



Why I Love OLLI — A New Chapter Full of Surprises

When I retired at the end of August 2022, I left a job I truly loved. But my husband made it clear: retirement couldn't mean doing nothing. So, like many of us do these days, I turned to Google and searched, "What to do when you retire?" One of the top suggestions was education. That got me thinking—maybe USF has something for seniors? A quick search led me straight to OLLI, and I was immediately intrigued.

I called the office, signed up right away, and the very next day I had a catalog in hand (thanks, Charise!). I was especially curious about the SIGs, and that curiosity turned into action pretty quickly.

I joined the **Outdoors SIG** in September 2022, started hiking, and haven't stopped since. Month after month, I've explored local parks and even a few state parks. Honestly, I had no idea how much natural beauty surrounds us — our county, our city, our state — it's breathtaking. Then I found the Bike SIG and jumped right in. It's been so much fun discovering all the biking trails I never knew existed.

What I didn't realize at first (but was thrilled to learn!) is that you can join as many SIGs as your schedule allows. So, I did just that.



First up was **Food Glorious Food**. I've always loved cooking, so this one was a no-brainer. I volunteered to lead the SIG's Lunch Bunch and joined the ABC Cooking Club. Our monthly meetups are a joy — great food, shared recipes, and lots of laughs.



Then there's **Hablemos**, where I get to practice my native language and help others do the same. Our Zoom conversations are lively, and the lunch outings to local Latin American restaurants are a real treat — delicious food and even better company.

I also joined **Talking Movies**, which I absolutely love. It's fascinating to hear everyone's different take on the movie of the month. The discussions are always engaging, and I walk away seeing the film through new eyes.

Beyond the SIGs, the OLLI classes and day trips have been amazing. From airport tours to behind-the-scenes visits to WEDU-PBS, there's always something new to learn and experience. Some of my favorite classes have been about Tampa's history, which have helped me connect even more with our local community. And the field trip classes

-- fantastic. Walking tours in Ybor, art sessions at the Tampa Museum of Art, wellness workshops: each one has been meaningful and fun

OLLI has truly changed my life in retirement. It's given me purpose, connection, learning, and — most importantly — friendships. I'm so grateful for the people I've met and the memories I've made (with more to come!).

Thank you, OLLI, for opening up this incredible new chapter.

—Grizelle Aldea, article and pictures