



Meet... Anne Christner

Olli South Facilitator



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# Snapshot

## A Class Member's Review

"I have to say the class was so well done that when it ended, we participants were a bit bereft that we wouldn't see each other next week."

Member comment from Anne's last course evaluation

# Living life one 'Why' at a time

"Why? Why? WHY?"

"All kids ask 'why' but I was a kid who never stopped asking 'why'," Anne Christner says as she reflects on her childhood. That questioning continues to this day and plays a prominent role in the multitude of Anne's classes she facilitates.

"Multitude" is an understatement: Anne is a Platinum facilitator, reflecting the more than 45 classes she has led since becoming part of OLLI in 2009. Her classes are known for putting historical events, issues and people into perspective. She leads discussions not only about the what, but about the how and the why.

That's reflected in the title of her winter, 2026 class: "Generations in America: How and why do they differ?"

"We all know of the different generations, from pre-World War I to the 'greatest generation' to boomers and Gen-X and on. What are these generations and what led to the labels? It's good to walk down memory lane and reflect on everything from divorce rates to finances to cultural and political events that affected those generations."

Anne's curious nature was developed as the daughter of an oil company chemical engineer who unlike many engineers had a passion for such things as literary classics and orchestral music. Family vacations always focused on learning, from visiting museums to exploring nature, historical sites and different cultures near where Anne, her parents and three sisters camped out.

"Dad wanted to raise children who had character, integrity, honesty, and a purpose in life. He never told us we couldn't do things."

At her St. Louis high school Anne sang, was involved in student council, chaired a planning committee for an annual school dance, and learned she had printer's ink in her blood when she edited the yearbook.

She followed her parents to the University of Oklahoma majoring in home economics after which she married a man who entered the Navy. It was off to Japan where she learned the art of self-sufficiency as her husband was at sea nine

months of the year. She had her son, took some classes, directed the base preschool and at the library absorbed everything she could learn about Japan.

A defining moment came when she looked at her base ID card to see that she was listed as "DEPENDENT" in big black letters.

"It was then I knew I was a feminist."

Three years later it was back to the states and a string of life events: moving to a Naval base in Norfolk, Virginia and then to Naval Station Newport in Rhode Island, the birth of her daughter, a master's degree in consumer

health issues, and became a consultant writing reports and evaluations for non-profit organizations.

She retired and moved to Colorado in 2008 to be near family and quickly got involved in such endeavors as volunteering at Rocky Mountain PBS. It was there that she mentioned to somebody her eagerness to continue learning. She was told about OLLI.

As is her want when moving to a new place, Anne went to a library and immersed herself in Colorado History. That led to her first facilitated OLLI class: "The History of Colorado."



## Behind-the-Scenes

OLLI member volunteers provide essential roles in the learning experience. Anne's devotion is a prime example of this critical support in OLLI South's success.

- Served three years on the OLLI South Curriculum Committee and chaired the History and Economics Subcommittee
- Copy edited course proposals for clarity and optimal appeal
- Rejoined the OLLI South Curriculum Committee in 2024
- Co-led a special task force to update and tighten up the OLLI South Noon Show format in 2025

economics from the University of Oklahoma, and joining the faculty at the University of Rhode Island where she became an assistant professor of consumer affairs.

Ever the learner, she earned a Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Massachusetts so she could be eligible for tenure at the University of Rhode Island. Unfortunately, a woman's opportunity for advancement at the university was limited so she left the academy. (The university later settled a discrimination lawsuit filed by women faculty members.)

The printer's ink in her blood resurfaced. She joined the Providence Bulletin's newsroom as a copy editor and rediscovered her love for language, was an editor at a business-to-business publication dealing with behavioral

Her class titles illustrate her passion for continuous learning on a variety of topics. Among those titles are: "Archaeology — It's Way More than Digging for Treasures!", "Taboo Texts: A History of Book Banning in America", "The Women's Movement (1960-2020): A Case Study in Social Change", "Social Influences on What We Eat: The American Story", and her first class: "A History of Colorado."

"I'm a product of time and family, and I don't want to be an unproductive adult," says Anne. "I enjoy the chance to offer OLLI participants opportunities to stretch their thinking, while conferring with each other; OLLI folks have widely different life experiences that inform their knowledge and views."

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