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From the Dean's Desk

by *Guadalupe Salgado-Shower,*
Associate Dean



Dear Emeritus Students,

I am thrilled to announce that this academic year marks the 50th anniversary of Santa Monica College's Emeritus Program! For five decades, Emeritus has been committed to lifelong learning, enriching the lives of our students through free educational opportunities. Many of you have already joined us in celebrating this milestone at various events, and we are excited for the celebrations still to come!

This anniversary is not just about reflecting on our past but celebrating you—our remarkable community of lifelong learners. Your enthusiasm for learning, growth, and curiosity at every stage of life is what makes Emeritus so special. Lifelong

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SMC Emeritus – The Origin Story

By *Jean Hee Yu and Caroline Feinstein*

Fifty years ago, Emeritus was but an inspired idea to offer lifelong learning programs geared toward the interests of retired citizens and the community. The first classes were modest — just 10 courses, held in the PBX room, with a \$4 tuition fee per class in 1975. Today, Emeritus College offers over 120 free noncredit courses and workshops, serving more than 3,600 students annually, and is recognized as a national model for senior education.

SMC Emeritus' growth and success are the result of dedicated stewards over the decades. Its bold vision and trajectory were seeded by its founding team, Dr. Richard Moore, the innovator, and Maggie Hall, the master builder.

INNOVATOR

Dr. Richard Moore was a visionary leader who initiated a student-centered culture as its operating principle and shaped programs to the evolving needs of the community, industry, and beyond. Serving as president from 1974 to 1994, Dr. Moore's passion for educational excellence led to SMC ranking as the "Number One in Transfers" to the University of California system, a record maintained for over 34 years.



SMC enrolls more Black and Latino students to the UC network than any other college, with initiatives such as Black Collegians and the Adelante program, a network of Latino students. His commitment to student success and personal and professional development opportunities led to instituting a Career Center and Emeritus program for further learning and engagement.

Despite big wins early on, SMC faced severe financial challenges with a California ballot measure in 1978, that slashed property taxes and significantly reduced funding for education. In the wake of Proposition 13, Dr. Moore actively advocated for a state legislative change in the 1980s. The "free-flow" college

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SMC Emeritus – The Origin Story

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bill would allow students to attend community colleges outside of their home districts — as the state funding was tied to enrollment — expanding the student base helped to mitigate the financial impact of P13.

“Working during the Dr. Moore years was an incredible adventure,” reflected Brenda Benson, Senior Administrative Dean for Counseling and Student Wellness. “I think the entrepreneurial spirit we are known for today stems back to the Dr. Moore days.”

MASTER BUILDER

Maggie Hall was a founding member of Emeritus and pivotal to its health and growth from its inception. Initially appointed as secretary for the advisory group that laid the college’s foundation, she quickly advanced becoming an instructor, then assistant dean, and eventually the associate dean. Her talent for shaping the curriculum to meet the community’s needs was only equal to navigating the changing priorities

in state funding and securing the interests of Emeritus.

Over her 35-year tenure, Hall was not only the fierce protector of the Emeritus but also its master builder. From the switchboard room to the counseling office and to a converted AV storage facility, Emeritus was forced to move between 13 locations throughout the SMC campus before finding a permanent address. Standing at 1227 2nd Street, Hall had secured funding from multiple sources to purchase the building of its own. In 2003, Emeritus opened in a state-of-the-art facility with an on-site art gallery in a prime downtown location in Santa Monica. Maggie Hall navigated volatile conditions to create a dream home, marking the first of two permanent addresses for Emeritus.

“Emeritus locations were quite colorful – from a desk in the old switchboard room on the SMC main campus in 1975 to a multi-storied showcase on Second Street... Then a bond issue for a permanent home for Emeritus passed, and a fantastic permanent home was purchased. The feeling of being a vagabond was gone.” – Maggie Hall, retired Associate Dean of Emeritus.

THE HUB

Vivian Rankin-Scales, Program Coordinator, and Jessica Riojas, Student Services Clerk, run the Enrollment Office for the school. This is the first place for any student, new or returning, to visit.

Vivian and Jessica not only keep this office in pristine condition with not a single piece of paper out of place, but they also know the office like the back of their own hands. Vivian has worked for almost twenty-five years and Jessica, almost twenty years.

