The Tufts Institute for Learning in Retirement (TILR) began with a letter to President John DiBiaggio in 1999 detailing the advantages of an ILR type program at Tufts similar to those being offered at other Universities. With many area alumni and residents interested in lifelong learning, and input from Dean Rob Hollister (Dean of the Graduate School and now Dean of Tisch College) who had already reviewed the idea, the project was assigned to former Dean Mel Bernstein to develop a program.

The Tufts Alumni Council responded enthusiastically to the idea and made a financial commitment that would allow the program to begin and a “startup” committee was formed to develop a business plan for the program. That initial committee included Usha Sellers and Robyn Gittleman, as co-chairs, David Burke, Doug Samoloff, Bob and Norma Sears, Bobbi Knable, and Marilyn Blumsack. Once organized, the original Curriculum Committee recruited a nascent group of study group leaders and eight study groups were offered in the fall of 2008.

In the fall of 2010 the Tufts Osher Lifelong Learning Institute celebrates its tenth anniversary with over 500 regular members who continue to learn in more than 75 study groups each year. We welcome everyone to come open the door to lifelong learning. Congratulations to all of us.
The Tufts Osher Lifelong Learning Institute has been a catalyst for educational engagement in our community as well as a model for other such programs throughout the country. The study groups offered provide opportunities for you, our members, to participate in and gain further understanding of topics of every discipline. Each term you rediscover the joy of learning and are motivated to enjoy yourself and be enriched by the experience. We are grateful to so many people for providing this mélange of opportunities and want to acknowledge their time and effort.

Please, come with me “behind the scene” as I acquaint or reacquaint you with some of these exceptional people: First, our program coordinator, Lisa Trapasso Verdile, married to Chuck Verdile for almost three years, and in April will give birth to their son. Lisa is responsible for the design and production of all our flyers, posters, and catalogues. She maintains the office in grand style and is respected by old and new members alike. I am sure you agree that her professionalism is impeccable and outstanding. We congratulate both Chuck and Lisa and hope she hurry back after her maternity leave to resume her stellar position in our program.

Our Fletcher interns: Elisa Perry, Blake Ratcliff, and Mariam Jalalzada who, like all our graduate interns, are remarkable young people.

Osher LLI Summer Session June 1-10, 2010 Study Groups

A sample of the exciting study groups being offered this summer:

• The Emeralds Necklace: Restoring the Vision and Preserving the Olmsted Legacy and Tour of Back Bay Fens
• “Passionless Moments” to “Bright Star”: The films of Jane Campion
• “Unaccustomed as I am to Public Speaking…”
• Wine Regions of France: New vs. Old World
• The Boston Women’s Heritage Trail: The Women of the North End and The Women of the South End
• Progressive Dinner: Home Economics, From the Era of Social Reform to the 21st Century
• Skinner, INC: How to Buy and Sell at Auctions and Is There a Treasure in Your Attic?
• Theatrical Violence from Page to State in Shakespeare and Contemporary Plays
• The Year Without a Summer
• Native American Events in New England this Summer
• Music Studies Today

We invite you to view the entire summer catalog available on our website March 22, 2010

http://asc.tufts.edu/lli/
Ivan Rasmussen

Ivan Rasmussen was born in New York City, but grew up in Danville, Kentucky, where his father was an English professor at Centre College. He attended local schools through high school and played soccer. Centre College had a program whereby students studying abroad were accompanied by their professors and after his graduation, Ivan accompanied his father on one of these trips and spent a year living in Strasbourg and taking college level courses on the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights. He notes that while he spoke French, not German, he looked more German than French and he was able to feel the hostility that existed near the German border. He developed an interest in the effects of social dynamics and immigration. He applied to colleges and was admitted to Princeton.

During his four years at Princeton, Ivan attended the Woodrow Wilson School of Public Affairs, graduating with a major in International Affairs and Public Policy. While there he was able to arrange for support to travel again to Europe and also to India. During summer breaks, he returned to Danville and worked at a mental health facility where he taught youngsters with learning limitations. At Princeton, he met his girlfriend, Amie Shao, who was majoring in architecture.

