:00 p.m. See article above for details.

Mystery Books – Monday, April 6, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. at KPL
We will discuss “The Shot Caller” by Jen Danna and Sara Driscoll. On May 11 we will review “Past Tense” by Lee Child. On June 1 we will cover “Resurrection Walk” by Michael Connelly.
POC Mary Lu Bednarsky, mysterybooks@lilnova.org

Photography – Friday, April 17, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at KPL
New members are always welcome. Cell phone cameras are fine.
POC Buck Myers, photo@lilnova.org

Tabletop Games – Tuesday, April 28, 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. at KPL
Our game is to be determined. POC Mary Lu Bednarsky, tabletopgames@lilnova.org.

Visual and Performing Arts – Circa: Humans 2.0, Sunday, April 12, 7:00 p.m. at George Mason University Center for the Arts. LLI members can purchase orchestra, balcony, or box seats for \$15 (plus \$4 fee). Pre-show chat begins an hour before curtain. POC [Anna Dixon](#).

Cultural Excursions

Detailed information about each excursion is on the class-registration webpage. Reserve your space by registering on the LLI website. Carpooling is strongly encouraged; contact the LLI leader if you are interested in participating in a carpool. Contact [Carol Fagnani](#) with any questions.

Virginia Garden Week Tour – \$50 (purchase tickets online in advance)

Sunday, April 19, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., Leesburg

Leesburg is a charming, historical town that was briefly our nation's capital during the War of 1812. This year's self-guided tour meanders through the side streets, taking a peek into a few of Leesburg's special homes and gardens, including Gen. George C. Marshall's home, Dodona Manor, along with five private houses built in the early 1800s and 1900s, showcasing a range of gardening styles. More information is available [here](#) and on the LLI registration [page](#). Carpooling is recommended.

Trip leader is [Carol Fagnani](#).

City Nature Challenge – Free

Friday, April 24, 10:00 a.m. to noon

Hidden Oaks Nature Center, Annandale

Each spring, cities around the world participate and compete in the Challenge, simply by observing and recording the wild plants and animals seen in nature. Those involved are taking part in one of the largest community science events in the world, as well as learning more about nature in our own urban environment. [Mary Alexander](#), an LLI Board member who has taught a number of LLI classes on nature, is organizing this event in collaboration with Ginny McNair from Arlington Regional Master Naturalists. Register [here](#).

Trillium Hike – \$26, divided among participants. Wednesday, April 29, 8:30 a.m. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area, Linden.

Join LLL's annual field trip to see the spring flowers, especially the trillium flowers. Join [Mary Alexander](#), LLI instructor, member, and Virginia Master Naturalist, on an organized walk to look for trillium and other spring flowers. More information about the trillium trail is available [here](#) and on the LLI registration [page](#). Meet at Hidden Oaks Nature Center.

Pohick Episcopal Church Tour – Free

Wednesday, May 13, 1:00 p.m., Lorton

Join us for a tour of Pohick Episcopal Church, "the Mother Church of Northern Virginia." Free, but contributions to the church are welcome. Details [here](#). Trip leader is [Regina Rogers](#).

Tea Around Town DC – \$82.50

Tuesday, May 19, 11:45 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

For a unique experience, enjoy a delicious afternoon tea while also enjoying the historic sights of our nation's capital aboard the "[Tea Around Town](#)" party bus. Leave the driving, cooking, and tea brewing to others as you enjoy this one-of-a-kind afternoon tea experience.

The price includes 14 savory and sweet items and tea, of course. [Registration on the LLI website](#) is available now and closes May 10. Your payment by check or cash is due to [Bonnie Hopley](#) by May 10.

Tour meeting location, accessibility, and further details are available online. Participants are responsible for getting to the meeting place.

Ball-Sellers House Tour – Free

Wednesday, June 17, 11:00 a.m., Arlington

The Ball-Sellers House, built in 1750, is the oldest structure in Arlington County. It is on the National Register of Historic Sites and it is designated a Virginia State Historical Landmark. The house has been restored to its condition from the colonial era. Free, but contributions are welcome. Details [here](#). Trip leader is [Regina Rogers](#).