This is the hub of the school. Anything dealing with admissions, classes, enrollment, teachers, or anything else students tend to ask, and no matter their workload, they stop to take care of each one. With everything falling on just the two of them, stress levels can run high, especially during Covid, which they said, “Was the hardest challenge they ever had to face,” and they were grateful for each other. Had they not had each other, they didn’t think they would have gotten through it. The positive that came from it, they grew extremely close to one another. Jessica stated, “Thank you, Vivian, for all that you have done, not just for me, but the school as well.”

Garret Camilleri – The Magic Man

By Gordon Blitz

The moment I attended Garret’s Improv class, I was mesmerized. Could this professor who teaches two classes on Monday, Improv at 10 a.m. and Magic at noon, have used magic tricks to engage me and my classmates? Garret dispelled the Karen Carpenter song, “Rainy Days and Mondays Always Get Me Down,” by making my Monday morning a soaring way to launch the week.

Garret is a seasoned actor who discovered the teaching bug after being co-operator and general manager of a small acting troop and realized his passion for mentoring. Subsequently, he got his Masters Performance Pedagogy Degree from Loyola Marymount and began his career as an educator.

Garret establishes an environment that enables students to trust their fellow classmates. He shows clips from professional Improvisors, as a learning tool for us. His favorites are from *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*

One of the techniques in Improv that I love is *the gift giving game*. Each student gives a gift to a fellow classmate. The student receiving the gift says something like, “Oh, thank you. I always wanted a pet skunk.” Then the giver has to explain why he gave the skunk as a gift.

Another of his world views is to use our improv games in class and try them out in the outside world. It’s a way of building our confidence and social skills. When I asked Garret about the difficulties of teaching improv, he revealed, “Students are disconnected from their sense of play, fearing that they might look silly. I have to teach them to let that stuff go.”

But Garret has a way of pushing past student discomfort. Leisa Wu explained, “Garret has a special talent for engaging everyone in every class session, no matter how talented (or, in my case, untalented) they are.”

In his magic class, Garret not only teaches the card sleight-of-hand, but also how to have a charming personality, almost to the point of being a distraction. This can be so important; audiences should not be able to figure out “how the trick is done.” In his private life as a magician, Garret has an agent and offers his talents for private gatherings like weddings and Bar Mitzvahs.

Interestingly, the stark difference between Magic and Improvisation comes down to memorization. In Magic, you can’t just wing it while one of the foundations of Improv is to not plan ahead. He told me, “I am amazed at the commitment from my magic class students. They are passionate about learning and meeting the challenges that this craft presents.”

Student Jackie Strull said, “His passion for the subjects he teaches is palpable making the learning experience so enjoyable.”

Garret told me, “I adore teaching at Emeritus. It is fulfilling and brings me joy.” At the end of last semester when he told the class, “I love you,” I was touched. When had I ever heard a teacher be that emotional? I spread the word to my other professors. I told them, “I know you have never said it to our faces, but I believe you love each one of us.” The teacher and student relationship doesn’t get any better than this.



Meet Phyllis Rothman

SMCC 1958-60 & SMC Emeritus

2007-Present

By Linda J. Hernández

My Emeritus classmate, Phyllis Rothman, has a long and successful history with SMC. In 1958, she entered then Santa Monica City College as a shy 18-year-old with little self-confidence. Deciding not to first attend UCLA with her then high school boyfriend, she determined she wanted to be on her own socially at college. Looking back, Phyllis describes this decision as the best one in her life up to that point. She acquired many new friends including two lifelong ones, Terre Gray and Sue Goldie Cyns. Phyllis was thrilled to be chosen as a member of their famous 80-member Coronettes Drill Team, led by Kay Crawford. Phyllis took the role as one of their four captains.

While at SMCC, Phyllis was invited to join the Epsilons, a women's honorary society, and was elected President during her second year. She also became involved in Student Government and was elected Commissioner of Activities. She felt very empowered as she was responsible for planning and carrying out many school-wide events. Upon



Santa Monica City College Coronettes, 1958. Phyllis Rothman is first and a team captain.

graduating in June of 1960, Phyllis received the "Girl of the Year" Award and also the "Sandmeyer Award" for Scholarship, Citizenship, Leadership, and Service. This came with a small scholarship to UCLA. "I now felt ready to face that huge campus, bringing my newly acquired self-confidence with me!" Phyllis says.

Phyllis is very proud to be the first college graduate in her family, receiving her B.A. degree and California Teaching Credential in 1963 from UCLA. As an elementary school teacher, she later received her Master of Arts Degree in Education in 1979. She is now happily retired and fondly remembers and thanks the friends, faculty, and administrators of SMCC for giving her a jump start on her successful future.

