

School bells are ringing-again-for seniors

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by Eileen Beal

Sixty-seven-year-old Fairview Park resident Carol Davis has been a "student" in Cuyahoga Community College's Elder Campus Program/West ever since she heard about it from friends five years ago. "They raved about it [the program]," she says, "so I thought I'd give it a shot."

The former hotel executive (who probably has her nose buried in this semester's Elder Campus catalog as you read this) loves her Friday-only classes-which cover everything from political discussions led by former US Congresswoman Mary Rose Oakar to writing classes taught by local mystery author Les Roberts to astronomy classes taught by scientists from NASA-because they aren't fluff. "They definitely enrich the mind," she says.

And because there are plenty of them. "I always have a hard time picking classes," she admits.

And because they are priced right. A semester's worth of classes and workshops, plus use of all campus facilities available to regular students, costs \$60.

Seventy-year-old Mayfield Heights resident Roslyn Kates has been a "student" in the Oasis Program, a national education program designed to enhance the quality of life for mature adults, at Kaufmann's Department Store in University Heights, for eight years. She likes the program-which offers everything from legal and computer seminars to yoga classes to hands-on nutrition workshops to current events discussion groups-because classes are close to home and real-world focused. "Almost everything I've taken I'm using in my daily life," she says.

Fourteen weeks [i.e., a semester] of classes and programs at Oasis's two 'campuses'-Parmatown Mall's and University Heights' Kaufmann's Department Stores-is a real deal: "It's \$20 a semester," says Kates.

Davis and Kates have discovered what may be one of Northeast Ohio's best kept secrets: the back-to-school bonus that comes with being a senior citizen. Seniors know about the evening and week-end adult education programs in their communities-though they often can't participate in them because of when they are held-and most are also aware of the educational programs that are available to seniors through area arts organizations, such as the Cleveland Museum of Art or the Cleveland Institute of Music. But few are aware of the senior's-only programs offered at area colleges or through organizations such as Oasis.

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These senior-focused programs serve two purposes: "They bring new knowledge to the students-in medicine, in technology, in the social sciences and the arts, so they are intellectually stimulating," says Kathy Manos, Director of Continuing Education at Case Western Reserve University and coordinator of CWRU's Senior Scholars Program.

Intellectual stimulation-mental gymnastics-is an important ingredient in successful aging, says Oasis Program Manager Elizabeth Fiordalis. "Research shows," she says, "that when you use your intellectual ability-discussing things, studying things, reading-that that it keeps the acuity level high as you age."

But mental fitness is just part of the package when people go back to school in their 60s, 70s, 80s- and even 90s-says Janice Dzigiel, director of Tri-C's Center for Applied Gerontology and coordinator of Tri-C's Elder Campus Program. "There is the socialization factor, too," she says. "When people are getting out on a regular basis and friendships are being made people stay actively engaged with life."

For information on 'elder scholar' programs, call:

Baldwin-Wallace's Visitor Status Program 440-826-2297
Case Western Reserve University's Senior Scholar's Program 216-368-2090
Cleveland State University's Project 60 Program 216-687-2000
Cuyahoga Community College's Elder Campus Program 216-987-2274
Kent State University's Senior Guest Program 440-834-4187
Lake Erie College's Senior Audit Program 440-639-7823
Lakeland Community College's Golden Opportunities Program 440-953-7116
Lorain County Community College's Older Adult Free Tuition Program 440-233-7244
Notre Dame College's Senior Growth Program 440-381-1680
Oasis Institute
University Heights Kaufmann's 216-382-2135
Parma Mall Kaufmann's 440-886-1157
The University of Akron's Plus 60 Program 330-972-7111

[Sidebar] **Turning gray has its perks**

And one of them is Program 60, a state-wide program that lets Ohio residents 60 and over audit classes at any state college or university in Ohio-for free. But there are a couple of catches. No college credit is earned for the class, and enrollment is on a space-available basis, so you can only

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enroll in the class on the second day the college or university's semester starts (so college officials know which classes have available space).

You also pay all fees, such as supply fees or student parking fees, connected with the class. For more information, call the continuing education department at your local state college or university.

[Sidebar] **Learning Vacations for active seniors**

Elder Hostel-whose fees cover housing, meals, field-trips, and lectures for one-, two-, and three-week learning vacations-offers those 55 and older an incredible variety of institute- and college-based programs in the US and overseas. For more information, and a hefty free catalog, contact: 877-426-8056.