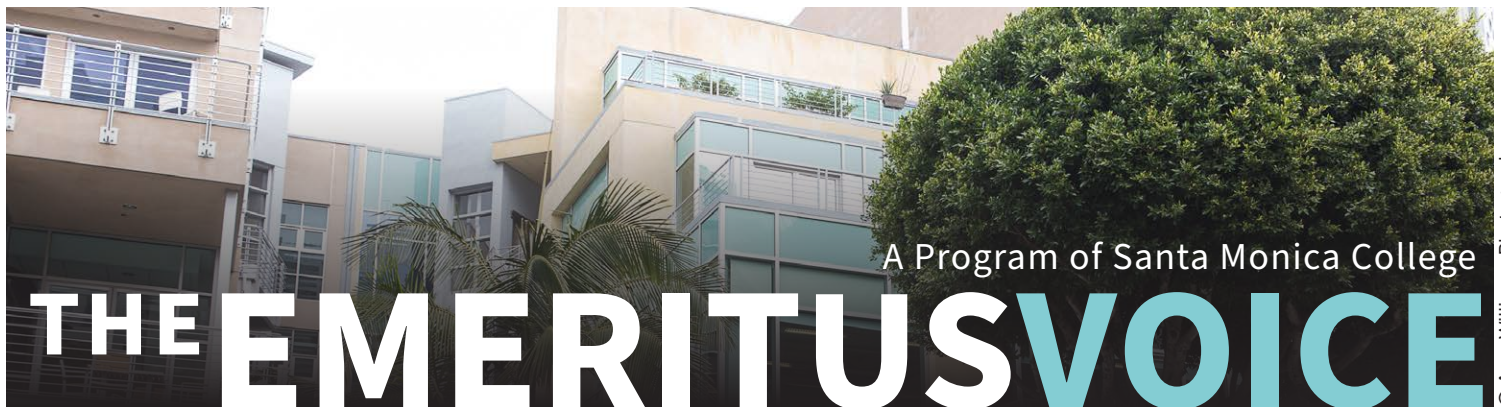




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A Program of Santa Monica College

THE EMERITUS VOICE

From the Dean's Desk
by Dr. Scott Silverman, Dean



Dear Emeritus Students,

As Emeritus continues to grow, one of our greatest needs is also one of our greatest opportunities: volunteers.

A strong core of volunteers has always been integral to the success of Emeritus. For decades, dedicated volunteers have helped support our amazing and hard-working staff while creating a welcoming environment for students. As our program expands and serves more learners than ever before, the need for volunteers continues to grow.

Every semester, new and returning students contact our office seeking help with enrollment, registration, password issues, navigating technology, finding classes, and understanding the many services available through Emeritus. Many

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Emeritus Funding Remains Uncertain

By Hannah Heineman

In recent years, funding for the Emeritus Program has been uncertain due to Santa Monica College's (SMC) ongoing fiscal crisis. Despite this, the number of Emeritus class offerings have remained consistent and even increased according to Scott Silverman, the Dean of Non-Credit and External Programs.

Silverman's "plan is to keep everything in a steady state." If a class is "trending towards low enrollment" he will take a closer look at it and then decide based on its content whether to drop it.

Silverman himself has had to take a 5 percent pay cut, but his workload has increased. His responsibilities now include being Dean and Associate Dean. Emeritus Administrative Assistant David Mendoza has also seen a reduction in pay. Mendoza oversees building maintenance, work orders, budget requests, and scheduling.

Sion Roy, the Chair of SMC's Board of Trustees, told *The Voice* that the Board "and the college leadership are very supportive of Emeritus." He also noted that beginning this fiscal year, "SMC is fully funded by the state's Student-Centered Funding Formula and now benefits from enrollment increases.

Increasing Emeritus enrollment has always been a top priority for Silverman. He has been encouraging current Emeritus students to help recruit new students and has made marketing literature available to them to do so. He emphasized that, "Emeritus enrollment is constantly in flux because students can enroll at any time."

For years, Emeritus has been marketed as a program for those 55 and up. However, the California Education Code states that non-credit programs like Emeritus must be open to those 18 and over; stressed Silverman. Emeritus "has always had a handful" of students under 55.

Char Fliege who is a member of one of the Emeritus Advisory Committees stated, it's important to "put a live face" on Emeritus recruitment efforts. She is hoping to have tables at Santa Monica's Palisades Park and at the Brentwood Farmer's Market.

Another source of funding for Emeritus is donations from the SMC Foundation. Grace Singh Smith who is SMC's Director of Public Information told *The Voice* last spring "the College has historically been open to accepting donations to offset

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Barbara Haberman – Emeritus Songbird Since Age Five

By Sharon Valente

In the Emeritus Lyric Chorus, Barbara's smile enchants, and her lilting soprano brings beloved melodies such as "You'll Never Walk Alone" and "Defying Gravity" to life. She holds high standards for musical accuracy and interpretation and is one of the kindest, most thoughtful people I know.