In 2007, Phyllis returned to SMC, enrolling in their Emeritus Program where she has remained through the present. "It was serendipitous that I learned about the Saturday Afternoon Autobiography Class," she remembers. "A dear friend told me that the teacher guides and inspires with classroom exercises for her students to write their life stories. English E33 has literally changed the occupation of my life. I am close to publishing my memoir entitled *If*. I could not have done it without the guidance of my talented Emeritus teachers and classmates. Thank you, All!"

On her first day back to SMC in the Fall of 2007 Phyllis recalled, "As I walked past the football field, I could see myself proudly marching on

that field. I could hear the marching band blaring. I also felt goosebumps and tears in my eyes. Santa Monica College had given me the self-confidence that spilled into the rest of my life!"

Introduction to Phyllis Rothman's soon-to-be-published Memoir, *If*.

If she had not heard about the Autobiography Class at Santa Monica Emeritus College,

If she has not wanted to write about her Dad's struggles

to immigrate to the United States from Russia.

If she had not been motivated to tickle her brain about her past memories

by dedicated teachers: Mary Jane Roberts, Monona Wali, Ana Reyes, Kathleen MacKay.

If she had not been brought up in Los Angeles with loving parents, Mimi and Irving Wershow.

If she had not found out that writing about her life for her granddaughter, Sophia Villasenor, gives her such joy.

Then her stories about her childhood, having two terrific children,

Unexpectedly becoming a Science Lab teacher at

Brentwood Science Magnet Elementary School,

And finding love and marriage again with tall bachelor Joel,

Her stories would never have been told.



Phyllis today with her beloved granddaughter, Sophia Villasenor.

Meet Beloved Music Director Gary Gray

By Margaret Lenzey MA

Santa Monica College has a beloved and gifted person in its music department named Gary Gray. He is an inspiration to most who know and work with him. As a very young child, Gary began playing the piano. In 1962 he took two dollar lessons at a local music store in his town of Modesto, California. He continued to play in elementary through high school, and although he was known as a singer in the school choir, piano took center stage.

Gary studied at Modesto Junior college, University of The Pacific and University Southern California. At USC Gary completed a masters degree in Music Accompaniment and took his first job at Glendale College playing for the musical theater productions. In addition, he started accompanying at Santa Monica College 1981, along with choir, musical theater workshop and musical theater production work. The first show Gary musically directed was a production of *110 in the Shade* in 1989.

“I am probably asked more than anything else, if I compose. I do not. Composing is a completely separate skill,” says Gary.

In 2008 Frank Turner, the musical director retired and Gary took the position. In 2006 the music department moved to the Performing Arts Campus, at The Broad Theatre location in Santa Monica. Gary has been at SMC for nearly 43 years. He likes to say, “I’m a musician with a steady job, an unusual thing to have.”

Gary has musically directed or accompanied over seventy musicals at SMC. The Theatre Arts department has taken shows to China (as part of a cultural

exchange), The Kennedy Center, and regional festivals sponsored by The Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival. Many talented students from the SMC Theatre and Music departments have gone on to other exciting venues, including Broadway and the Metropolitan Opera. Gary has performed at The Broad Stage as an accompanist for Music department performances by the Chamber Choir, Concert Chorale, and Applied Music program.

Gary shares, “I may retire in the next couple of years, continuing to teach part-time at SMC and take my road trips across the US, maybe Europe enjoying my love of photography.”

Gary Gray is a special person for so many. I see this when I attend the many musicals at SMC and The Broad Theatre. The energy from

students, directors, and musicians is magical! He is highly admired professionally in his specialty, open and available to many outside of school. Also a tech and trivia buff, ask him, he will have a solution! I am proud to be one of his good friends, he is the very definition of what friendship truly means. His cat, Carly, is also a fond friend of the feline persuasion for many years.

If you would like to be moved and entertained by the musicals and concerts that Gary Gray and the SMC Music Department passionately create, join them for their upcoming performances! To find current Music and Theatre event listings, visit: smc.edu/events. Bravo SMC and thank you Gary for continuing to share your gifts for decades!



The Good Earth

By Camille Gaon



I had the good fortune to visit the Santa Monica College Organic Learning Garden recently, that consists of an ever-expanding 1,200 square feet of a cornucopia of fruits, vegetables, and herbs in raised beds, containers, and plots of land. There is even a raised herb garden that is U-shaped to allow wheelchair access. Being a long-time organic produce aficionado with a rudimentary background in growing my own tomatoes at age ten, this was indeed food for my soul, literally.

