



LivingLIFE

Spring 2016, Issue 1

LivingLIFE is coordinated, edited and published by LIFE's Communications Committee.

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Welcome to *LivingLIFE!*

Welcome to *LivingLIFE*, the latest incarnation of the LIFE newsletter.

For those of you who have joined LIFE recently, we'd like to extend a special welcome to the LIFE community.

Since its inception 25 years ago, the LIFE Institute has been much more than simply an academic institution.

Being a LIFE member affords opportunities to learn, to contribute, and to socialize.

The lifelong learning movement is truly a revolution. In the U.S., for example, the Osher Foundation supports approximately **150,000** members in over 100 Lifelong Learning Institutes.

Later life learning opportunities abound in Canada as well. At present, the LIFE Institute is the largest such institute in Canada. 50+ learning institutes are growing exponentially throughout Canada, and indeed, around the world.

In our inaugural issue, we will be touching upon various aspects of the LIFE experience. We will use this newsletter as a forum to keep members up-to-date on activities and special events. We also want to provide a flavour of what it is like to be a Moderator, Board Member, Class Host, Committee Member or volunteer in another capacity.

Our plan is to publish five times per year.

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LIFE's 25th Anniversary Event

By Jeanette Browne

Maple Leaf Gardens... the words conjure up warm memories for LIFE members.

That must be why the LIFE 25th Anniversary Luncheon was completely sold out. Or was it that everyone wanted to celebrate the 25 years of life at LIFE? Or perhaps it is because LIFE members know a good party?

And it was a good party! The basketball court was transformed into an elegant dining room with sparkling decorations installed by the organizing committee.



L to R: Jeanette Browne, Milvi Ester, Marcel Deurvorst, Lily Leung, Carol Duncan, Laura Tyson, Terry Poulton

The meal, cooked on site by the Mattamy Centre staff, was delicious and the impressive celebratory cake was decorated by our own volunteers.

During the reception and lunch, we were entertained by the music of the Charles Wright Trio and generous door prizes were distributed to lucky winners.

Finally, local singer Amanda Martinez accompanied by her skilled guitarist offered a *plato fuerte* of Latin rhythm and songs.

Thanks to the 25th Anniversary Committee who worked for six months to make this happen, and to the additional volunteers who helped with the set-up before the event.



L to R: Past LIFE Presidents - Fran Smookler, Jack Marmer, Judith Levkoe, Louise Brousseau, Geoff Arnold, Marg Edgar and Simon Pearson

LIFE Gives Back

LIFE Institute contributes back to Ryerson University in a number of ways.

The Jack Brown Award is a monetary award for students who are actively pursuing the improvement of the quality of life for the aging in today's society. It is given out two times a year – in the fall to a continuing education student and in the spring to full time undergraduate and post-graduate students. Ryerson is very proud of this award. Thank you for your continuing contributions to keep growing the number of awards we can give out.

NOTE: Since LIFE is a registered charity, you are eligible to receive a tax receipt for your donations to the Jack Brown Award.

Secondly, LIFE Institute supported Ryerson by pledging and donating to the last Ryerson Fundraising Campaign. If you are ever in the Sears Atrium in the George Vari Engineering building at the corner of Church and Gould, you will see LIFE Institute's name in lights as part of the Ryerson Circle of donors to the campaign. Thank you, LIFE Institute!

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Did you know...?

- ... the LIFE Institute began in 1991 with a membership of 87 and now has a membership of 1720. Originally, all courses were peer-led. Now LIFE offers a combination of peer-led and lecturer-led courses.
- ... in addition to courses, LIFE offers an array of clubs. Current clubs include topics such as Photography, Computers, Movies, Luncheons, Investing, and Books. Clubs are listed on the LIFE website under the sub-heading *Get Involved*.
- ... LIFE Guided Walks start in late spring and continue throughout the summer and fall. These walks, listed in the Spring Calendar, are led by enthusiastic volunteers who are extremely knowledgeable about Toronto neighborhoods, parks, etc.
- ... LIFE Institute has an Ombuddy program. This program is designed to provide financial support to help pay for membership and/or courses for those individuals who need assistance. Enquire at the LIFE office, either at info@thelifeinstitute.ca or 416-979-5000, ext.6989.
- ... a LIFE Membership Card entitles you to access the Ryerson Library, and to join the Ryerson Recreation and Athletic Centre (RAC) at a reduced rate. Contact the LIFE office to obtain your LIFE Membership Card.
- ... the LIFEcares program sends cards to members who are ill or who are celebrating a special occasion. If you know or hear of someone who should receive a LIFEcares card, contact the LIFE office.
- ... a recent LIFE Institute Survey report done by Ryerson shows the majority (47%) of our members are between the ages of 60-69, with 38% between 70-79, 7% at 80+, and 6% between 50-59.
- ... Spring registration begins April 4th. The calendar will be published on our website in mid-March.
- ... **if you withdraw from a course and are eligible for a refund, you can donate your fees in lieu of a refund.** You will receive a charitable donation tax receipt for the full amount that you paid (the standard administrative fee will be waived). Tax receipts are issued for all donations of \$25 and over.