Barbara grew up in a caring Coney Island neighborhood. "I sang at age four and performed onstage in the Catskills and sang in the casinos at age five," she says. She loved singing Yiddish songs such as "Shine Like the Sun" and watching audiences light up, sing along, and cry. "Singing was fun," she recalls. On weekends, she performed for Yiddish- and English-speaking organizations, at Temple, and at the Capitol Theater in Brooklyn and Manhattan. Her family did not speak Yiddish at home, so her grandmother helped her learn it. Her mother had dreamed of singing, but her parents

said it was not proper for ladies; she became Barbara's greatest supporter. Barbara also loved sewing and roller skating. Her father helped her master zippers while she made a fashionable light beige costume for roller skating dances.

At 16, Barbara met the love of her life, her next-door neighbor Shelly Goldman, and they married three years later. They moved to Encino in the 1980s. Barbara completed 1.5 years of college, focusing on music and psychology. After raising her daughter, Linda and son, Steven, and living in her Encino home for over 40 years, Barbara moved to Marina del Rey.

In 1975, with singing partner Irene Chapman, Barbara created *Two Grandmas from Brooklyn*, performing music and comedy for local businesses and celebrations. The Grandmas hobbled onstage in plush bathrobes and babushkas (e.g., head coverings) as stooped, nearsighted grandmothers calling, "Hello, hello," in strong, twangy Brooklyn accents. Then, shedding their disguises with striptease flair,

they emerged in elegant black lace gowns and sang like angels. Linda says, "Anytime Mom sings in a group, I can always identify her voice. She thinks that is a bad thing, but my brother and I think it is wonderful." At her grandson's recent wedding, Barbara sang "It Had to Be You" while the wedding couple performed a synchronized top-hat-and-soft-shoe routine. The attendees were enchanted.

Around 1978, Barbara met and married Stan, a tall, elegant Navy veteran and lawyer. Her own children were grown, while Stan still had young children. Barbara has a supportive family, including her younger sister in Newport. Her daughter, Linda, is a kind, intelligent nurse practitioner with a doctorate; her son, Steven, left business to become a talented drummer. When I admired Barbara's stylish cane, she said, "It's a gift from Linda," who organizes Mom's and Stan's medications and manages medical issues. Linda and Steven help with everything from computer glitches to a slow, hidden leak from the upstairs neighbors.

At Barbara's recent 90th birthday celebration, Linda hosted family and friends in the backyard. Guests of all ages enjoyed a professional magician, Barbara's grandson, Ross Levine who made objects appear and disappear.

Emeritus Funding Remains Uncertain

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reductions" and that the Board of Trustees has no control over these funds. Information on how to donate to the SMC Foundation can be found at foundation.smc.edu/emergitus.

In July, SMC was put on a list of institutions requiring increased financial monitoring by the Accrediting Commission for Community and

Junior Colleges because of SMC's fiscal problems. Roy emphasized that, "SMC has made significant progress towards balancing its budget and began this fiscal year with an improved starting fund balance and adopted a nearly balanced operating budget. However, a 5 million-dollar structural deficit still exists."

SMC has also been conducting a nationwide search for a new Superintendent/President. The current Superintendent Kathryn E.

Jeffery will be retiring on December 31, 2026. The search had been paused in August but has resumed according to Roy. A candidate has been interviewed and "the Board will be providing an update."

Roy also pointed out, "the Superintendent Search Committee "contained people with deep connections to the Emeritus Program, including a current faculty member who teaches at Emeritus."

Former Emeritus Instructor Monona Wali's *Sutra Americana*

By Perri Chasin

"Monona Wali's new novel, *Sutra Americana*, is an incredibly written, multigenerational family saga that follows an Indian-American immigrant family through five decades of change, sacrifice, and self-discovery" (Third Coast Review). Praise indeed for Wali's latest novel which the reviewer continues is a "beautiful case study in identity."

If the name Monona Wali sounds familiar, it's because for nearly two decades, she was a beloved instructor here at Emeritus who taught Autobiography, Short Story and Writing for Publication. On Monday, November 30, at 4:00 p.m., Wali and Emeritus instructor Kathleen McKay will be in conversation about *Sutra Americana* and Wali will read from the novel. The event will be held in the auditorium of the Emeritus campus at 1227 Second Street in downtown Santa Monica and books will be available for sale. All are invited and Wali says she is really looking forward to seeing former students there.

When asked the meaning of the book's title, Wali, who retired from teaching writing at Emeritus in 2025, tells me it means "to learn to be American. Sutra means a manual threaded with beads of wisdom." The book follows how an Indian scientist, his wife and three young daughters assimilate in America, the daughters' embarkations of self-discovery shatter their parents' influence, the parents' failings pull the family apart, and how they all find their way back together.