I was given a top-notch tour by Ferris Kewar, who runs the program that has been ongoing since 2011. It is a program open to all SMC students, including Emeritus students, whereby they can apply for a plot requiring six people each to come and grow their own organic produce.

I met Tony, a seasoned volunteer who gifted me with a most welcomed basil cutting with instructions on how to propagate it. The program's goal has always been very focused to encourage a sense of self-sustainability, provide access to fresh, nutritious food, reduce the food miles environmental footprint, and stay connected to our precious earth.

As we meandered through cornfields on campus, banana trees, tomatillo bushes, various tomato plants, hot peppers, and hybrid fruit trees that student volunteers grafted themselves, I felt like I was Snow White replete with hummingbirds, small busy birds, and butterflies all thriving in their habitat. There was a raised flower bed with a rainbow's

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learning is more than just acquiring knowledge — it keeps us engaged, inspired, and connected to one another. Your commitment to continuous education is a testament to the power and the ability that lifelong learning has in transforming lives.

To mark this momentous occasion, we have a series of events planned throughout the year. We recently kicked things off with our “Back to School Kick-Off,” where students were welcomed back to the Emeritus campus with complimentary refreshments and meals. We have just begun hosting field trips to several SMC campuses, allowing you to experience all of SMC's rich offerings with guided tours, transportation, and lunch provided. We are also excited for the Harvey Stromberg Living History Series, which will feature inspiring stories from Emeritus icons, captured by SMC media students. Also, our “Fifty Over 50” photography project will celebrate our students' beauty through portraits

displayed at future events. Finally, the grand finale in May 2025 will culminate with a spectacular event at the SMC Main Campus, bringing together the entire Emeritus and Santa Monica College community for a special celebration of 50 years of lifelong learning.

We invite you to visit our dedicated 50th anniversary webpage (a blue bar at the top of our webpage) for all the latest updates on events, including information on both upcoming and past celebrations. Stay connected and join us as we honor this significant milestone!

Lastly, I would like to thank you for being an essential part of the Emeritus community. Your love of learning continues to inspire us, and we look forward to celebrating with you throughout this incredible year.

Best,
Guadalupe Salgado-Shower

The Good Earth

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selection of flowers, not for picking but rather pollinating purposes.

The lushness and vibrancy of each and every plant, herb, fruit, and vegetable I saw was a testament to the fact that they were all pampered and very well-tended to by gardeners with a gift for nurturing everything to thrive. And this was at the tail end of

the heatwave and there wasn't one wilted or withered plant in sight.

One surprising fact I unearthed, excuse the pun, was that they have an extensive on-site composting system staffed by worms. Four hundred thousand worms go through about 300 pounds of food waste weekly.

The volunteers nurture not only the plants, but the community and sell some of what they grow in their on-site Bodega. Every Wednesday, they

have a volunteer group lunch, more like plot-luck since they all share the food and eat what they grow. There was a colorful assortment of cleaned dishes and plates in the strainer next to their outdoor sink, left to "air-dry" from the prior day's lunch.

It was kismet that I visited late in the day during the Golden Hour's sunset literally shining a light on the fact that this marked the Golden 50th anniversary of Santa Monica College.

A Blessing in Disguise

by Linda J. Hernández, B.A., M.S. Ed.

As the only native Angeleno I know of that doesn't drive on freeways, my travels are usually limited to a 10-mile radius from my home. Now, through the magic of Zoom (which seemed to have originated during the COVID-19 pandemic), I can visit friends and colleagues throughout our country and the world! I feel that many other seniors are in my same situation and appreciate the convenience and necessity of taking classes and scheduling meetings by Zoom. Some are homebound and don't drive anymore for various reasons. One true jewel I discovered through Zoom is the Santa Monica Emeritus Program for Seniors. My brother, Ed Johnson, had praised their writing program for years and how I longed to join him. However, I live too far away in Southeast Los Angeles County to commute there. Since we are both obsessive-compulsive readers and writers, he knew I would enjoy the classes. And so I have, more than I could have ever predicted.

With the advent of the Zoom option for contacting others near and far, I feel like Cinderella must have felt when she traded in her old, used pumpkin for a sparkling, new,

horse-driven carriage. (Complete with dashing Princes and charming Princesses awaiting me at the various, faraway castles!) Mean and/or boring stepsisters have been left in the dust as I pursue new and erudite friendships. As for the elegant gown, all I need is to look decent and presentable from the neckline up in my *Hollywood Squares* box! I do miss the personal contact with others. In fact, I have Cerritos College across the street from me where I could easily walk to classes. However, I have bonded with so many students and instructors at SMC Emeritus, that I feel like they are family members whom I would miss greatly.

