



PVSC

Voice

Learning for the Fun of It!



FUN AND FOOD COMING UP!

Probably the most fun we have all year is at our annual party plus short business meeting. This year's should be a hoot. The speaker will be Andrew Mead, formerly of Bangor's Retro Rockers band. He is also, of course, a Maine Supreme Court Justice and presenter of a Summer Extravaganza session on law, ethics, and morality. He'll be talking about the History of Rock and Roll, so be prepared for anything! And the food is always good at Jeff's Catering, our venue this year (15 Event Center Way, Brewer).



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
SEPTEMBER 9: *deadline for mandatory registration.*
ACTUAL EVENT: 12:30 on Wednesday, September 18.

Fall Courses!

Your Curriculum Committee has been hard at work, and here's what they've put together—great stuff! Classes are all in person except where noted. Keep your eye on your email for more details and registration dates. Note size limits on several courses. **THE SEMESTER BEGINS SEPTEMBER 23.**

- ◆ *A Political History of the Middle East*, Rabbi Bill Siemers.
- ◆ *Unmasking the Courts and the Fate of American Democracy in 2024*, Berney Kubetz with guest speakers.
- ◆ *Opera for Beginners*, Anita Kurth (Zoom).
- ◆ *Rustic Furniture Workshop*, Wayne Hall (Orland). Max 6.
- ◆ *African Drumming (Bucksport)*. Max 9 (more with your own drum).
- ◆ *Cooking for Guys*, Geoff Gordon. Max 6.
- ◆ *Wildlands*, Deborah Krichels, organizer (Orland, outdoors). Max 20.
- ◆ *Aging and Spirituality*, Stephen McKay. Max 10.
- ◆ *Walking Strong for Fall 2024*, Mary Smith & Carol Plummer (Bangor area, outdoors). Max 15.
- ◆ *Italian Renaissance Visual Culture II: 1425-1550*, Michael Grillo. Max 15.
- ◆ *Origins of the Western Literary Tradition*, Kay Retzlaff, (Hybrid). Max 15 in-person + 10 Zoom.
- ◆ *Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction*, Mary Eyerer, MD. Max 14.

Rippling Outward

You never know what's going to happen in—or after—a PVSC course! In the last few semesters, members have created two reading groups to continue the interest and energy of the course.

Greg Gaines' course on *Scandinavians in Maine* generated a bunch of eager readers who tackle books in translation. Recently they met at Cathy Anderson's camp to discuss *Anxious People* by Fredrick Backman, translated from Swedish.

Ruth Nadelhaft's literature courses inspired another group of intrepid readers to form a Classics club. They have an impressive list of titles on their schedule and meet monthly.



Photo: Paula Moore

Members' Corner

A Mud Kitchen

By Al Larson

The Old Town Y does a good job of taking care of kids from very young through high school. The Y in Bangor does as well. They are good places to support so when they asked me if I could help out by building something for their outdoor playground, I was glad to help.

The "mud kitchen" I built has two plastic sinks and a play stove with knobs, so kids can play at cooking and doing the dishes. Because it would be set outdoors, I used some wood, paint, and varnish that I had left over from some wooden boats I had been working on. The playground is covered with woodchips so they can't get too dirty.

The staff said that when they brought it out to the playground the kids all ran over to it and started to enjoy it. The Y has a great staff so I was happy to be able to help out



Photos: Al Larson

More than "Just a Game"

By Paula Moore

As I walk from the exercise class for seniors at the Bangor Y, headed to the Rummikub game in another room, Kathy, another member in the exercise class, catches up with me. She's going to the Rummykub game, too. We joke that we are going from exercise for the body to exercise for the brain. And the researchers agree! British researchers (<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/3/8/e002998>) found that board games seem to improve both short- and long-term memory and even reduce the risk of dementia. A 68-year long study in the Journal of Gerontology (<https://academic.oup.com/psychogerontology/article/75/3/474/5628188>) found that analog game-playing may be associated with higher cognitive function at age 70 and less cognitive decline between 70 and 79.



Perhaps surprisingly, several studies suggest that playing board games seems to trigger the release of endorphins to give you that "feel good" effect. And maybe that is why my Rummykub friends and I say we are "addicted" to the game. We always leave the game table with smiles and more energy, making dates for the next game.

While I recognize that playing games keeps me sharp and happy, there is an even more important reason that I love playing board games—it's the connections with other players. Kathy was a stranger when I started the Bangor Y exercise class. As we stood together waiting for the class to begin, we just started chatting about the class, the weather, and events at the Y. Now I count Kathy as one of my friends.

"Small talk" between people who do not know each other well is often overlooked in the fabric



of our social lives, but research suggests that it is critically important. Shankar Vedantam hosts a program on Public In radio and his podcast called The Hidden Brain. In one of a pod called and a podcast, "Relationships 2.0: The Power of tiny Interactions," (<https://hiddenbrain.org/podcast/relationships-2-0-the-power-of-tiny-interactions/>), Vedantam suggested that relationships with close family, friends, and coworkers help us feel cared for and connected. And there is another whole category of people with whom we interact—casual acquaintances and even strangers—that provide additional opportunities for extra social connectedness in our lives.