Like the family in her novel, Wali's family also immigrated to America. She indicates while some aspects of the book are autobiographical, much of it is made up and characters take on a life of their own when one writes fiction.

Following unsuccessful attempts to find a publisher, her previous novel, *My Blue Skin Lover*, about a woman take the god Shiva as a lover, was self-published in 2014. "I got a note from a publisher saying, this is too Hindu for us. And I was quite offended by that, to be honest."

She experienced some of the same challenges when attempting to seek a publisher for *Sutra Americana*. The novel was sent to many agents in the hope they would represent her to a major publishing house. She next reached out to independent presses while simultaneously submitting the work to contests. It was after her novel was a finalist in three separate contests,



she knew she was getting close Around that same time, the University of Wisconsin Press had an open submission process. She submitted the novel to them, an editor there liked it, and yet it took another year before it was green lit and they agreed to publish the book.

When asked about University of Wisconsin Press, Wali exclaims, "They've been really wonderful...I have several podcasts scheduled and my book launch will be in L.A. at Village Well Books in Culver City on October 22nd at 6:30 p.m., and everyone's invited to that." The official publication date is October 20th.

According to Wali, *Sutra Americana* "...is about the power of getting a story out about a family that chooses to love each other and forgive each other and stay together as a family despite the ways that they might have hurt each other and for me, that's a powerful message that we really need to hear right now in this very fractured world...and seeing the potential of fiction to bring people together and to step into other people's shoes...I feel that putting a book out in the world is very much a part of that process. That's what I'm really wanting to celebrate."

Sutra Americana is now available on pre-order through Wali's website at mononawali.com

Scan the QR code to the book's review in Third Coast Review:



Meet Emeritus Instructor Gloria Albert

By Margaret Lenze

Gloria Albert is one of those good, kind of cool teachers we all hope for as we show up to the first class of the school year, at whatever age. She is friendly, inviting, with a plethora of fresh ideas and activities. She encourages participation, is open to feedback, and students are welcome to stay unmuted. Students feel a part of the learning process; Gloria's welcoming approach makes it feel more like being with a group of friends. She comes across as "one of us." She seems to enjoy learning new information as a student herself.

Gloria has been teaching at Emeritus college for twenty-seven years. In 1999, she started teaching the then-named Stress Management, which is now Understanding Our Mind, Body & Brain for Senior Adults. She says, "It kept morphing into something else. I only had the one class for many years and somehow the exercise classes came my way and I'm loving them all now.

She had other jobs in prior years as a plant nanny and a production assistant to well-known producers in the motion picture industry, although did not like it. Through her own acupressure sessions,

she was invited to learn to be an acupuncturist at the acupressure workshop in Santa Monica. She shares, "I loved it, embracing the philosophies and theories turned my life around."

Gloria also practiced massage therapy for many years. Inspired, it also began her passion for travel, and she spent most of the eighties abroad—five years in Nepal, four years in Sierra Leone and West Africa. She found getting quiet led her on a path of wellness. She practiced message therapy and acupressure in Nepal, as well as studying healing techniques with Buddhist monks.

Through teaching at Emeritus, Gloria found herself integrating all of the mind-body techniques she had learned over the years. Before starting at Emeritus, she taught exercise, balance, and brain health to seniors in residential communities. She has always had a love for dance, particularly Zydeco dancing, which originates in Louisiana. She practices what she teaches, walks every day, lifts weights at the YMCA, and is well-read on the latest health, mind-body, and spiritual knowledge. She has a library of music from all genres

to move to and makes sure we all have smiles in each class by showing heartwarming, uplifting, fun videos of all kinds.

In addition to keeping her students' minds sharp and aware in class, Gloria has a monthly column: "SOS (Succeed Over Stress), WellnessWorks: providing innovative, stress management, and wellness programs and information. With the Goal to help reduce stress...and live more productive, healthier, happy lives."

Students come to appreciate Gloria's wealth of experience on healthy living, healing, exercise, acupressure, and the workings of the body-mind connection, inspiring students to feel good about their lives.

If you'd like to take a class with Gloria Albert, she teaches the following at SMC Emeritus:

Enjoy life-Understanding Our Mind, Body & Brain for Seniors T/TH, Strength & Stamina M/W, Walking for Wellness (at Palisades Park at ocean) T/TH, and will be teaching a meditation class beginning Spring 2027.

Emeritus Class: Principles of Acting with Barbara Gannen

By Marjorie Friedlander

Barbara Gannen's been teaching Principles of Acting at Emeritus for 37 years, and loves it. For most of those years the class met in person. The Covid pandemic has changed the way the class operates: Zoom to the rescue. Our "interview" consisted of questions emailed to Barbara, and her recorded responses on Zoom, delivered in a wonderfully warm and engaging manner.