After graduation, Ivan and Amie went to China for a year, where he taught English and she worked for an architectural firm. He traveled a great deal through the country, learning the language as he went, and this experience is reflected in his current interest in relations with China and the study group that he is leading in the 2010 Spring Session: Friend or Foe: The US Relationship with China since 1949.

Ivan applied to and was accepted by the Fletcher School where he received his Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy (MALD) in the spring of 2009. He is currently a PhD candidate at Fletcher. During this period, he also worked as a soccer coach at a middle school in Cambridge and as a teaching assistant at the graduate level before becoming a student intern for the Osher LLI.
Sixth Annual National Conference of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
by Jayson Brodie, Executive Board Chair

I had the pleasure of joining Marilyn Blum-sack, the Director of the Tufts University Osher LLI, at the three-day meeting of the Sixth Annual National Conference of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute held this year in Park City, Utah, among the towering mountains. I was not alone as a first time participant with 50 percent of the 249 conference attendees in that category.

At the opening of the conference, Mary Bitterman, president of The Bernard Osher Foundation, announced a special gift from Bernard and Barbro Osher to all the institutions in the Osher LLI network. The aim of the gift is “to recognize the exceptional contributions of each institute to the community it serves as well as the many challenges that institutes are facing in the wake of the nation’s economic downturn.” Every Osher Lifelong Learning Institute – endowed or not endowed – will receive a special gift of $25,000! If generosity, graciousness, and sensitivity to those around him are any measure of an individual, Bernard Osher is certainly making his mark. To him I say -- THANK YOU.

The success of Osher’s mission can be seen in the most recent count, which indicates that we have 86,000 fellow Osher LLI participants.

After that good news had filtered through the guests, the real work of the conference began. While I was quite busy attending the two general sessions plus three of the available breakout sessions, Marilyn managed to fit in many more of the breakout sessions.

In spite of regional differences, everyone came together to share their ideas and enthusiasm for the aims of the organization or as one speaker paraphrased it, “to ensure that no adult is left behind.” There was a common message through the conference as every aspect of the meeting was aimed at improving on the long string of success stories as lifelong learning blossoms across the country. We see this eagerness for continuing one’s education not only among our colleges and universities but also at libraries, senior centers, and museums. Speaker after speaker urged us to do our part to bring the Lifelong Learning experience to a wider and wider audience. A key message was SHARING and creating “a place to sit, learn, and think about yourself.”

The gracious hospitality provided by the Osher Foundation to all the participants made us feel welcomed and valued at the conference. It was a valuable and enriching experience.

A Message of Appreciation to Our Members
by Sam Brown, Finance Chair

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Tufts receives generous support from Tufts University and from the Bernard Osher Foundation. Their support is meant to augment the money we generate ourselves. We, the members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Tufts, are the primary source of funds through our tuition and our donations. As you know, our LLI is a lively and innovative senior learning program. We can boast a cadre of excellent Study Group Leaders, Tufts Scholars, E-learning courses, plus an exiting EDventures program that enriches us socially and educationally.

To all of you who have made a donation to the Tufts Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Thank You. Your current and future generosity will insure continuation and improvement of the Tufts Osher LLI. We invite all members to make a tax deductible donation.

Please make your check payable to the Trustees of Tufts College, specifying that your donation is to be credited to Osher LLI. Mail to:
Tufts University Advancement Office, 80 George Street, Medford, MA 02155
This strangely charming novel is a story about a housekeeper hired by an agency to take care of a renowned mathematician. Seventeen years earlier he had severely injured his head in a car accident, which left him with a traumatic brain injury – his short term memory lasts for precisely “eighty minutes...no more and no less.”

In an interview with his sister-in-law, the housekeeper is told “Resolve any difficulties without consulting me.” When the housekeeper reports for duty the professor greets her by asking “What’s your shoe size?” Unfazed she tells him, “Twenty-four centimeters.” “That’s a sturdy number,” he says. “It’s a factorial of four...what’s your telephone number?” She gives it to him. “That’s the total number of primes between one and one hundred million.” Every day that she reports to work the same questions are asked, and every day there is another informative explanation of the number’s characteristics.

