

OLLI at UNC Asheville has developed a unique pair of programs under the banner of Life Transitions to help people design a “creative retirement.” The first is titled “Creative Retirement Exploration Weekend” (CREW) and the second is dubbed “Paths to Creative Retirement” (Paths). And both draw participants from all over the United States. We welcome OLLI members from around the country to spread the word about these programs to family and friends who are approaching retirement.

The CREW program at OLLI, launched in 1991, offers a two-day interactive educational program designed to give participants an understanding of retirement lifestyle choices and help them make informed decisions about whether, where and how to relocate. An optional third day is provided for participants specifically interested in relocating to the Asheville area and includes tours with realtors to allow participants to gain a sense of the real estate market and varied living options in Western North Carolina. Presentations and facilitator-directed discussions help participants discuss and discover the personal and social aspects of their relocation in retirement, including relationships, identity, starting over in a new location and remaining productive.

CREW is offered at the end of May each year with an average of 75 participants. Over the past 10 years, more than 800 participants attest to successful retirement decisions they made as a result of this unique workshop.

Paths to Creative Retirement was developed in 2002 to offer a more intense and holistic approach to the needs of people approaching retirement. This three-day interactive educational workshop focuses on the non-financial aspects of life’s second half. Decision-making exercises and facilitator-led discussions reveal stimulating opportunities to help participants transform anxieties into a reassuring learning process.

One participant described the Paths experience this way:

“What I expected was content around finances, health and other insurance, mostly nuts and bolts stuff, and coming away with a “to do” list of things to sort out and accomplish before retiring. What I got was something completely different, however. The Paths Workshop focus was really about my identity and who would I be without the work that defined my life for the previous 40 years. The workshops were mostly on self-reflection, introspection, and really spending concentrated time thinking about what gives me joy fulfillment, purpose and direction. It was totally unexpected.”

OLLI's Paths Workshop is offered twice a year in April and September. Over the past 11 years, more than 750 participants have completed the program. Many are today OLLI members.

People interested in these programs can find more information or download a brochure at <http://olliasheville.com/retirement-workshops>.