Barbara was born in New York, first generation American. Undergrad at Ithaca College, and an MFA from Hunter College, her first experience with acting was in a high school performance of Antigone. In college, she directed Bertoldt Brecht's *A Man's a Man*, and in grad school she studied with Harold Clurman, a founder of New York's Group Theater. Barbara was ready, but New York wasn't, so in 1976 she moved to

Los Angeles. A friend invited her to review a film script, which led to an eight year reading career. Her recommendations were sought by every studio and every network.

Another friend introduced her to Maggie Hall, then head of Emeritus College. Barbara was hired. She didn't see herself as a teacher, but, "We all love stories. And what are stories? We hold the mirror up, and we see ourselves. And if it's a comedy, if it's a drama, we see ourselves in all of our most noble and heroic aspects, and in a comedy, we hold the funhouse mirror up, and we see ourselves reflected as silly,

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Eight Decades of Community, Craft, and Creativity in Santa Monica

By Gordon Blitz

Theater is alive and well in Santa Monica. For those of us who want neighborhood theater and refuse to go east of the 405, you'll find your salvation at The Morgan-Wixson Theatre.

It's the home of the Santa Monica Theatre Guild, which stands as one of the longest running community theaters in Los Angeles County—a volunteer powered institution that has shaped the cultural life of Santa Monica since 1946. What began in a living room meeting of passionate theater lovers has grown into a vibrant nonprofit organization dedicated to entertainment, education, and artistic development.

From its earliest days, the Guild embraced an ambitious vision. In its founding year, the company produced eight shows at the Miles Playhouse, including *You Can't Take It With You*, a title they revived in 2026 to celebrate their 80th anniversary—a symbolic nod to their origins and enduring spirit. Over the decades, the theater survived a fire, rebuilt its home, and

adapted through cultural shifts and even the Covid-19 shutdown.

Today, the Morgan Wixson produces ten shows each year: five Main Stage productions and five Youth Education Series (Y.E.S.) shows. The Morgan-Wixson Theatre is not an architecturally grand or historic movie palace. Instead, it is a modest community theater building that was largely constructed by volunteers containing a 201-seat auditorium, a large proscenium stage, wing space, and a fly system.

The theater can handle large casts costume-heavy plays and musicals.

The 80th Anniversary Season exemplifies the theater's blend of tradition and contemporary relevance. Productions such as *Dogfight*, *9 to 5 The Musical*, *Shrek*, and *Into the Woods* showcase both professional quality craft and community accessibility. Their staging of *9 to 5* in 2026 highlighted themes of female empowerment and workplace equity in addition to the testament of composer Dolly Parton's genius.

Beyond its stage, the Morgan Wixson serves as a cultural anchor for Santa Monica. It offers discounted tickets for students and seniors, volunteer opportunities, and a welcoming environment where residents can participate in or simply enjoy live theater. Its longevity—now over 80 years—is a testament to the dedication of thousands of volunteers and artists who have kept the Guild thriving.

Located at 2627 Pico Boulevard, the Morgan Wixson Theatre remains Santa Monica's only community theater, a place where artistry, education, and neighborhood pride converge. As it continues into its next decade, it stands not just as a venue, but as a living legacy of local creativity, resilience, and shared storytelling.

Plus, for myself, as a playwright, having live theater a few blocks from my Santa Monica residence is miraculous.

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stupid, neurotic, selfish, greedy, annoying, petty people that we actually are, and we get to laugh about it. So, story is really what I teach. I don't really teach acting, although that's what we do."

Switching to Zoom, work is still the telling of stories, but in close-up. The work is still the telling of stories, but in close-up. It's very intimate. Before, actors were on a stage, so they had to be a bit larger than life. For Zoom, Barbara knew that it had to be very simple and very present and conversational. "I love what's happening here. You're actually just sitting right across the table from

each other. Just pull it back to a much more intimate conversation, which changes everything right away. So that was the big adjustment. Now, when we could go back to the classroom, very few people want to. There are a lot of people who no longer drive. Some people live pretty far away, and they get to participate. The fact that it's on Zoom is wonderful for me. People who really want to do in-person have other opportunities, but they still want to come to this class because I'm giving them something that maybe they're not getting someplace else."

Barbara has connections with the Geffen Theater's "Lights Up" program, and occasionally shares

tickets with students in the class, a welcome extra perk.

At the end of each semester, on Zoom, Barbara presents Conversations, a lively collection of short works. Each "conversation" involves a couple of students who have worked together all semester. During the semester, each team finds a scene, or writes one. As the semester goes on, the students work on their scenes in class, with coaching from Barbara. The final presentation includes all the conversations.