My post-Covid, post-retirement life now revolves around my Zoom classes and meetings. Necessary, in-person medical and business appointments are of secondary priority and must somehow be fit into my schedule. These are the highlights of my week Zooming into Emeritus:

Monday – I have "Writing for Publication" with talented new SMC Emeritus Instructor Kathleen MacKay. We prepare and edit articles and stories for various

college publications like *The Emeritus Voice Newsletter*, *Chronicles*, and *The Ongoing Moment*.

Tuesday – I take a "Short Stories" class with longtime Emeritus instructor and author, Monona Wali. We read and analyze both classic and modern stories.

Wednesday – I look forward to a "Current Events" class with renowned political analysts and commentators Warren Olney and Robert Stern. It is especially interesting in this highly polarized election year.

Thursday – A free day to fit in necessary, in-person medical, business, and social appointments.

Friday – I continue "Readers' Theatre" with multi-talented actor, writer, and director Tony Abatemarco. I always loved this activity for a half-century as an elementary school teacher. Playing different roles and accents from renowned theatrical works is still enjoyable for me.

Saturday – I'm back with Kathleen MacKay in her excellent "Autobiography Class." I'm discovering and analyzing life experiences that I had forgotten about.

Sunday – A whole day for Family and Friends!

Frugal Adventures Fall 2024

By Jeanne Shamji

SMC Emeritus students can look forward to fun and free activities this fall in Santa Monica, Culver City, and Downtown Los Angeles. There's something for everyone to enjoy: yoga, dance classes, chess games, Halloween events, and choral music. Purchase a discounted senior TAP card for 35 cents per ride. Parking for these events is free or inexpensive.

Yoga and Run at Santa Monica Beach at 2819 Pico Boulevard is free with required registration. Start your Saturday morning at the Santa Monica pier under the iconic Santa Monica Yacht Harbor sign with a group run on Saturdays from 8 – 9 a.m. Or skip the run and join the yoga class with an incredible instructor at the west end from 9 – 10 a.m. until November 11. Parking is difficult to find in Santa Monica, but your TAP card will take you to the end of the line, a ten-minute walk from the pier. Stay in the loop with Wellness&Waves on social media.

Free Chess Sundays from 1 – 3 p.m. requires no advance registration. Chess players of all ages and levels are invited for casual play on the 1200 Block of Third Street Promenade. Play with a friend or meet a (check) mate. Chess sets will be provided, or you can bring your own.

Another free, energizing activity at the Ivy Station in Culver City is **Salsa Night** on the third Friday of each month. From 6:30 – 7 p.m., Pepe Gonzalez will teach basic salsa moves. You can easily make friends to dance with, no matter your level of expertise. From 7 – 8:45 p.m., a live band begins the party, and experienced, costumed salsa dancers arrive. They are enjoyable to watch, and you can join in. Use your TAP card to reach the Culver City Ivy Station. The garage entrances are at 8900 Venice Blvd. or 8840 National Blvd. Two-hour parking is free with validation.

Put on your costumes and bring the family to **Hip and Historic Halloween 2024** in downtown Culver City on Sunday, October 27, from 4 – 6 p.m. for their annual street party. Celebrate Halloween in the Heart of SCREAMland! Enjoy dinner specials at your favorite restaurants. Participating businesses will display a "BOO CREW" sign.

The Walt Disney Concert Hall tickets for ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE | LA SINGS! go on sale on October 7, 2024. The show is on Sunday, November 10, 2024, at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10. The concert hall is on the corner



of Grand Avenue and First Street in downtown Los Angeles. The hall's distinctive sweeping silver facade is an internationally recognized architectural landmark heralded as one of the world's most acoustically sophisticated concert halls. *All You Need is Love* is a mega sing-along at Walt Disney Concert Hall, featuring songs *Stand By Me*, *What A Wonderful World*, *Ain't No Mountain High Enough*, and popular choral music. There is no strict dress code for the concerts, but as a rule, "smart casual" is a good guideline. You are advised to arrive at the hall at least 15-20 minutes beforehand. ListenUp! an educational pre-concert talk will begin 1 hour before the concert starts and is free to ticketholders and will be held in BP Hall on the 2nd level of Walt Disney Concert Hall. Ticket Services: Phone (213) 972-7282 or email boxoffice@lamasterchoale.org Tue-Fri, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. Parking under the concert hall is \$10 all day on weekends. Plan to rideshare or take the Metro to the Bunker Street Exit, which is a 7-minute walk to the Concert Hall's front door.

