The evening of April 13 was a busy one in Pittsburgh. A presidential primary candidate was speaking at the Convention Center; the Penguins were on the ice in a Stanley Cup playoff game; the Pirates were on the field in a night game—and members of Osher at CMU were in McConomy Auditorium, holding our 24th annual meeting, an event capped by a talk by Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto.

President Joe Shirk thanked the leadership team, the university liaison, and the office staff for their work and support during the past year. He noted that an organization like ours, with educated, opinionated members, is both a pleasure and a challenge to leaders.

Vice President John Olmsted spoke of the growing use of online registration and of our efforts to increase our collaboration with the university. We again supported the International Film Festival and will be supporting the undergraduate research symposium this May.

After the report of the Nominating Committee, the members elected the following officers and board members: John Olmsted, president; Alan James, vice president; Rosalie Barsotti, secretary; and Greg Wright, treasurer. Linda Bishoff, Jane Cordisco, Jeffrey Holst, Allan Hrobar, Patricia (Pat) Schroder, Jeffrey Swoger, and Greg Wright were elected to the board.

Awards and recognitions culminated the meeting. Members for 20+ years stood and were recognized, and Joe Shirk noted that five founding members were among the 20+ year members listed in the Annual Report.

Former presidents were invited to stand and were applauded. Gloriana St. Clair was honored for her many valuable services to our lifelong learning program. A board member since 2004, she has served as secretary and university liaison as well as a study leader. Outgoing President Joe Shirk was presented with a canvas print duplicating the cover design of the 24th Annual Report distributed at the meeting (shown below).

After the meeting ended, Joe Shirk welcomed Mayor Bill Peduto, who came to talk about the achievements and challenges he sees in Pittsburgh today.

continued on page 5
Wow, my last letter as president of this wonderful organization! By the time you read this, we will have had our annual meeting, and Osher @ CMU will have a new slate of officers leading the board of directors.

During my term as president, there has been a complete change of leadership at our host, Carnegie Mellon University. At CMU we have a new university president, a new provost, and a new liaison. Visionaries, bringing the university to the forefront of world-class education and research, compose the new leadership team; however, they have limited knowledge of our history or the role our Osher Longitudinal Learning Institute (formerly A.L.L.) has had with this prestigious university.

Your Executive Committee and the executive director have been working diligently in preparing and presenting formal presentations to this group to illustrate the history of our organization at CMU and the benefits Osher brings to the university and to the community. Osher @ CMU is the de facto continuing education arm of CMU serving the Greater Pittsburgh area—especially the Oakland/Shadyside/Squirrel Hill neighborhoods surrounding the campus—where over half of our members reside. Studies show that 53% of our members live within two miles of campus.

Not only do we serve the community’s needs for continuing education, for participating in physical activities and developing friendships with like-minded individuals—we offer the opportunity for members to gather in a variety of settings and venues to enrich the social component of life so important for us seniors.

In addition to developing a bond with the new leadership team at the university, we have been developing relationships with key departments that can assist us in improving our program offerings. Perhaps most important and challenging have been our preparations and presentations to the university in requesting new and consolidated classroom space. The university is rapidly expanding the campus to meet its needs for new classrooms, offices, and laboratories. Our needs are among many requests from departments within the university. We can only be successful in this quest if we make a compelling case for our value to the university, and we believe that our presentations meet this criterion. In addition, if successful in our quest for additional space, we must be be able to financially support the improvements to the physical space that will be needed for proper classroom and office requirements.

In addition to working on these major projects, your leadership team has seen a major reorganization on many of the committees—having those with financial expertise working on the financial committees, those with personnel expertise working on the personnel committees, etc.

Also, we have developed the concept of special interest groups: dining out, bridge, arts and music, and so forth. If you have an idea for such a group; we are prepared to assist you. Of special note this year was initiating the practice of inviting foreign students to our homes to celebrate Thanksgiving for this traditional American holiday—making long-term friendships with students from around the globe.

2017/2018 will be a landmark for Osher—it will be our 25th anniversary here at CMU. Stay tuned for the many activities that will be planned to celebrate this momentous occasion.