The professor has gone through nine housekeepers but this one develops a tender relationship with him by looking upon this anomaly as going to a new job every day, and she develops an interest in numbers. Furthermore, she considers herself a consummate professional and is determined to make this work.

She is a single mother of a 10 year old boy whom she begins to bring to work. The professor develops a loving relationship with her son whom he calls Root (he is the only character bearing a name in the novel) because his flat head reminds him of the mathematical sign for a square root. He insists that the housekeeper bring Root with her to work every day.

The Professor wears a suit with notes attached to it to remind him of what he needs to remember. He pins a picture of Root to his suit to remind himself of Root and his new housekeeper. The professor has a beloved baseball player, Enatsu, whose number is 28, the second smallest so-called perfect number (that is, the sum of all its factors excluding the number itself). The professor always makes a fascinating mathematical connection to any number or geometrical shape that comes up. Both he and Root love baseball, but the professor has never been to a baseball game. The housekeeper puts much effort into planning to take Root and the professor to a baseball game and suffers the consequences when his sister-in-law discovers this.

Yoko Ogawa’s *The Housekeeper and the Professor* has been a great success in Japan, selling more than 2.5 million copies. This delicate, wise, and moving book about caring and friendship is written in language that is simple and a joy to read and conveys the excitement of learning and discovery. It can make a math lover out of anybody.

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**An Invitation from the Friendship Group by Regina Kando**

A new **EDventure** began in December with the first meeting of the Friendship Group. We are off to a great start with 12 members. We encourage all those single people—especially you gentlemen—out there to join us. We spent our first meeting getting acquainted and setting the group’s goal: For single men and women, whether divorced, widowed or never married, to socialize and share experiences together.

We are in the planning stages for a visit to the Museum of Fine Arts, timed to coincide with the annual Arts in Bloom exhibit. So all you single guys and gals, check out one of our meetings. We look forward to many exciting adventures and friendships.

Check our activities on the weekly **OSHER LLI E-NEWS**. For more information contact: Regina Kando at 617-776-4829 or reginakando@comcast.net
Movie Review by Cecily Grable

AVATAR
Written and directed by James Cameron. 
Oscar winner for Art Direction, Cinematography, and Visual Effects.

In a nutshell, this is a movie about a marine, Jake, who has been transferred to the planet Pandora on a mission to help convince the local population (Na’vi) to move away and allow military contractors from earth to mine the priceless mineral (Unobtanium). Jake joins a team of biologists who can turn themselves into copies of the Na’vi bodies and, as avatars, infiltrate the local tribe. They discover that the Na’vi have special powers and skills, a unique social order, and a remarkable relationship to their environment.

And what an amazing environment that is! James Cameron has created a spectacular world. There are glorious vistas of wooded forests, snowcapped mountains (some of which hang in the sky), lush canyons, waterfalls, rain forests, and jungles. There are gorgeous flowers, iridescent insects, and birds with unique plumage. Among other creatures there are wild horse-like animals that can be tamed and then controlled by the thoughts of the rider. The viewer feels that he is part of this landscape and is weightless as he is soaring along with the characters over and through this phenomenal place.

Unfortunately the story, while never boring, lacks originality. Powerful Us and Weak Them are separated by mistrust and understanding.

Conflict comes when They have something that We want and will stop at nothing to get. I am reminded of Dances with Wolves from 1990. Another excellent film, District 9, has a similar theme and was also nominated for an academy award this year. While District 9 is very moving, it was a much less popular movie due to a lower budget and a far less attractive cast of characters.

I found Avatar to be highly entertaining and beautiful to the point of being breath taking. It has been said that the groundbreaking visual art of the future will be based in the internet and digital technology. In Avatar, Cameron has turned his imaginative vision into reality in three dimensions complete with color, motion and sound. It is definitely worth seeing, but only in 3D with those glasses, or even better, at an IMAX theatre.