On another weekend, visit the Walt Disney Concert Hall's 3.6-acre complex, open to the public during operating hours. You can take a self-guided one-hour tour from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Picture ID is required to use the phonic equipment. Also available are docent-led tours that take you around the complete Center complex, allowing visitors to enter private rooms displaying exceptional paintings and sculptures by renowned artists. Tables and chairs are available in the garden, so bring a picnic with non-alcoholic beverages to enjoy.

Confirm availability, times, dates, and transportation details before your adventure. All events are handicapped, service animal-approved, and wheelchair accessible. Check your computer for FRUGAL EVENTS.

Living Better with Less Anxiety

By Sharon Valente, PhD. APRN, FAAN

Anxiety is a constellation of feelings including worry, tension, and loss of control. Triggers range from injury to bad news to trauma. Emeritus student, Teresa said she, “Worries about her mom and husband’s health.” Others found that life changes caused nervousness. Another colleague was tense after surgery. Low anxiety narrows one’s focus and improves performance, while high anxiety narrows problem solving, thinking, and coping. Anxiety may peak when one performs on stage, has a health problem, or learns of disasters.

You can mitigate these feelings. As a college student who performed, I was only nervous auditioning for Roger Wagner. I was so jittery I couldn’t recall my name and pointed

to my name tag, saying, “Nursing Student.” When I sang solos in Emeritus Voice Class, I was so on edge I needed to calm down.

You can reduce anxiety with approaches like *meditation* that focuses on the present and use *breathing exercises* to induce serenity. Here is an example of a simple breathing exercise: inhale for a count of four, hold for four and exhale for four, and repeat. Individual or group meditation options exist online. Similar to meditation, *imagery* focuses on relaxing and safe images. You imagine being at your favorite place and using your senses to see the mountains, smell the flowers, and enjoy the birdsong. Another strategy, *hypnosis*, is focused attention that can be guided

or self-induced. You are always aware and can stop whenever you wish.

Some people appreciate Emeritus yoga classes or online mental health apps like Calm, Headspace, and others that reduce stress. Others use music, prayer, or chanting. Some experimentation helps identify what works best. Reducing stress can reduce your blood pressure and improve sleep.

If your mind races before sleep, you can use YouTube meditation or hypnosis to fall asleep, stay asleep, and awake more rested. My Mom, Maxine, was a Nervous Nelly who always worried. After a stroke, she was a nervous wreck and needed some anxiety-reducing medications for two weeks and more. She rejected yoga, meditation, and breathing techniques saying, “They are silly and for dunderheads.” However, she did agree to listen to online bedtime stories. She liked the soothing voice describing an enchanting walk in the garden or lying by the ocean or lake. The stories included slow breathing and progressive relaxation which clenches and releases muscles from toes to head. Mom fell asleep quickly, slept well, and liked the stories, but didn’t realize they included meditation, hypnosis, and breathing exercises.

Whatever approach, find what works for you. Try breathing exercises and imagine a serene place to reduce tension. If anxiety disrupts your functioning, you may wish to consult a counselor or therapist and consider whether you can benefit from treatment as well as self-help.



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Sandi Burnett: The Pathfinder

How One Woman Made a Difference for Herself and Others Like Her

By Frank Eck

For the entirety of her professional career, Sandi Burnett has sought to improve the lives of the disabled. Her desire to work in this field grew from her own personal experience, having been born with spina bifida, a birth defect that occurs when the neural tube doesn't close completely during pregnancy, that can result in a wide range of issues affecting personal mobility for children born with this condition.

Sandi underwent several surgeries as a child and had spent three summers at the Mayo Clinic. Because there were no special education programs offered at her school at the time, Sandi was unable to attend, so instead, was homeschooled by her mother as well as by a tutor. Sandi's condition eventually required the amputation of her left leg when she was just thirteen. Her family moved to California from Oregon shortly, thereafter, settling in Pasadena, the summer before Sandi was to enter high school.

Sandi had always been an avid reader, and so tested well above average academically. Because of this, along with the practical issue of being able to support herself once she became an adult, Sandi was encouraged by her parents to pursue higher education at a time when there were very few accommodations for severely disabled students at most colleges. Undaunted, Sandi earned an undergraduate degree in psychology from UCLA in 1971, and three years later, a Post Graduate Certificate in Occupational Therapy from USC. She earned her Masters in Psychology from Pepperdine University in 1978. Sandi joined the faculty of the Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS) at Santa Monica College in 1980.