I would be remiss if I did not thank our university liaison, Vice Provost for Education Amy Burkert, for her guidance, assistance, and expertise in our efforts to expand our relationships within the university and in our preparations of the presentation requesting additional space to meet our growing membership needs.

Also, I would particularly like to thank our Executive Director/Registrar Lyn Decker and her staff: Chris Dashti and Chelsea Prestia, for their professional and tireless support in the day-to-day operations...
From the President
Continued from page 2

tions of the organization. I thank them for the professional course catalogues, the improvements to the online registration system, for the support to the various working committees, and—most important—for assisting our members on the telephone, via email, and in person at the office, on the everyday issues that arise in an organization involving thousands of members, hundreds of classes, and scores of committees. They are truly the glue that holds us together. I cannot thank them enough.

It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve as a board member, treasurer, vice president, and president these past eight years here at Osher @ CMU.

Sincerely,
Joe Shirk

Osher Surveys Members About Mobility Needs
by Joan Morse Gordon

Considering the difficulty some of our 2,200 members might have in negotiating their way from home to classroom, our board of directors instituted a study to find out. Dr. Janel Sutkus, Carnegie Mellon’s director of institutional research and analysis, designed a survey that she presented as three journeys—from home to campus, parking to the building door, and from that door to the Osher classrooms. Almost 800, a successful response, helped clarify members’ needs and concerns.

For the first journey, from home, Jim Reitz is investigating many possibilities, from carpooling to Access, Uber, Lyft, Zcab, and CMU shuttles with off-site parking. We should have the survey committee’s results in our next issue.

Osher members, for the most part, are able to negotiate the second journey. The options there—valet parking, motorized cart, wheelchair—were mentioned. The costs of implementing and maintaining such a service are significant, and grant funding would be needed to initiate it.

Just a few members showed concern about the third journey—from the building door to the classroom seat. Individuals needing this assistance may work with their health providers and with interested volunteers to transport them.

The final part of the survey asked members to respond as to the relative importance of the various frequently used locations. CMU core campus was most important to over 500 participants, followed by Mellon Institute, the Friends Meeting House, and Wilkins Community Center.

The committee welcomes all suggestions.

Joe Shirk speaking at the Study Leaders Workshop

Byron Gottfried and other members attempting to build a robot in Norton Gusky’s class on Emerging Educational Technology
Great Conductors: A Great Course
By Joan Gaul

Jeffrey Swoger brought a lifelong love of music, a large collection of CDs and videos, and years of experience listening to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to his Great Conductors course. The class received a multimedia exploration of the role of the conductor and a visual and aural experience of six of his favorites: Arturo Toscanini and Leopold Stokowski, Fritz Reiner and George Solti, Herbert Van Karajan and Leonard Bernstein.

Each class was preceded by an email outline, warts-and-all bios of the conductors to be discussed, and a list of the music to be heard. This gave participants advance food for discussion, which Jeffrey promoted after his initial talk, between the video clips of or about each conductor, and the music segments.

The engaged and knowledgeable class loved the subject and made for the liveliness you hope to find in a room full of grownups. An especially enjoyable aspect of the course is that the videos appeared when expected and the music was heard seamlessly thanks to Linda Swoger, Jeffrey’s wife and business partner, who mastered Osher’s often quirky AV system.

It was such a varied and well-prepared class that I asked Jeffrey how he came up with the format. He said he had wanted to teach an Osher class, but didn’t know where to begin. Music seemed a natural. He asked around and was advised to keep it short. Otherwise there might have been two more conductors.

Ninety-five percent of the material used was from his own collection. He supposed the actual organization came out of the way of thinking that developed during his 50 years as head of his Chicago design firm.

Never having taught before, he was unsure that anyone would sign up and terrified at the thought of teaching if they did. Turned out there was no need for worry. The class was so over-subscribed that he repeated it in the second session. Evaluations were uniformly high.

How did Jeffrey feel about the class? He was thrilled that people were interested enough to come and found it a “meaningful experience.” Will the Swogers do more? Some possibilities were mentioned that I hope will come to fruition.