Thank You to The Danish Pastry House by Anna Catalanotto

Have you been enjoying the delicious breads, cookies, and pastries in Alumnae Lounge on Monday and Friday mornings and at Lunch and Learn? These lovely sweets are donated to us by The Danish Pastry House at the corner of Boston Avenue and Winthrop Street, just by the Tufts campus. The Danish Pastry House is a bakery and cafe with a European flavor.

Kathleen Flahive opened The Danish Pastry House in 2004, with her friend Ulla Winkler, a native of Denmark, who found herself constantly craving the pastries she grew up with. Flahive, a 2004 graduate of Tufts University’s Peace and Justice Studies program. All bakery items are made fresh each day, so at the end of the night volunteers from local charities swing by to pick up the extras.

Our Osher LLI program has become a happy and grateful recipient of this generosity.

When you stop by The Danish Pastry House to dine on their sandwiches, soups, and salads, be sure to tell them you are from Tufts Osher LLI and thank them for donating their world-class pastries and delicacies.

Editor’s Note: Thanks go to Anna Catalanotto (Fall 2009 Hospitality Chair) who not only arranged for The Danish Pastry House to donate their pastries to Osher LLI, but also picked them up every Thursday and Sunday nights and delivered them to Alumnae Lounge the next morning.
Hal Miller-Jacobs & Psychodrama of Genesis  by Robert Green

A new study group leader, Hal Miller-Jacobs, and his course, Psychodrama of Genesis, was an intriguing entry to the fall session of the Osher LLI program. Hal has been on the Tufts campus for over 40 years, first as a graduate student and then as a member of the faculty in the Psychology Department teaching Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

When asked about what caused him to consider offering this course, he explained that he had previously “done single session psychodramas on the Bible in several venues with favorable feedback.” It occurred to him that “a series of sessions might be a little more substantial,” and thought, “the Osher LLI program might provide a perfect opportunity to try it out.”

The techniques Hal uses in his study group were learned from the work of Jacob L. Moreno, MD, known as the founder of psychodrama. Hal’s particular take on these techniques was to apply them to looking at the stories of the Bible, especially in Genesis.

As he explained, “I have personally found that approach of examining the story from the perspective of the characters makes the Bible enormously more engaging and I wanted to share this with others.”

Throughout the ages Bible scholars have written much about the meaning of the stories in the Book of Genesis. Hal saw clearly that by reading these scholars, “we are invited to find our own meaning to these stories – yet we rarely do that.” He added, “If we use the psychodrama techniques, wherein we take on the roles of the characters in these stories, we enable ourselves to contribute, and sometimes from that perspective, find additional meaning.”

What might it be like to delve into the conversation between Adam and Eve after their expulsion from Eden? Did both Abraham and Isaac have an insight into God’s plan to test Abraham’s faith on the way to Isaac’s intended sacrifice? Why was Rebekah so ready and willing to leave her home to marry her kinsman, Isaac? What could we have learned if there had been a news reporter who would have asked more probing questions of these characters? The objective of Hal’s course was to draw out from his participants the human side of these Bible characters through the psychodrama devices of role-playing.

The components of the study group were: the reading of the Bible text, the posing of questions not clearly addressed in the text, a search for what explanation scholars might have offered, and the role-play prompted by Hal’s setting the scene. Members of the class compiled a list of questions and attempted to present some answers to them from their research. There was lively discussion about each person’s interpretation of the motives of the Biblical characters. With some hesitation at first but enthusiasm once the role-playing began, the members took turns in imagining themselves to be in the suggested situation. Hal remarked, “I was pleased with the study group’s participation and responsiveness.”

Asked to comment on his expectations for the course, Hal responded, “My hope was that the attendees could ‘get into’ the characters and develop new legends to expand and better understand the Genesis stories. These hopes were mostly realized.” Asked about how he believed the members of the class felt about their participation, he reflected, “I was delighted that several mentioned that the course was fun. While fun was not on my agenda – I was glad the course was described as such. I have heard it said that having fun is an experience that stays with you longer than any form of instruction.”

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Submit letters and articles to the Editor at:
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The Tufts Osher LLI Circle of Members

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