Prior to attending UCLA, Sandi had never met anyone who was disabled. She says that her interest in advocating for the rights of the disabled was inspired by the civil rights movement of the nineteen-sixties. "I felt that we [the disabled] belonged in the public square and that we should have access."

When Maggie Hall was promoted to Director of Emeritus College in 1976, there were no programs to assist students with disabilities. In 1984, Sandi founded Pathfinders at Emeritus College with Maggie. Pathfinders was funded by a grant from the Santa Monica College Chancellor's Office and from funding through the DSPS at SMC.

Pathfinders focuses on placing students impacted by Cerebral and Vascular Accidents (CVA) into the appropriate classes, assisted by speech pathologists and occupational therapists with experience in helping those with difficulties such as aphasia (word-finding difficulties) or dysarthria (affects muscles in the tongue) and hemiparesis (paralysis of limbs), with a focus on communication and physical exercise. Additionally, Sandi was a driving force in implementing the Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Program for those over thirteen who've suffered brain issues from strokes, tumors, or accidents, as well as Veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Sandi is a past Vice President of the Santa Monica College Faculty Association, the collective bargaining unit for SMC instructors. Until her retirement in 2016, Sandi had been an Occupational Therapy Specialist, Faculty Specialist, and an ADA/504 Compliance Officer at the Disabled Students Center at Santa Monica College. In her free time, she enjoys painting and sculpture, reading, and volunteering, as well as spending time with her two young grandsons, Dario and Alessio.

Finally, when asked about how the disabled are often depicted in popular culture, there is one point that Sandi is most adamant. "We're not here to be your inspiration. We just want to have our own life."

For more information regarding Pathfinders and the Disabled Students Center at Santa Monica College, scan the QR code or go to: smc.edu/student-support/center-for-students-with-disabilities/pathfinders/



So, You Wish You Could Calm Down Your Mind...

By Harriet L. Lipson

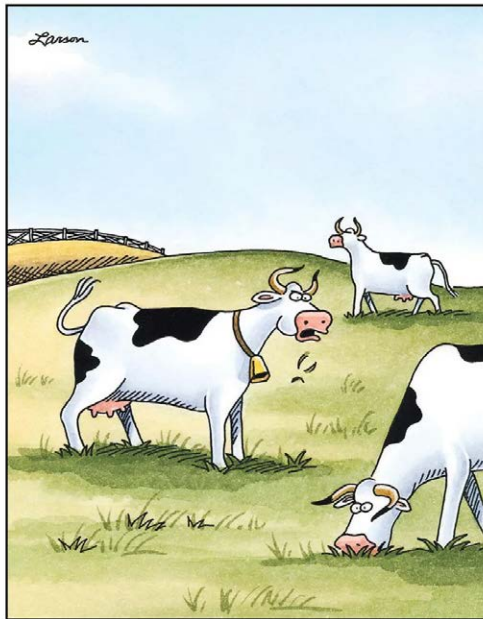
"I'd love to learn to meditate but I just can't focus my mind."

I've heard this a lot since I started meditating in 2011; and in reality, the average person has more than 60,000 thoughts daily, according to Fred Luskin, Ph.D., Director of the Forgiveness Projects and Senior Consultant, Health Promotion at Stanford University, Professor at the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology, and Faculty Member, Greater Good Science Center. The good news is that harnessing random thoughts while seeking inner tranquility need not be discouraging.

There is a simple practice that has existed for thousands of years which helps to quiet your thinking, while intentionally creating moments of stillness throughout your day.

Mindfulness Meditation trains your mind to focus on the present moment, without scrutiny or judgement.

And it's alright if your attention shifts and you suddenly find yourself putting together an ingredient list for a recipe. It happens. It's human. But happily, Mindfulness is forgiving. It simply asks you to take note of new



"Hey, wait a minute! This is grass! We've been eating grass!"

thoughts and then let them go—just like clouds passing by in the sky—before returning to the present moment. Moreover, Mindfulness helps ease the stresses of everyday life, urging its practitioners to slow down and reconnect with their inner selves.

Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, founder of the UMass Memorial Health Center for Mindfulness, points out that mindfulness is not a "mental trick." He says, "We need to be optimally aware of who we are, where we are and how we are, in order to survive individually as communities and even as a species..."