In addition to the sheer enjoyment of the class, there was for me, a non-musician, a learning bonus. Recently, at a PSO rehearsal, I understood for the first time how it was for the conductor to ask the musicians to produce the music in his head, and for the musicians to produce those sounds. Two nights later at the concert, I heard those sounds and no longer assumed that they were simply there.

At Holiday Party last December: Top from left: Lyn Decker, Chelsea Prestia, Chris Dashti. Above: Jayne Keffer welcomes guests
Registering Across The Digital Divide
By Filomena Conti

Did you receive your Summer 2016 Osher catalog within the two-week period from the date Osher emailed membership the go-ahead signal to register online? If you didn’t, you were in good company: Neither did the Osher office, Registrar Lyn Decker at her home, or I, myself, to mention a few. Luckily for me, my guardian angel—it had to be my guardian angel—urged me to register immediately, and I did. (What helped me was that previously when the catalog went online, I viewed it and made notes of classes that I was interested in.)

What went wrong with the catalog delivery? Well, as the kids say today, it’s complicated. Could have been the CMU mailing office, the post office receiving point, the distribution point, or the delivery point. Who knows? (And, believe it or not, some members received their catalogs beyond the anticipated two-week period.)

What is important is how Lyn Decker and her staff reacted. Every effort was made to help members who called or visited the office to be registered for the summer term.

While this snag of incomplete delivery was an annoyance for everyone, for the 20 percent of our membership who prefer to register on paper, this was a real inconvenience. That’s the digital divide we need to address. Gloriana St. Clair, Osher member and former dean of CMU Libraries, believes very strongly that those members who do not use a computer to register must be given every opportunity possible to register in a timely way. Lyn Decker agrees, and the office makes every effort that non-online registrants are accommodated. Immediately upon alerting the membership by email that online registration is open, the registration papers that have been received in the office are input to the system.

Both Lyn and Gloriana suggest that if a member does not have a computer at home, the Hunt Library and all branches of the Carnegie Library have computers available. If a member does not feel sufficiently computer literate, find a buddy or friend to help with registration. If you’re really lucky, try asking a young grandchild to help.

By the way, something really interesting about the 20 percent of Osher members who prefer registering on paper: Osher members range in age from the 40s to the 90s, yet surprisingly it’s the 60s to 70s group that prefers paper registration. However you wish to register, Lyn Decker and her office staff will do their best to accommodate you.

Mayor Peduto Speaks After Annual Meeting
Continued from page 1

The mayor described his process of choosing a new police chief. Meetings with communities in the city developed ideas about characteristics desired in candidates, and the chief was chosen after a nationwide search.

Mr. Peduto is especially proud of a program that will bring free Wi-Fi to city senior centers and recreation centers. He spoke of “Rec to Tech,” where kids might learn coding in rec centers, and seniors could be introduced to the Internet, moving Pittsburgh’s parks and recreation centers toward the future.

Mr. Peduto sees challenges as well as gains from success. For example, how can we make East Liberty a community for all when the market is working against that goal? Another challenge is to “keep Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh.” The mayor doesn’t want to lose Pittsburgh’s specialness. We agree. Our Osher Lifelong Learning program is part of what makes Pittsburgh special, and the mayor’s talk was an extra-special part of our Annual Meeting evening.
I don’t know if I watched too many episodes of Project Runway or experienced a late-life crisis, but in January I bought a new sewing machine. If you think registering for Osher classes tests your use of technology, try this screen!

The last time I used a sewing machine for hems was in 1995 on an inherited Kenmore sewing machine. It bit the recycling dust bin at age 40. The last time I sewed a garment was in my 1963 home ec class. But those details didn’t discourage wonderful new projects from sugarplumming in my head. Taggy blankets for the two new grandbabies. New curtains. A new slipcover. Home decor that would add glamour to my worn-out living room. Out of an array of Brothers, Janomes, Berninas, Singers, and Kenmores, I bought a Babylock on sale from a local Mt. Lebanon sewing shop that provides instruction and knowledgeable salespeople. At the store I watched a bobbin and threading demonstration before bringing the shiny new Baby Katherine home (each model has a friendly yet elegant name).

