



# THE ORACLE

NOVEMBER 2025

A Biannual Newsletter of the  
Oak Ridge Institute for Continued Learning

## Message from the President



In my previous message, I outlined the actions the Board is taking to attract and retain members. Increased membership allows for more—and more diverse—classes, an improved financial position, and a more attractive and enduring program. I am happy to report that these efforts have begun to pay off.

We have added 57 new members this fall! Our fall catalog lists 84 courses! These are significant increases over the past few years. We are anticipating ending the 2025-26 fiscal year in the black for the first time in many years. This achievement would not have been possible without the concerted effort, commitment, and generosity of ORICL leadership, staff, instructors, volunteers, and members. We have no intention of backing off from these efforts. We continue to look for practical, cost-effective ways to let people know about ORICL. (You may have noticed our ads in the playbills of the Oak Ridge Playhouse and Oak Ridge Civic Music Association.) We will continue to promote ORICL through:

- hosting a “Meet & Greet” event for current and prospective members in January;
- writing articles in *The Oak Ridger* to promote the upcoming term;
- doing targeted advertising where it makes sense;
- increasing ORICL’s visibility at area Senior Centers;
- recruiting black residents to attend and participate in a course entitled "Lessons in Black and White: A 160-Year Journey of Race Relations in Oak Ridge";
- dropping off ORICL literature at area libraries, retirement communities, arts organizations, credit unions, etc.;
- producing the ***Our American Roots*** series of presentations and performances in collaboration with the Oak Ridge Breakfast Rotary Club;
- including ORICL information in ORNL’s retiree packages and giving out ORICL flyers to interested employees at ORNL’s annual Benefits and Wellness Fair;
- increasing our exposure on internet searches and visitor and relocation websites; and

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- hosting a table/booth at area events/festivals.

If you are a new member this fall, you likely received a call from a board member welcoming you to our ORICL community and soliciting your input on the types of classes or subjects that interest you, what influenced your decision to join, (word of mouth is most often cited), and any questions or concerns you have. Your feedback provides valuable intel for our marketing efforts, class preferences, and suggestions for new subjects and instructors. If you have other suggestions to promote or improve ORICL, or would be willing to help, we would like to hear from you. Please call or email the ORICL office.



### ORICL Calendar for December 2025 through April 2026

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 12/2/2025             | Winter/Spring Online Registration opens                    |
| 12/15/2025 - 1/3/2026 | Holidays - ORICL office and classrooms closed              |
| 1/5/2026              | ORICL office opens   |
| 1/19/2026             | Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday - RSCC/ORICL closed        |
| 1/21/2026             | Student Schedules pick-up                                  |
| 2/2/2026              | Winter/Spring classes begin                                |
| 3/9/2026 - 3/13/2026  | RSCC Spring Break - ORICL in session, but RSCC Cafe closed |
| 4/3/2026              | Good Friday Holiday - RSCC/ORICL closed                    |
| 4/24/2026             | Winter/Spring classes end                                  |



**Save the date:  
January 13, 2026: Meet and Greet  
Bring a friend. Special Membership rate  
for people "new" to ORICL.**

We remember the wonderful programs presented in previous years by the cooperation of the **Oak Ridge Rotary Clubs** and **ORICL**. A new season is being planned; keep an eye out for upcoming notices.

***American Roots*** will be back in 2026!

### Remembering Murray Martin The Murray Martin Memorial Fund

Murray Martin's involvement with ORICL began in 2000. He served as the Chair of the Curriculum Committee, a demanding position that is crucial to the educational success of ORICL's program, from 2006 through 2021. Along the way, he also taught thirty-five courses, emphasizing music, art, and travel. At the core of all this service was a passion for education, which he enjoyed sharing with others.

If you would like to make a donation to the Murray Martin Memorial Fund, please be sure to note on the check. If you have questions, contact the office staff (info on the right side of this page).

## ORICL Board Members

Pat Bryan, President  
Jim Palmer, Vice President  
Lois McKeever, Treasurer  
Becky Rushton,  
Curriculum Committee Chair  
Phyllis Alexander  
Nancy Burwell  
Betty Anne Domm  
Judi Gray  
Jim Knox  
Carolyn Krause  
Ruby Miller  
Jackie Rylander

### STAFF

Susan Perry, Office Administrator and Secretary to the Board  
Melanie Neal, Assistant Office Administrator

### ORICL Office

Room F-111 - Roane State  
Community College  
701 Briarcliff Avenue  
Oak Ridge, TN 37830

**Hours:** M-Th, 9 am-Noon  
Closed Fridays

**Phone:** (865) 481-8222

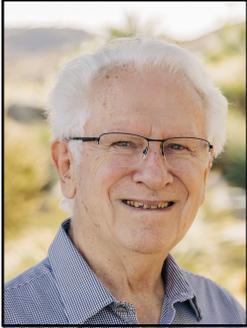
### Website:

