

Jim Canavan: this bulldog embarks on UNC Asheville experience

(continued)

by Judy LaMée

Jim exudes enthusiasm for OLLI, its programs and people, as well as for the entirety of the UNC Asheville. “I met [Executive Director] Catherine Frank and [Projects Manager] Lynn Spaight even before moving to Asheville. Over a shared lunch with them, I developed great respect for the outstanding work that happens here. Joining OLLI as campus liaison, it’s extended that pleasure getting to know many of the Steering Council, volunteers and other members. I’m fond of saying, ‘If this OLLI didn’t exist, we’d have to invent it!’ It’s an intellectual fountain of youth, which actually becomes a tremendous factor in wellness. This OLLI is on steroids!” He remarks on the fact that OLLI’s membership is 2300, juxtaposed with a 3800 enrollment at UNC Asheville, as terrific testament to its success.

Previously director of Community Teamwork, Inc., a large anti-poverty program in Lowell, Massachusetts, Jim sees opportunities here to expand inclusivity efforts as well as intergenerational learning, efforts already included in the strategic plans of OLLI and the university. He’s quick to encourage more OLLI members to enjoy on-campus opportunities, especially first-rate athletics programs.

A natural storyteller, Jim shares early experiences as a Boston cab driver and a stint at Massachusetts General Hospital in resident services. Whatever hat he is wearing, he fully embraces the role: its needs, people, and programs.

It’s easy to agree with Jim when he says, “The future is bright here at OLLI, with its intellectually challenging programming and wonderfully skilled and experienced members and staff. We really are all in this together.”