At home the thread stubbornly wound around the base of the spool, not on the bobbin. I couldn’t get the automatic threader to work either. I dug through a box of attachments and found the instruction booklet: 168 pages of small print. On page 28 I found “Thread the upper body.” With the thread between my forefinger and thumb, I followed a dotted line 1 through 8 on the cute face of Baby Katherine. I pushed a button that lowered my needle into the material and then pulled a latch. Katherine refused to sew. Throwing the manual back into the box, I called the shop to sign up for free classes.

At class I took detailed notes. “The J foot is for regular sewing. The R foot for a blind hem. Decorative stitches require the N foot. Overcasting zig-zag is the job for a G foot and for buttons, the M foot. I foot is for zippers. We used the button hole foot and the open toe foot . . . .”

By the end of the two-hour class I could thread the bobbin without it looking like teased hair. The threading of the needle was solved when the instructor said, “Whenever you’re threading, be sure your pressure foot is up.” A warning not to be found in the instruction manual. In the three months since I bought my Babylock, I have spent $600, four days in the learning curve and completed four taggy blankets.

Now on to slipcovers.
Revisiting an Old Acquaintance with an Interesting New Study Leader

By Rosalyn Treger

Many of us Osher members choose classes to explore areas outside our comfort zones. But sometimes the experience is just the opposite. An entry in the Winter-Spring catalog jumped off the page for me: “The Genius of Henry James,” a course to focus on the novel *The Portrait of a Lady*. Back when I was English majoring more than 60 years ago, we read a lot of Henry James, and *Portrait of a Lady* was a familiar title. I had not read or thought much about James or his work in the years since, and I soon found myself in an unusual class taught by a most unusual study leader.

Carol Zisowitz is a practicing psychiatrist. She began her professional career earning a Ph.D. in history at Harvard University. She remembers an infuriating experience in a seminar during those studies. The women served tea to the men, remembering who took lemon, who cream, etc. They weren’t allowed to sit down until after they served the tea, when the seminar had already started. After earning her doctorate, she found that opportunities for college teaching in history were scarce and not very satisfying, and at 35, she entered medical school and trained in psychiatry. There was a connection—she had always been interested in cultural history and had written several articles and books about the history of emotions, for example, *Anger: the Struggle for Emotional Control in America’s History*.

In graduate school she loved literature and especially enjoyed fiction. She has been interested in James since she first read *Portrait* in graduate school. Because of her interest in James, she loved Colm Toibin’s 2004 book *The Master*, a celebrated novel described by John Updike as about James’s “inward life” at the end of the 19th century.

We can thank our well-known waiting list for leading Carol to teaching our Osher class. She had heard about our program and learned that teaching a class would shorten the wait for membership. And she loved teaching the class. At first she thought no one would sign up, then found that there was a waiting list for seats in the intimate setting of the Osher conference room.

We were a varied group: some new to James; one who said she never read fiction at all; one very familiar with James, who was attracted to the topic and the study leader’s bio; one eager to revisit an old, faintly remembered acquaint-

ance. Carol provided background information about the author’s life, the critical reception of the novel, and the style of life in the novel’s setting—all topics never touched on in my English majoring days of the 1950s, when we focused only on “the text.”

She stimulated lively discussions—how did James contrast American life and English life? Why did the young, beautiful Isabel Archer, innocent, confident, and adventurous, and suddenly wealthy, decide to marry the odious Osmond? And what did we make of the ambiguous ending? And she challenged us to write something in James’s complex, insightful style.

Only one student met the challenge: Jim Reitz read to us a moving, insightful description of his meeting his wife, Mary Heath, whose loss he was still grieving. It was a most memorable moment in a very special class taught by a study leader new to Osher, who says she loved teaching Osher students and hopes to do it again soon. We hope so too.
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Carnegie Mellon

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Published once per trimester for members of Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Carnegie Mellon

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