If you want to explore acting with Barbara, Principles of Acting meets online on Tuesdays

Frugal Adventures: Visiting the University of Southern California Campus

By Jeanne Shamji

My eldest son received a full scholarship to the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business, but I never took the time to tour the campus to enjoy the beautiful architecture and peaceful grounds. Nor did I visit the libraries, museums, and restaurants. I recently discovered that USC offers free campus tours to all visitors with 24 hours' notice. I was told the tour offers a chance to experience a college like no other.

The meeting point is the USC Admission Center at 3607 Trousdale Pkwy, Los Angeles, CA 90089. Student-led tours cover campus history, traditions, and student resources. Tours are open to all visitors Monday through Friday, starting at 8:45 a.m., and last about 90 minutes. I suggest arriving 30 minutes late to avoid the preliminary 45-minute sit-down discussion about how to enroll at the university.

Parking is \$20 per day. I recommend taking the Metro, which takes you

directly to the front of campus at the Expo Park/USC station. Seniors pay thirty-five cents per ride. Friendly security guards are highly visible on the trains and at the station.

Knowledgeable, polite, and caring students lead the tours and are attentive to visitors who need walkers or wheelchairs. Visitors can explore the campus on their own from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. using an available map.

The campus can feel overwhelming, with so many schools and buildings to explore. Walking from the Metro to the opposite side of campus is a fifteen-minute stroll. If you get tired along the way, there are plenty of comfortable, shady spots to rest and grab a snack before continuing.

The university dates back to 1879. Drawing on medieval European architecture, the Romanesque Revival design features symmetrical façades, arched windows and doors, and intricate sculptural decoration.

Buildings are typically faced with brick and cream-colored limestone. Fountains and statues abound. The terrazzo walkways are lovely. I felt as if I were spending the day in France or Italy. Some students ride skateboards or bikes, but the campus is largely car-free. The majestic Library of Philosophy inside Moose Hall is breathtaking. Its interior is richly appointed with fine woods, tile, marble, and stained glass.

USC sits in the creative capital of the world, offering unmatched pipelines into film, communication, and the arts through programs like USC Cinematic Arts. USC is among the most filmed college campuses in the world, known for its Ivy League architecture and its versatility as a stand-in for other universities.

Neil Armstrong, the astronaut and first person to stand on the moon, attended this college. The USC Rocket Propulsion Lab builds a rocket ship from scratch each year and launches it into space. Students build Formula One race cars that compete worldwide.

Our tour took us into Heritage Hall, where USC Heisman Trophy winners are honored. I was amazed to learn that USC alumni have won 341 Olympic medals throughout the history of the Games.

I can't wait to return to USC on a home game day to watch the Trojan band practice in their iconic maroon-and-gold full-dress uniforms, wearing plumed helmets and marching in formation while playing their instruments in front of Heisman Hall two hours before the football game.

Go Trojans!



Resilience in Aging

By Sharon Valente, PhD., APRN

My Emeritus friends are amazed to be in their 80th or 90th decade. Beverly is a gorgeous, white-haired ninety-plus charmer who lives alone with daytime support. She is positive, supportive, and a role model for all her yogi friends. Marlena and Sally never imagined surviving their husbands' deaths—but they live alone and cope with balance, mobility, and vision issues. Sally just relinquished driving her beloved SUV. Both appreciate compassionate family and friends who lend a hand. Recovering from a fractured pelvis, Marlena appreciates rides to her voice class. As we manage distressing losses of friends, abilities, and disorders, how do we remain resilient and optimistic?

Health-care decisions can be based on science, Western or Eastern principles, cultural values (e.g., self-care or native healers), socioeconomics, or “Doc Google.” Aging challenges us to accept the law of life. As Sally says, “I’m falling apart, slowly.”

The internet offers tempting miracle cures and the fountain of youth. Think of the hyped baking soda for weight loss, the honey recipe that reverses Alzheimer’s Disease, or the potions for everything from sagging boobs to hair restoration or toenail fungus that seem too good to be true. All costly and without reputable scientific support. When I’m tempted by the enticing wrinkle cream or latest celebrity-touted insomnia cure, I pause and research “fake internet cures” or check the AARP Fraud Network.

Mike Evans, a University of Toronto physician-researcher, argues that we should exercise vigorously for 30 minutes daily; this helps reduce hypertension, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Such advice needs tailoring to individual needs and tempering during heat spells.

Changing diet and exercise is not easy. Options include a DIY approach, Weight Watchers, senior centers, local gyms, or the YMCA. Type A or the Energizer Bunny types who summited high mountains, ran corporations, or reached other pinnacles find they are slower, lack balance, strength, and other taken-for-granted capacities. We may scale back our expectations and take walks instead of conquering mountain peaks.

In the socio-emotional realm, geriatric experts advise us to reduce stress, enjoy the ride, and be positive thinkers. It helps to have someone to share in healthcare decision-making. Long-term care, home health care, and surgery vs. physical therapy decisions are complex decisions. Consulting medical experts, thoughtful family, or friends can help.

