

# LIVING and





# LEARNING

## Older Adults Make the Grade

ELIZABETH SUNEBY **writer** / PETER BAKER **photographer**

**exams**, term papers, pop quizzes, and being called on in class without warning. Does the mention of these school-related realities make your heart race, muscles tighten, and palms sweat?

Now imagine you can attend classes and simply sit back, listen, and ponder. Learn without regard for entrance into college or graduate school, your GPA, or career advancement.

Learning for the sake of learning—that’s the beauty of attending or auditing classes as an older adult. And just one of the several benefits of participating in classes later in life.

Joan Ingersoll, director of Weston’s Council on Aging (COA), lists many other advantages: the opportunity to pursue new or dive deeper into long-held interests; engage regularly with people; create new connections and friendships; keep the mind engaged and active; maintain curiosity and openness; increase feelings of wellbeing, confidence, and purpose; and decrease loneliness, isolation, and boredom. Deborah Greenwood, Wellesley COA’s director of senior services, sums up the benefits this way: “Maintaining senior health is about far more than preventing or treating issues. Keeping seniors active and socially engaged post retirement can help them lead long and productive lives.”

*left: Bruce Belason, President of Wellesley-Weston Lifetime Learning*



## Living and Learning

Dr. Ipsit Vahia, MD, geriatric psychiatrist, clinician, and researcher who heads the Technology and Aging Laboratory at McLean Hospital underscores the importance of older adults taking classes. He writes in the Harvard Health Blog: “When you exercise, you engage your muscles to help improve overall health. The same concept applies to the brain. You need to exercise it with new challenges to keep it healthy. The process of learning and acquiring new information and experiences, like through structured classes, can stimulate that process.”

Fortunately, local seniors have a range of options available to them and can pick ones that suit their lifestyle and their priorities. Choices

include one-time lectures and ongoing classes offered by adult community education programs, councils on aging, lifelong learning institutes, area colleges, houses of worship, senior living facilities, and more—in person or online; for a fee or for free.

### Wellesley and Weston Councils on Aging Programming

The Towns of Weston and Wellesley Councils on Aging (COAs) each host an array of learning opportunities—both free and for a fee, over Zoom and in person.

Wellesley’s COA offers lifelong learning classes, book discussions, technology assistance, lectures, and more. Topics range from current events to world history to Shakespeare. Priority is given to residents 60 years or older. If space permits, non-residents 60 years old or over are welcome.

*“I’ve lived in Weston for 40 years, the first 25 years I was enmeshed in the corporate world. So when I retired, I faced a dilemma: we hadn’t raised children in town, didn’t belong to local organizations or a church, and our families and close friends were scattered across the country. How to begin anew as a senior with no local connections? I thank my lucky stars that I signed up for a watercolor class at the Council on Aging. One course led to another and then a variety of activities. I developed new interests and made wonderful friends. I was delighted to discover I could offer something in return leading classes in handwriting analysis, polymer clay, and short stories, and serving as a front desk volunteer and as a member of the Arts Council.”*

► **Kat Fast**







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*"I became involved with the COA to strengthen my connection with Weston. After many years volunteering with the schools, when my children left home, I felt a void. The COA has introduced me to a brand new community. One that surprised me with its vibrancy and has given me the opportunity to enjoy many new experiences with new friends."*

► **Joan Heilbronner, Weston COA Board Member**

Any resident of Weston 60 years or older is eligible to participate in Weston's COA in-person or online programming. Typical offerings include conversational Spanish; lectures about artists, historical figures, destinations around the world, current events; and health-related topics such as managing arthritis and communication strategies for dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Programs are free, other than those that involve trips, meals, or supplies.

#### **Wellesley-Weston Lifetime Learning**

Wellesley-Weston Lifetime Learning (WWLL) is the second oldest lifetime learning organization in the country and one of the few not affiliated with an institution of higher education. The nonprofit was started in 1976 to provide "intellectual stimulation, vigorous discussion, and good fellowship." WWLL is

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entirely staffed and run by volunteers and open to seniors wherever they reside.

Typically, about 250 seniors from Wellesley, Weston, Natick, Needham, Newton and 20 other towns attend lectures taught by professionals from Massachusetts and beyond. Topics range from current affairs, science, the arts, history, aging, and more. Most lectures are held on Zoom on Mondays from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. over an eight-to-10-week period each spring and fall. There is a \$25 per person/per semester registration fee regardless of how many courses are taken.

*“As President of WWLL for 15 years and a presenter, an invaluable and unexpected benefit has been the opportunity to meet and cooperate with so many interesting, like-minded, experienced people and personalities.”*

► **Bruce Belason**

*“After I retired, these Monday classes always get my week off to a good start: fabulous lectures, discussions, and camaraderie.”*

► **WWLL participant**

#### Lifelong Learning at

#### Regis College (LLARC)

LLARC is a membership organizations for older adults from any town interested in “expanding their minds in a relaxed, welcom-

ing, and sociable environment.” The nonprofit offers an array of 10-week study groups on Mondays through Thursdays, some in person at Regis College, others remote on Zoom, as well as a Thursday in-person Lunch, Listen, and Learn series followed by a brown-bag lunch. There is a \$75 annual membership fee for Lunch, Listen and Learn, Glee Club, access to Regis College Library, discount at Regis Fine Arts Center, and eligibility to enroll in up to four study groups each semester—which requires an additional cost of \$200 per semester.