Volunteering at LIFE: Making a Difference

The LIFE Institute and its member volunteers are the lifeblood of the organization.

Volunteers have allowed this organization to drive forward with its programs, clubs, and special events by getting involved in all aspects of the operation.

From developing the programs and courses, to facilitating those courses as Moderators or hosting the class as Class Hosts, to planning events such as the Welcome Days, Winterfest, Partners in Learning (formerly called March Mingle), to hosting clubs, to being part of the LIFE Board – *all of these activities are driven and done by volunteers.*

We are always looking for new volunteers.

We want to make sure that volunteers feel that their interests and skills are well matched with their volunteer role.

We are in the process of reviewing all the volunteer roles and making sure that volunteers are well informed about the expectations and time commitments.

If you have any questions about volunteering at LIFE or if you want more information please contact Susan Zimmerman, Interim Project Lead by either sending an e-mail to s_zimm@thelifeinstitute.ca or calling 416-979-5000 ext. 6989.

Here are some quotes from a few members who want to share their own experiences as a LIFE volunteer:

“LIFE + Volunteering = Links to others, Inspiration, Fun, and Encouragement.

The more I volunteer at LIFE, the more I see its value. New skills, new knowledge, new friends at LIFE have brought me a new community. We, the members, are that community for each other. Our participation ensures LIFE will continue to thrive.”

Jeanette Browne, Current Board Member, Chair of the Member Engagement Committee

“Leading LIFE classes gives me an opportunity (now that I'm in the 3rd age) to explore material that always interested me, but which I never found the time to examine while employed. It's a challenge, but it's also rewarding on a personal level and rewarding when LIFE members thank you for the course you led.”

Robert Fabian, Moderator, Chair of the Moderator Support Committee

“For me, the primary benefit is the opportunity to give back to the LIFE Institute. As you know, LIFE is a volunteer organization – its survival is dependent on the contributions of its members.

The Class Host tasks suit me. I am somewhat gregarious, I definitely enjoy helping people, and I like the opportunity of working with the lecturer or moderator.

It's a pleasure to work with a group of people that you respect and can relate to.”

Barry Anderson, Class Host, Member of the Class Host Support Committee, Member of the 25th Anniversary Seminar Series

“I have never liked the word ‘volunteering’. It sounds so heroic, melodramatic. In the 10 years I have been a member of LIFE I have discovered that volunteering has more to do with ‘sharing a passion’, whether it is doing a course on my favourite topic, contributing to a committee or being on the Board. ‘Sharing a passion’ is an experience everybody should enjoy at last least once in their life at LIFE. It sure has enriched mine.”

Marcel Deurvorst, Former Board Member, Moderator, Member of the Member Engagement Committee, Off Campus Classroom Supporter

Bob Rae Visits Ryerson: Talking About Reconciliation

At a January 24, 2016 event sponsored by Ryerson's Programs for 50+, hundreds of people turned out to see Bob Rae, former Premier of Ontario speak about the challenge of Reconciliation and the steps we need to take towards self-government.

As a lawyer, negotiator, mediator, and arbitrator, with a particular focus on first nations, aboriginal, and governance issues, Mr. Rae was able to impart on the audience some relevant historical facts and perspective that underline the urgency of rising to the unresolved challenges created hundreds of years ago with the colonization of indigenous people.

He spoke about how we are the inheritors of fundamental misunderstandings around the "discovery" of America, which was already populated by some 20 million indigenous peoples along the coasts from the Arctic Circle to Tierra del Fuego.

The challenge is that we are living in the aftermath of the colonial experience – where dysfunction was created and remains unresolved. He proposed that we need an agreement on a political agenda to put substance to the idea of reconciliation to not only learn about the nature of the relationship with First Nations and what happened through the colonization experience, but also develop a serious political agenda to move towards self-government.



This will work towards addressing past actions from the time of colonization to present day – including setting up the administrative/ governance structures of reserves, taking children away from their families, and cutting their hair, changing their clothes and not allowing them to speak their language – which, together, have amounted to a form of cultural genocide.

There will continue to be a challenge to find the collective will across jurisdictions. In fact, some bands are systemically opposed to each other.

There is a need to understand the nature of violence on First Nations reservations, and the issues around missing and murdered women.

There is a need to factor in the ongoing changes to on and off reserve living. Currently there is a huge depopulation from reserves to urban centres: today, 25% of Thunder Bay's population comprises aboriginal residents, while in Edmonton that number is about 30%.