Grieving our losses is important and encourages reflection and memories. Sally and Caren take comfort in imagining how their late hubbies would cope. Caren said, “I laugh as I struggle with the IRS phone line. When my late hubby complained bitterly about how he hated doing taxes, I teased that dead men don’t do taxes. Now it’s on me.” We appreciate our family, friends, and Emeritus, where we socialize, expand new friendships, and learn skills such as jewelry making, singing, and acting.

Aging challenges seniors to develop resilience and acceptance. We need to build ego integrity as we face disappointment with our changing capacity and adapt to fading physical and mental prowess, increased medications, and disease management. I admit to coping with denial and procrastination, but usually I’m proactive. To reduce my A1c score and avoid GPL medications, I eliminated sugar and was surprised to find sugar-free chocolate and recipes to assuage my sweet tooth. Despite my early resistance to yoga, I discovered a wonderful Emeritus yoga community. Although I prize independence, I am learning to ask for help. Adapting to change and shunning negativity builds resilience.



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One SaMo People's Academy

By Perri Chasin

On April 30, 2026, Santa Monica inaugurated its first One SaMo People's Academy, a program that offered residents an inside look at city government operations. The brainchild of Santa Monica's then mayor, Lana Negrete, the concept was unanimously approved by the City Council. Sergio Ramirez, a thirty-year veteran of the city, responsible for Special Projects, was tasked with developing and overseeing the program which took six months to launch.

What resulted was a six-week course which met Thursdays from 6:00 to 8:00 pm, offering a behind-the-scenes glimpse of city government. The goal was to incorporate each of the city's fifteen departments from the City Clerk to Police, Fire and Emergency Management to Rent Control to the Library to Public Works and Transportation, every one of which was represented weekly to provide participants opportunities for civic engagement.

The call for participants went out and originally 263 residents initiated the application process which was reduced to 145 applicants by attrition. Ramirez revealed that their council believed ideal candidates for this opportunity were individuals with little or no exposure to city government in an attempt for them to get the most out of this experience. The twenty-five Santa Monica residents selected came from all walks of life and included students, housewives, film producers and chemists which ranged in age from a 19-year-old urban planning student to a 79-year-old retiree. Ramirez initially didn't know what to expect, "when I realized the demand by the residents, I'm like, wow, they're really looking for this type of connection and knowledge about our local government, wanting to dig deeper into how policies are made, how are they affected by some of these decisions, where are these decisions made, and who's delivering on the work."

An important component of the course was to include facility tours and one of these was an exploration of the city's underground Sustainable Water Infrastructure Project (SWIP) and Advanced Water Advanced Water Treatment facility that is located beneath the Santa Monica Civic Center parking lot. Some long-time residents had no idea the water plant existed and were fascinated to learn the city maintains the underground infrastructure developed to recycle water, reusing up to 1.5 million gallons per day of stormwater, dry-weather runoff and treated wastewater to make the city more sustainable for zero waste.



Another class was conducted on a Santa Monica City bus tour which provided participants with an understanding of the city's mobility projects, traffic engineering, roadway safety and how transportation policy decisions that were made by the City Council are implemented. It additionally aided in an understanding of some of the city's bikeways, of the city's parking structures and basically anything transportation related so that by the end of that tour all participants were actively engaged in addressing the Santa Monica city's transportation system.

Each of the participants completed the course and on June 9, they arrived at City Hall and were issued a certificate by the mayor. Feedback for the course has been excellent, so much so that the City Council has resolved to launch the program annually. Not surprisingly, after participating, one graduate applied for a seat on the city's Arts Commission while another applied for city employment and was hired to work with the city's Housing and Human Services Department program at Virginia Avenue Park as a community specialist.

Ramirez is already planning the next iteration, which will commence in March of 2027, along with a separate one-day Youth Civic Leadership program for high schoolers. He intends to add two additional weeks to the Academy's current six-week syllabus. "People have a lot more questions about finance, our HR processes and some of our technology," and he will incorporate the new classes to address them. It's fair to say that witnessing the participants' engagement, their wanting to learn and "just their commitment to learning and coming together in the spirit of being passionate about government," has already deemed the debut One SaMo People's Academy a success.

Just North of Malibu with Jolynn Freed Regan

By Linda J. Hernández

Jolynn Freed Regan has been a student with SMC Emeritus for the past two years. She takes Instructor Barry Ghabaei's Creative Writing class. During the fall 2026 semester she added Writing for Publication with Instructor Kathleen MacKay. I had the pleasure of interviewing her for our first class. There I learned that she has been preparing her first poetry collection for the past several years. Jolynn launched her first poetry book in May of 2026.