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*"LLARC members are a friendly, supportive, welcoming, and diverse group of seniors committed to collective inquiry and to learning about the world around them. Our lifelong learning program is unique in that our members lead the study groups, sharing their own knowledge, wisdom, and research."*

► **William Koehler**, interim LLARC director, dean, Marshall M. Sloane School of Business & Communication, Regis College

*"One of my creative writing students had asked me to look over his writing. So when I was finished, I drove to his house. His adult daughter came to the door. I told her who I was and that her dad was expecting these papers, to which she*



*replied, 'Make no mistake, your class is the highlight of his life; and when it's not running, believe me, the whole family suffers!'"*

► **Virginia Slep**, member and Creative Writing Study Group leader



### Wellesley College and Babson College Audit Programs

A few older adults can "go back to college" by auditing classes at local schools when space permits.



Wellesley College reinstated its auditor program in the fall of 2023. Residents of the Town of Wellesley who are age 60 and older (as well as alumnae, current full-time employees and their spouses, current part-time employees, and retired employees of the college who retired at age 60 or older with a minimum of 10 years of service at the college) are

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eligible to audit one course in a fall or spring semester class.

Resident auditors are charged a \$250 administrative fee. Registration is first-come, first-served. Even if auditors would like to, they may not submit written work or take quizzes, tests, or exams. Unless the professor specifies otherwise, auditors may not participate in classroom discussions.

Babson College offers residents of the Town of Wellesley or Needham who are age 65 or older (as well as alumni aged 65 or older) the opportunity to audit one course per semester at Babson College for no cost or fees. Only two auditors are allowed per course that has space available. Auditors are fully engaged in classroom deliverables.

**MassBay Community College**

**MassReconnect Program**

If you don't have a college degree and are game for exams, papers, and all the requirements of a degree program—without the tuition—the new MassReconnect program could be for you. Older adults can now earn an associate degree or professional certificate for free at MassBay or any public community college in the state thanks to a scholarship program introduced by the Healey-Driscoll administration that went into effect in fall of 2023. MassReconnect is for Massachusetts residents 25 years or older with a high school diploma but no higher education who enroll in at least six credits per semester in a degree

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# EXPLORE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

## **Weston COA**

- **LOCATION:** 20 Alphabet Lane, Weston, MA 02493
- **PROGRAM OFFERINGS:** [www.weston.org/1602/Whats-Happening](http://www.weston.org/1602/Whats-Happening)
- **PROGRAM REGISTRATION:** Call 781.786.6280 or email [westoncoa@westonma.gov](mailto:westoncoa@westonma.gov)
- **QUESTIONS:** Call 781.786.6280 or email [westoncoa@westonma.gov](mailto:westoncoa@westonma.gov)

## **Wellesley COA**

- **LOCATION:** Tolles Parsons Center, 500 Washington St, Wellesley, MA 02482
- **PROGRAM OFFERINGS:** [www.wellesleycoa.org](http://www.wellesleycoa.org)
- **PROGRAM REGISTRATION:** Call 781.235.3961 or [www.myactivecenter.com](http://www.myactivecenter.com)
- **QUESTIONS:** Call 781.235.3961 or email [coa@wellesleyma.gov](mailto:coa@wellesleyma.gov)

## **Wellesley/Weston Lifetime Learning**

- **LOCATION:** Zoom
- **PROGRAM OFFERINGS AND REGISTRATION:** [www.wllcourses.org](http://www.wllcourses.org)
- **QUESTIONS:** Call 1.800.490.3056 or email [info@wllcourses.org](mailto:info@wllcourses.org)

## **Lifelong Learning at Regis College**

- **LOCATION:** At Regis and/or Zoom
- **PROGRAM OFFERINGS AND REGISTRATION:** [regiscollege.edu/LLARC](http://regiscollege.edu/LLARC)
- **QUESTIONS:** Call 781.768.7135 or email [william.koehler@regiscollege.edu](mailto:william.koehler@regiscollege.edu) or [LLARCH@regiscollege.edu](mailto:LLARCH@regiscollege.edu)

## **Wellesley College Audit Program**

- **AUDITABLE COURSES:** <https://courses.wellesley.edu>; scroll to the bottom of the list of Filters on the left hand side of the page; check the option "Show the courses available to auditors;" click "Search." Spring 2024 options will be posted by December 1, 2023.
- **REGISTRATION:** Complete the online registration form: [https://webapps.wellesley.edu/course\\_auditor/registration.php](https://webapps.wellesley.edu/course_auditor/registration.php).
- **QUESTIONS:** Call the Registrar's Office at 781.283.2307 or email [registrar@wellesley.edu](mailto:registrar@wellesley.edu)

## **Babson College Audit Program**

- **TO VIEW THE LIST OF CLASSES:** [fusionmx.babson.edu/CourseListing/](https://fusionmx.babson.edu/CourseListing/)
- **REGISTRATION:** Complete the registration form: [www.babson.edu/registrar/senior-citizen-audit-policy/](http://www.babson.edu/registrar/senior-citizen-audit-policy/), provide proof of residency and age, and send all to [registrar@babson.edu](mailto:registrar@babson.edu) or bring in person to the Registrar's Office in Hollister Hall.
- **FOR FIRST-TIME APPLICANTS,** a Babson network account will be created and sent by email to the personal email address listed on the application and registration form. The Babson network account must be activated to access the course information located on the Canvas e-learning site.

## **MassBay Community College Free MassReconnect Program**

- **ADMISSIONS:** Call 781.239.2500 or email [admissions@massbay.edu](mailto:admissions@massbay.edu)

## **Living and Learning**

or certificate program. Students must also complete the 2023-2024 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

### **Get Started Today!**

You are never too old to learn. Take it from Renaissance great, Michelangelo who sculpted the David at just 26-years-old, but professed at 87-years-old, "I am still learning." Or heed the warning of Albert Einstein: "Once you stop learning, you start dying." 