

# As Seen In: Metro West Daily News

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### A lifetime of learning



“Get over the idea that only children should spend their time in study. Be a student so long as you still have something to learn, and this will mean all your life.” When Henry L. Doherty, a successful businessman in the 1930’s, announced his view on education, he could not have anticipated that 75 years later almost 100 U.S. institutions of higher learning would have university-linked retirement communities on or near their grounds.

Unique among them is Lasell Village. Living and learning is the defining characteristic of this not-for-profit continuing care retirement community which opened in 2000, sponsored and managed by Lasell College in Newton.

Approximately 215 Village residents, whose ages range from 65 to 95 - the average age is 82 - are required to complete a minimum of 450 hours of learning each calendar year, to the extent that each is physically and intellectually able. The college-appointed Dean of Lasell Village assists each resident in designing a personal learning plan.

Resident retirees may satisfy the requirement in diverse ways: by enrolling in intergenerational courses at Lasell College “for credit,” or as “participating students” with a pass/fail option. They may register for courses, seminars and lectures at Lasell Village, or at other colleges and universities, or through Elderhostel programs. They may teach or mentor Lasell College students or advise student groups.

Residents welcome opportunities for interaction among generations where, as co-learners, they can be appreciated as “experienced” rather than stereotyped as “old.”

“I enjoy seeing energetic young people around the campus, living in a nearby dorm, and waiting on tables for us,” notes Ellie Mamber, who moved to Lasell Village last June and has found that the educational component insures a group of compatible people. “Initially, the group seemed an ordinary collection of elderly people. Then I noticed that many were reading the New York Times and carrying books like ‘The Early Plays of Eugene O’Neill.’ Because they were alert and thoughtful, and had interesting things to say about their classes, I knew that I had made the right decision in choosing this community.”

Twenty percent of residents have high school diplomas, 40 percent are college graduates, and 40 percent hold master’s or doctoral degrees. Alice and Saul Aronow, who met at Cooper Union in New York City, where he was a post grad engineering student and she was studying for an art degree, value participating in academic programs in retirement.

Though Saul Aronow feels that after six months he and his wife are still “getting rid of old stuff and getting really settled,” he managed to take four courses last semester, including “Islam” and “Mississippi Musings: Short Stories of Eudora Welty,” each meeting weekly for an hour and a half.

Together, at the Village Center, the couple took “Ernest Gaines, A Louisiana Literary Master.”

“As northerners we both had great lack of knowledge about southern life and wanted to understand the life and times of the southern black culture,” says Alice Aronow, who found the reading and “very hot discussions” among 20 people “extremely rewarding.”

“My other course was a well-organized writing workshop which started with writing from exercises, and gradually became deeper and deeper. I found poetry at the end very demanding-- and kind of mind blowing. But I was thrilled with what I started to understand,” she said. “While it’s wonderful to go downstairs, turn left to the studio space, they’ve given me, and find gymnasium machines and the swimming pool all in the building, I enjoy painting at the Newton Art Centre and hope the programs offered here will be enlarged to form even stronger ties with the Newton community at large.”

Meanwhile, the active, intellectually enriched living, on a scenic 13-acre site overlooking a pond where residential buildings are connected by enclosed walkways, makes clear that in retirement there can be life beyond Bingo.

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