The social network of many seniors may begin to shrink as children move, friends pass away, and physical mobility limits social engagements. The tiny interactions with people who aren't close to you—the cashier at Hannaford's, a patron at the library, the person sitting next to you in the doctor's office, or a new person at the game table—may result in feelings of belonging and increased happiness. These positive feelings are achieved solely through the benefits of smiling, making eye contact and holding a brief conversation, all while paying your grocery bill, checking out a new book, waiting your turn, or sliding your tiles around the table. In the post-pandemic world, these quick, casual conversations are more important than ever.

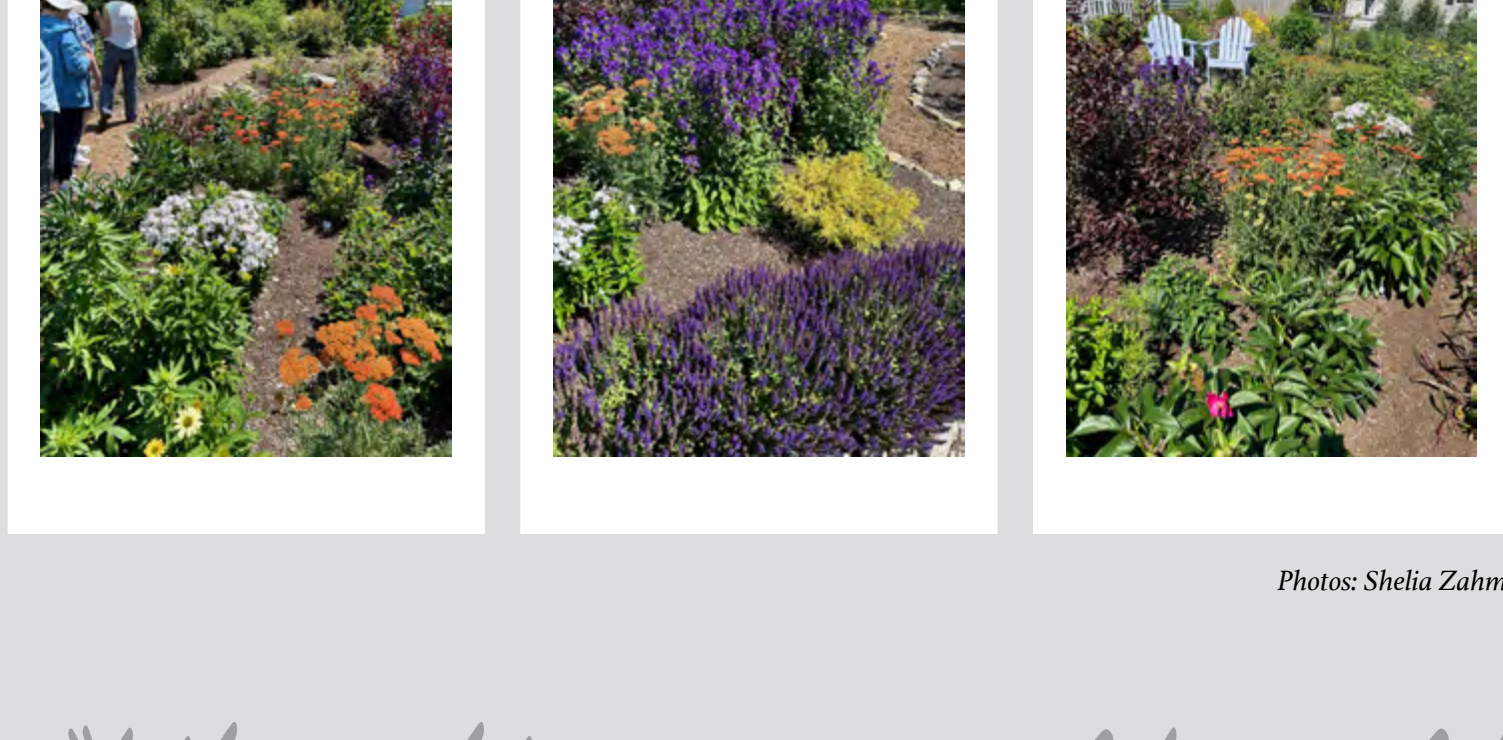
So at the game table, casual conversations, along with cognitive stimulation and feel-good endorphins, make games like Rummykub more than "just a game."

THE MEMBERS' CORNER IS FOR YOU. We really want your stuff: things you've written and photos you've taken. Poems? Short essays? Travel pix? Sunsets, flowers, oddities along the road? We'd also love photos of your crafty output, whether it's something you built, created, or repurposed.

Send your goodies to kurth@maine.edu.

In an Urban Garden

Photos From a Recent Extravaganza



Photos: Shelia Zahm

"I thought growing old would take longer"