[www.roanestate.edu/oricl](http://www.roanestate.edu/oricl)

**Facebook:** @ORICLRSCC

***ORICL is a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit organization in partnership with Roane State Community College***

## Jim Palmer Elected ORICL Vice President



Jim Palmer has been elected as Vice President of ORICL. Jim is a retired U.S. Patent Agent, and he has been a member of the ORICL Board of Directors since Nov. 2020. As a member of the Board, he has been instrumental in promoting diversity in the organization, and along with Board Member Ruby Miller he has co-chaired the **Our American Roots** project since its inception three years ago. In addition to his role in ORICL, he chairs the Roane County Industrial Development Board and is a Board Member of the Oak Ridge Housing Authority. He is also an active member of the Oak Ridge Breakfast Rotary Club where he co-founded and continues as a leader of “Career Pathways,” which provides mentoring and part-time jobs to help boost the achievement of Oak Ridge High School students facing academic and personal challenges.

## Phyllis Alexander Joins ORICL Board

Phyllis Alexander has been a champion for social justice for several decades, and civil rights professional for over twenty years working for both corporate America and city government.

Phyllis is a experienced coalition builder and trainer and credits her skills to her 30-year plus affiliation with the [National Coalition Building Institute](#), an international social justice/ social change organization. Phyllis has had several roles with NCBI including senior trainer and was President of the NCBI Board of Directors from 2012-2017. In addition to facilitating NCBI workshops including their Welcoming Diversity training, Phyllis facilitates a variety of conversations ranging from courageous conversations about race, to strategic planning sessions for boards.

Phyllis has a Bachelor of Science in Economics and later received a Master of Science in Community Economic Development from Southern New Hampshire University.

As a consultant with the Promise Neighborhood of the Lehigh Valley (PNLV), Phyllis works as the Project Director for the Leadership Without Limits Leadership Institute. In this role, Phyllis practices her “pass the baton” strategy by supporting the leadership of mostly millennial students. Phyllis works as a Social Justice and Identity Repair and Recover Specialist for two nonprofits.

Community engagement includes volunteering as a board member of the Freedom Memorial, a Lehigh Valley, PA non-profit dedicated to commemorating the life and continuing the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. & Coretta Scott King. Until February 2025, Phyllis was the Vice President of the Resurrected Community Development Corporation (RCDC), a Lehigh Valley faith-based non-profit dedicated to social justice. Per their vision statement, RCDC is committed to creating communities of equity, excellence and empowered residents.



## Melanie Neal Celebrates Ten Years with ORICL



Melanie Neal began her career at ORICL during the summer of 2015. She worked with Laura Bowles as the Assistant Administrator, learning all of the tasks needed to run the office. Laura retired in 2016. Melanie was instrumental in running the office and all of the things that needed to be done while waiting for Laura's replacement to be hired. Melanie proved her efficiency while waiting for a new office mate. She kept everything moving along smoothly until Susan was hired, and then she helped train Susan in the day-to-day operations of ORICL.

She is a dedicated and loyal employee. Melanie is quite skilled in using the computer, especially using excel - she creates many useful spreadsheets! She is kind and pleasant to ORICL members and instructors. She is helpful to many, especially Susan, especially this year as Susan has been dealing with her parents' health issues in another state.

Melanie is married and has two adult children, one son-in-law and two precious grandsons.

Susan could not ask for or have a better co-worker; she and Melanie are both co-workers and friends both in the office and outside of the office.

We would like to congratulate and thank Melanie for her 10 years of serving the members of ORICL.



## Member Donations Provide ORICL with Additional Operating Funds

Thanks to members who contributed to ORICL above the required membership fee. Donations were recorded so far this calendar year. (In the first three categories, there were anonymous donations.)

### Sponsoring Members (\$50 or more above the membership fee)

Alexander, James

Ball, Syd

Basford, Jim & Nancy

Battle, Connie

Burwell, Nancy

Daugherty, Mary Lou

Ewing, Virgie (tribute to Paul D. Ewing)

Graham, John & Robin

Klots, Cornelius & Mary Ellen

Knox, Jim

Kocher, David

Lasky, Sue

McKeever, Lois

Robbins, Dan

Rushton, Becky & Jim

### Sustaining Members (\$25 above the membership fee)

Adler-Jasney, Marty

Bunick, Elaine

Burger, Marion

Cantrell, Bob

Cook, Sylvester

Delene, Nancy

Ellis, Elizabeth

Ferrell, Barbara

Hatcher, Diana

Luther, Charlene

McKenney, Priscilla

Reister, Willa

Thomason, Susan & Baxter

Tompkins, Bruce

### Friends of ORICL (\$25 above the membership fee)

Kathleen Alexander, Margaret Dory, Virgie Ewing, Jane Flanagan, Ron Fowler, Ann Lesar, Frank Munger, Harry Spatz, Betty Ann Sloop, Betsy Smith, Mayo Uziel, Mary Fell, Jim Knox. In addition, there are four anonymous donors in this category.