Once you have experienced the pleasure of achieving a state of focused awareness, you can easily incorporate the practice into all aspects of your life, while you sit, lie down, walk, eat and love...really anything. Mindfulness can become a way of life because it is an easily achievable way of life.

Where to Practice Mindfulness Meditation



You can start at home by trying Jon Kabat-Zinn's classic [Mindfulness Body Scan](#)

Free Mindfulness Meditation Resources:

- **SMC Emeritus – Health E19 – Mindfulness and Meditation**
Tuesdays and Thursdays, Introductory Class, online with Kathy Cass
- **Mindful Mondays (Virtual)**
Mondays: 12:30 – 1:00 p.m.
Facilitated by Marvin G. Belzer and other UCLA-trained teachers
Zoom Meeting ID: 964 5666 1655
Password: 123456
- **Santa Monica Hospital Auditorium (In-person)**
Tuesdays: 12:30 – 1:00 p.m.
1250 16th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404
Lunch-time drop-in meditation led by UCLA-trained mindfulness facilitators; available to staff, patients, and general public.
- **Hammer Museum Meditation (Hybrid)**
Thursdays: 12:30 – 1:00 p.m.
In Person: Billy Wilder Theater in Hammer Museum
10899 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles
Scan QR code for live broadcast
- **Hammer Museum Meditation Catch-Up (Virtual)**
First Tuesdays Monthly:
12:30 – 1:00 p.m.
Zoom Meeting ID: 958 0173 3523



WHAT'S HAPPENING:

Fall Emeritus Events

Viva Las Vegas: SMC Emeritus Concert Band and Santa Ana College Concert Band

The Emeritus Concert Band presents a combined performance with the Santa Ana College Concert Band under the direction of Adam Gerling.

Sat, October 27 | 3 p.m. | Free

The Broad Stage at SMC Performing Arts Center

Emeritus Players Acting Showcase

Conversations: Scenes from Film and Theatre

Mark your calendar for our performance showcase featuring silly, serious, and quirky scenes that inspire, entertain, and — hopefully! — give you something to think about. For more information, please call 310-434-4306.

Sat, February 1 | 1 p.m. | Free | Online; see smc.edu/events for details

EMERITUS ART GALLERY

The Emeritus Art Gallery is located on the first floor of the Emeritus Campus, 1227 Second St., Santa Monica. For gallery hours and more information, call 310-434-4306, or visit the Emeritus website (smc.edu/emmeritus). Exhibits and opening receptions are FREE.

Akemi Watanabe

Online (smc.edu/emmeritusgallery) starting October 24, 2024

Zoom Virtual Reception at smc.edu/emmeritusgallery: October 24, 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Don't miss this online-only exhibition of colorful, highly detailed paintings and drawings by renowned artist and Emeritus student Akemi Watanabe. Exhibition opens Thursday, October 24, with a Zoom reception event from 5 to 6:30 p.m. featuring the artist speaking about her work, and hosted by Emeritus Associate Dean (interim) Guadalupe Salgado-Shower and Emeritus Gallery Curator Jesse Benson.

The Ongoing Moment 2024: Literature and Art from Emeritus In-Gallery Exhibition November 21, 2024 – January 10, 2025

Zoom Virtual Reception at smc.edu/emmeritusgallery: November 21, 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Enjoy a simultaneous in-gallery and online event celebrating publication of The Ongoing Moment, the annual Emeritus art and writing journal created by students in Monona Wali's memoir class and Catherine Tirr's watercolors studio class. Journals will be printed and available for purchase on campus and online. The Zoom event will feature artworks and live readings.



1227 2nd Street

Santa Monica, CA 90401

Business Hours:

Mon. – Fri., 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Telephone: 310-434-4306

Email: emeritus@smc.edu

Website: smc.edu/emmeritus

SMC Emeritus is committed to life-long learning for older adults. From art and literature to health and safety, personal finance, and digital technologies, SMC Emeritus students connect, discover, renew, and reinvent. Classes are held at the SMC Emeritus headquarters at 1227 Second Street, Santa Monica, as well as at community sites located throughout the cities of Santa Monica and Malibu.

Got Suggestions?

You can give Emeritus your feedback in several ways: by emailing emeritus@smc.edu; calling 310-434-4306; through the suggestion boxes located on the 1st, 2nd, and 4th floors of Emeritus; and in-person on the 1st floor Enrollment Services or 4th floor Administrative office.



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This edition of the *Emeritus Voice* was written and produced by students in the “Writing For Publication” (E34) class taught by Kathleen MacKay