The bottom line: we need to go from the 94 recommendations outlined in the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in 2015, to a practical, working agenda.

There is unfinished business.

There is a need to learn.

And there is a need to ensure that at the end of the learning there is a fundamental change and a sense of how we move forward.

Board Activities

As you may know, through your participation in LIFE courses, you are also a member of the LIFE Institute. Most of our members know us for the wonderful courses that are on the roster each term. Quite a few members volunteer to enable many of the courses and special events hosted throughout the year. And as you probably know, the LIFE Institute is a non-profit, charitable organization that is governed by a volunteer board of directors. The membership elects the Board annually at our AGM. Presently we have 14 people who serve on the Board. Our board members have a cross section of life and professional experiences providing valued talent, perspective, insight and they often roll up their sleeves in service to the organization. Right now, we are examining the implications of LIFE's undisputed success. We have experienced double digit growth for several successive years and are now in the world of big numbers... just last month, we reached the 1700 membership level. With growth at 8 to 10% a year, we'll reach 2,000 in short

order. The organization has experienced this organic growth largely by word of mouth, and the Board is at work to understand the implications of our growth and adopt actions that ensure we continue to deliver on our mission.

Within the next few months, we will have a defined plan to address current and future growth. We will have greater clarity on how we work (both as volunteers and through our staff) to ensure continuity and consistency over time. Once we crossed the 800 membership mark a few years ago, we found ourselves in a more complex operating model.

At 1700, we know that meeting the needs and expectations of our membership requires clear thinking, clear strategies, dedicated resources to execute the many tasks at hand, and a system that integrates all that we do to ensure the outcomes you've come to expect and enjoy.

We'll keep you posted on our progress. Thanks for your support.



Virginia Bosomworth
President, LIFE Institute



LIFE Board Members			
Executive Committee		Board	
Virginia Bosomworth	President	Diane Abbey-Livingston	Charlotte Snider
Monty Hyde	Vice-President, Governance	Barbara Atlas	Marilyn Wright
Howat Noble	Vice-President, Operations	Dennis Bockus	Sharon Zeiler
Alan Lavine	Treasurer	Jeanette Browne	Sandra Kerr, Ex-Officio
Barbara Williams	Secretary	Diane Schulman	

So what IS Programs for 50+ anyway?

Programs for 50+

... is the campus home for a wide variety of non-credit programs for any adult 50+ who wants to continue to learn, to be connected to the world today and to be involved in the community. The 50+ programs are under the umbrella of the Chang School, which is the Continuing Education (CE) branch for Ryerson University. The oldest of these programs, LIFE Institute and ACT II STUDIO have been part of Programs for 50+ for 25 years.

LIFE Institute began as membership only, volunteer-led and self-directed learning partnership. LIFE had registered itself as a not for profit charitable organization and it was not until its fifth or sixth year that it officially

partnered with Ryerson's CE faculty to offer lecture-led courses.

At the same time, Programs for 50+ also had a sister program developing in ACT II STUDIO – a theatre school which grew out of a couple of courses in acting and today focuses on teaching acting, directing and playwriting skills to older adults. ACT II has grown and expanded to include a membership-driven unit that allows them to take their works out in to the community and help raise funds to sustain the STUDIO program.

Programs for 50+ now has eight other ongoing active program opportunities open to not only LIFE Institute members but **any** older adult in the public.

These include the Caring Clown Program, Conversational Connections (with Ryerson international students), 50+ Lecture Series, 50+ Festival, a Film Club, a new Music program along with an outreach program through Baycrest at the Wagman and Apotex Centres, and workshops and presentations around aging in the workforce. Programs for 50+ is a model for other institutions throughout Ontario and Canada.

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Be Considerate

As a courtesy to your fellow LIFE members, if you know that you are going to be away for several classes please do not register for the course. If you do register but find that you cannot attend, please withdraw as soon as possible so the LIFE office can add a member from the waitlist. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

In Memoriam

From time to time, we receive sad news about one of our members passing on.

With permission from the family, we will publish information about the deceased member.

Please send this information to info@thelifeinstitute.ca.

The Back Page

To make sure this newsletter is interesting and useful for members, on behalf of the Communication Committee (Tresa Labaj, Ruth Lerner, and Susan Zimmerman) we welcome your feedback.

We also invite members to submit story ideas for consideration by the Communication Committee and to join the Committee if you have the urge to let your inner writer shine.

Please send your feedback or story ideas to Susan Zimmerman, at s_zimm@thelifeinstitute.ca.

PRESENTED by
Programs for 50+

SAVE THE DATE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1–
SATURDAY, JUNE 4, 2016

RYERSON UNIVERSITY CAMPUS



50+
Festival

Discover new possibilities

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fiftyplusfestival.ca