Jolynn was born and raised in Fargo, North Dakota. She moved to Los Angeles in 1998 and immersed herself in the local poetry scene. Her poems have been read from Fargo to Phoenix and New York to LA. Her work is published in *Transformations*, *A Place Like This* and *All Breathing Things Poetry Anthologies*. She is a member of the Academy of American Poets and the Vital Poets writing group. Jolynn is a regular contributor to the Verse About Town program, featuring her poems in public spaces throughout Malibu. One of her greatest joys is teaching poetry to elementary, middle, and high school students over the past ten years.

Just North of Malibu showcases the breathtaking beauty of the seaside paradise that is Malibu, California. Malibu is iconic in its reputation as a fabled beachfront town, an exclusive enclave for the rich, famous, private

and privileged. Jolynn has lived here for the past thirty years, and her poems reflect the Malibu she knows—a destination for nature lovers, surfers hunting the big wave, families raising children, and animals running wild.

As Jolynn explains, “My poetry flows into mythical Los Angeles, a vibrant and diverse metropolis, sprawling with cultural heritage, famous landmarks, and everyday wonders that ooze Hollywood history. Part elegy and part call to resistance, my poetry collection explores the dichotomies of these two dynamic cities—their beauty and despair, their apathy and protest, their fame and addiction, as they interlock in the soul intimacy connection of poetry.”

Jolynn's poem, “Flower Shower,” won Berlin Poetry Society's *Small Magic* poetry contest in April 2026. One of my favorite poems reflects her vibrant personality and spirit:

GENEROUS ENTHUSIASM

Live each day

with gratitude

and

generous enthusiasm

so as

never to remember

any day

with regret

Jolynn is also a featured reader for the Los Angeles Poet Society's Jubilations poetry events and has been a featured reader for the past seven years at the City of Malibu's Annual Poetry Summit. Her book is currently available on Amazon, and I found perusing her poetry very inspiring.

In answer to the question, “What is the best part of releasing your book?” she replied, “It is the amazing people I have met along the way that welcome me with open arms and hearts into the Malibu and Los Angeles poetry scene. It is pure joy for me to read on stages with people from all over our country.”

Jolynn with *Just North of Malibu* at the city's annual Poetry Summit in May of 2026.



Dating on the Cheap Tips for Senior Citizens

By Camille Gaon

A lot of senior citizens are struggling these days with trying to keep up with inflation. Just a few years back, the social security set could subside on eating dog food, but then that got too expensive. As a result, the high cost of living in today's world, seniors are isolated and lonely and a lot of them would like to date but can't afford it. So, I've researched some options for them.

Gentlemen, start your libido engines. You're going on a date! First of all, there are lots of FREE activities and events for people of all ages, especially seniors. Check out local parks, libraries, rec centers and senior centers. Art galleries are another good choice, such as at Bergamot Station's opening receptions which offer free nibbles and wine.

Here's a curated date night prepared just for you. It starts in the afternoon though because I know you early birds rise at the crack of dawn and heads hit the pillow shortly after the sun touches down. Senior centers and libraries screen films during the day. So, take your date to a matinee.

When that lets out, you're just in time for the early bird dinners or happy hours with reduced price appetizers and free nuts and olives at the bars. If that's still too costly, given your paltry dole out from Social Security, here's option two. Take your gal to Costco. They have free food samples. It's like going to the world's fair with the carnival barkers hawking their wares, "Step right up, folks! Get your hot chicken nuggets fresh out of the oven!" Granted, it's a little toaster oven on a table where they dispense the freebies, but at least you're taking your date for a hot meal.

Now these are bite-sized so you have to eat a lot of them to fill up. Go for pizza samples, then mini-sub sandwiches, then the raviolis and repeat. Do that until the sample dispenser cuts you off. Don't forget the dessert samples!

One drawback. You have to stand while you eat. If you both have those walkers that have seats built in, then that solves that dilemma. If you wanna have a sit-down dinner at Costco, you're gonna have to spring for a hot dog and Coke in their

outdoor food court. I hear the dogs are delicious and only cost a buck fifty.

At the next phase in your relationship? Invite her to your place for dinner. A free dinner. Just go stock up on samples at Costco beforehand.

There will be little old ladies, older than you even, who will try and cut the lines. If you were raised a gentleman, you have to suspend the good manners if you want to get samples before they run out. So, when these blue-haired battleaxes run your toes over with their walkers, (oh yeah, don't wear flip flops unless you want to end up in the ER) you have to nonchalantly jab them with your elbow to nudge them out.

Now, let's get your honey fresh flowers and chocolates. Go pay your respects at the nearest cemetery. Mondays are best because relatives leave flowers on Sundays. Next, go to See's Candy stores and collect enough free samples to fill one of your old cigar boxes. Wrap in newspaper and you have a thrifty, nifty gift for your lady who's way past fifty.

Coming soon:

The Ongoing Moment Fall 2026

A journal of art and memoir by SMC Emeritus students. Scan the QR code to order your copies. And stay tuned for reading and events!