### The Murray Martin Fund

Darling, Chuck

Oak Ridge Rotary Club on behalf of Carolyn Krause



### Dale Rosenberg and Dan Robbins - Teachers of the Year



Dale Rosenberg is a freelance Jewish educator and the rebittzen (rabbi's wife) of the Jewish Congregation of Oak Ridge. She teaches across the lifespan and in a variety of settings: colleges, synagogues, community centers, and retreats. Dale moved to Oak Ridge in January 2024 and began teaching at ORICL in February 2024. From that first class, she has consistently engaged the students in her many, varied, and popular offerings for ORICL, as well as being involved in the Oak Ridge community.

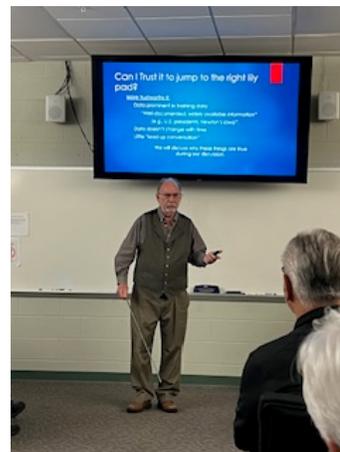
Dan Robbins retired from B & W Y-12 after 47 years of company service. At Y-12 he was the director of the analytical laboratories. He is a graduate of UNC, Chapel Hill, and a Princeton PhD. For many years, Dan has dedicated himself to obtaining materials for and teaching a variety of ORICL classes, especially in the areas of music, history, and nature. To wide acclaim, he has led many nature and birding walks in the Oak Ridge area.



The **ORICL Scholarship Endowment Fund** was established in 2003 by the ORICL Board in celebration of its fifth anniversary. As an endowment fund, the principal is invested by the Roane State Foundation (RSF), and may grow over time. The income is used for scholarships for deserving students of RSCC as determined by the RSF. The balance as of June 2025 is approximately \$26,472, which normally funds one scholarship per year.

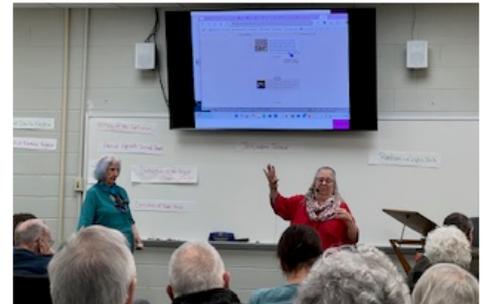
The ORICL Board plans to continue contributions to this fund to assist deserving students, and to give back to RSCC for their role in making ORICL such a success. Members wishing to contribute to this fund may contact Pam Rudnitzki, Director of Student Programs, Roane State Community College Foundation, (865) 882-4507, rudnitzkipl@roanestate.edu, or the ORICL office.

Special thanks to ORICL Board members, **Nancy Burwell, Betty Anne Domm, Judi Gray and Becky Rushton**, for volunteering to make calls to new ORICL members. ORICL wants to connect with members who have decided to join this special learning community.



## Carolyn Krause and Mayme Crowell - Volunteers of the Year

Carolyn Krause, a volunteer journalist for *The Oak Ridger*, has been a member of the ORICL board for six years last decade and almost six years this decade. Her main job has been to write news releases promoting the upcoming ORICL term and many of its courses in the catalog. She has published newspaper articles on newsworthy ORICL lectures. She has taught five courses; the most recent that she initiated, organized, and helped teach dealt with the history of race relations in Oak Ridge in the past 160 years. She recruited, promoted, and covered the talks of outside speakers hosted by ORICL last decade. She gave PowerPoint presentations to several groups to promote ORICL to outside groups. She successfully proposed investment in Vanguard index mutual funds and the creation of the Murray Martin Memorial Fund for the support of special educational projects such as Our American Roots. She helped potential ORNL retirees become more aware of ORICL by convincing its HR department to include ORICL flyers in the lab's retirement packets. She has enjoyed many ORICL courses and trips over the past 14 years!



Mayme Crowell was asked by Susan and Melanie to organize all the historical documents (pictures, articles, past flyers...) of ORICL. She spent several days over a couple of months organizing and sorting everything that had accumulated since the beginning of ORICL. The eventual final product will be a notebook "History of ORICL."

Mayme says about her connection with ORICL: In 1997 I attended the initial "interested in an adult learning" event at RSCC on the Turnpike. After retiring from ORAU in 1998, I began taking ORICL classes. I have served on the ORICL board and in 2007 was ORICL President responsible for organizing the Ten Year Celebration. Over time I have taken numerous classes in history, music, and religion as well as enjoying several trips.

ORICL is a valuable Oak Ridge asset.