Ricardo Means Ybarra Celebrates 10 Years of Teaching Poetry in Malibu Schools

By Jolynn Regan

Ricardo Means Ybarra was selected as Malibu's First Poet Laureate, ten years ago. The honor well deserved with Ybarra writing three novels, three volumes of poetry and a community anthology of art and poetry. He is a sixth-generation Californian, surfer, husband, father and poet. Ybarra had been teaching poetry workshops to students in Pacoima for ten years prior to his Malibu Poet Laureateship and saw the positive impact writing poems had on students.



As he began his Laureateship, it occurred to Ybarra that students in this city could benefit from writing poetry as well. "I wanted to write poetry with the kids in our community; I wanted them to have the experience of writing something that comes from deep inside, from thousands of years of 'telling' around the fire circle, poetry from their ancestors that continue on and on. I hope that when they hear a poem they will proudly remember, "Wow, I wrote a poem too!" explains Ybarra.

Thus began his now famous four-week "Poetry in the Schools" workshops with Malibu students in fifth, eighth and 12th grades. During Ybarra's first workshop, I had the distinct pleasure of being a fifth-grade mom volunteer. From that first workshop until now, ten years later, I have not stopped teaching with him and continue to be in awe of the honesty, humanity and humor he brings out in the students' writing.

"In each workshop we are reminded to slow down, appreciate, feel, celebrate, connect, and reflect on the beauty of being human through language," said 8th grade Malibu Middle School English teacher, Katy Lapajne. Lapajne has been a teacher partner since the first workshop ten years ago.

The poetry workshops have always been a collaboration with art, another brainchild of Ybarra's. Students in fifth grade create beautiful pieces that complement their poetry. Each year, a guest artist is brought in to work with the students, decide on a theme and create a masterpiece.

The "Poetry in Schools" program celebrated a special full-circle moment two years ago when Ybarra conducted a poetry workshop with 12th graders, who had been his fifth-grade students in his very first workshop. It was incredibly meaningful to see the inaugural poetry workshop students off to college.

Ybarra has continued to champion the program in Malibu through two devastating fires and Covid. The challenges were great, but Ricardo did not stop the poetry workshops. He turned to Zoom and with the help of incredible teacher partners, he was able to continue to share poetry. The stay-at-home year Ybarra created an incredible quilt by giving each student a "take-home" quilt square and supplies to write their poem on their square. What came after was no less than magic when he shared the completed quilt with the students in person, when they could safely return to school.

The City of Malibu is looking forward to honoring Ybarra by celebrating 10 years of "Poetry in Schools" with an exhibition of student poetry and art in April 2027. Congratulations, Ricardo Means Ybarra for sharing your passion for poetry with nearly two thousand Malibu students over the past ten years!

From the Dean's Desk

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simply need someone patient and knowledgeable to guide them through the process.

That is why I am asking for your help. Volunteer opportunities are available both at the Emeritus front desk and in our Mini-Lab. At the front desk, volunteers help welcome students, answer questions, connect students with resources, and assist with enrollment and registration. In the Mini-Lab, volunteers help students access their accounts, navigate online systems, register for classes, use Zoom, and build confidence using computers, tablets, and smartphones.

We are also looking for volunteers who can assist with outreach efforts. Many potential students are eager to participate in Emeritus but need encouragement, information, or technical assistance before taking the first step. Volunteers can help us connect with prospective students, support recruitment activities, and ensure that more older adults have access to the educational opportunities available through Emeritus.

If you are one of the many Emeritus students who comfortably uses email, Zoom, online registration systems, or a smartphone, you may already have the skills we need.

Volunteer Requirements

To be successful in these roles, volunteers must:

- Have strong computer, internet, and mobile device skills.
- Be able to successfully set up and manage their own SMC student email account.

- Be comfortable navigating the SMC Corsair Connect student services system.
- Be proficient using the Zoom platform.
- Demonstrate patience, professionalism, and a commitment to helping older adults succeed.
- Complete all required campus clearance processes, including fingerprinting, a background check, and a TB test.
- Commit to volunteering for a minimum of one three-hour shift per week.

Why Volunteer?

Volunteering is an opportunity to make a direct and meaningful difference in the lives of fellow students. A few minutes of assistance can help someone enroll in a class, overcome a technology challenge, remain engaged in learning, and become an active member of our community.

Volunteers also become ambassadors for Emeritus. They build relationships with students, faculty, and staff, stay connected to program developments, and experience the satisfaction that comes from helping others succeed. Many of our most successful students first needed someone to guide them through the process.

How to Volunteer?

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Vivian Rankin-Scales at rankin-scales_vivian@smc.edu.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable community. Together, we can continue building an Emeritus program that changes lives through lifelong learning, personal growth, and meaningful connections.



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/emeritus

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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