

Brooklyn Lifelong Learning

Annual Report 2026

July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026

Letter from the President

As we look back on the 2025–26 year, we can see that Brooklyn Lifelong Learning continues to broaden its offerings, exploring new class subjects, events, trips, and cuisines. Our leadership team—officers, committee chairs, and committee members—is very much aware of the varied interests and desires of our members, and we strive to create a program that reflects those interests.

We aim to cover a lot of bases, offering classes in history, practical knowledge, culture, literature, crafts, drama, games, and physical activity. We provide a selection of classes on the beautiful, newly renovated Brooklyn College campus, as well as classes on Zoom.

Outside the classroom, we offer a wide array of events and activities. Popular programs include docent-led museum visits, day and overnight bus trips, local events, walking tours, multicultural lunches, and BLL-hosted lunches at the end of the winter and spring semesters. The pages that follow, written by our committee chairs, provide more details about these activities and the work of their committees.

We have been successful in maintaining our membership at a level that keeps our finances healthy and allows us to continue providing a diverse and engaging program. We recognize that, over the past several years, our members have expressed an increasing interest in activities outside the classroom, and we have adapted accordingly.

While an important part of our mission is to expand our store of knowledge, we also believe that opportunities to socialize, make new friends, and enjoy meaningful human interaction are essential components of the BLL experience. And since I am mentioning opportunities for interaction, I encourage you to consider joining one of our committees. It is a wonderful way to become more involved, meet other members, and help shape the future of BLL.

BLL is a volunteer organization, and it takes a team to make it successful. I extend my heartfelt thanks to our class instructors and facilitators; our officers; our Board of Directors; our committee chairs and committee members; and the many Brooklyn College personnel who have supported and assisted us throughout the year.

I would also like to give special thanks to our administrative assistant, Ellen Carlson, whose hard work and dedication are so important to the smooth operation of BLL.

As always, I invite all of our members to share their suggestions and feedback about our programs. Your ideas help us improve, grow, and ensure that BLL continues to meet the changing interests and needs of our members.

Thank you for being part of Brooklyn Lifelong Learning, and I look forward to another year of learning, exploration, friendship, and fun.

Robert Mishaan, President

September 25, 2026

Membership/Publicity Committee

Report from Robert Mishaan

The mission of our committee is to publicize the BLL program in order to attract new members and also to retain members from previous years. We are cognizant of the fact that the revenue from our membership fee is instrumental in supporting the program.

Our biggest recruitment event is our annual, late August Information Session. Committee heads detail the classes and activities of the latest year as well and give previews of what is coming. This year we added a testimonial by Daisy Lee Sprauve whose enthusiasm and dramatic flair enhanced our presentation. A mini-class gives prospective new members a taste of what a class is like.

Beyond that, we make many other efforts to recruit new members throughout the year.

- We attend table events:
 - The Older Adults Fair at Brooklyn Public Library
 - Assembly member Jo Anne Simon's Older Adult Resource Fair
 - The Flatbush Frolic
- Committee members distribute fliers at Greenmarkets and other gathering spots in Brooklyn.
- Our most productive method of recruiting new members is word-of-mouth, so we encourage all BLL members to spread the word.
- We print flyers, business cards and schedules-at-a-glance which preview the upcoming semester offerings. This year we added a tri-fold handout that gives greater attention to the many activities we offer outside of the classroom. Older adults want opportunities to socialize and immerse themselves in cultural activities and culinary exploration.

In order to be welcoming to new members, we have established a “buddy system.” Each new member is contacted by a committee member who is available to answer questions, resolve difficulties and listen to suggestions, comments or complaints.

Our current members are:

Robert Mishaan – Co-chair Annette Libert - Co-chair

Diana Falk, Adrienne Gant, Marianne Gennari, David Krupp, Candace Lieberman, Gail Naftalin,
Helen Schneiderman, Cheryl Jones, Mary Texiera, Sheron Cox, Charmane Moss

All the members do very good work for the committee. Special appreciation goes to the committee co-chair, Annette Libert whose hard work and graphic skills are instrumental in the functions of the committee.

We also welcome new members to the committee for those inclined to help us carry out our mission.

Program Committee

Report from Rona Goldwitz

Our primary focus continues to be obtaining notable and interesting guest speakers, particularly professors from Brooklyn College and other institutions of higher learning as well as professionals in other fields.

The committee gained a new member this year who helps us in this search. Marianne Gennari joined David Clough, Doris Adler and Rona Goldwitz.

Many noteworthy presentations were given this year. The wide variety of topics can be seen from the highlights below. They include practical information, crafts, art, history and literature.

Overall, 72 different courses were offered, comprising 366 class sessions. Last year, 65 different courses were offered, comprising 322 class sessions. There was a 10% and a 12% increase in these two measures respectively.

Fall 2025:

Twenty-three courses were offered, comprising 124 class sessions. Some of the highlights:

- LEARNING TO LOOK AT PAINTINGS
- INTERMEDIATE TAI CHI
- THE HISTORY OF CHINATOWN, NYC
- CROCHETING AND KNITTING GROUP
- MEDICARE 101: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER
- FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN THE MOVIES
- THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE
- AMERICAN MAH JONGG
- *MEANS OF ASCENT* by ROBERT CARO

Winter 2026:

Eleven courses were presented, with a total of 28 class sessions. Among the highlights were:

- THE EXECUTION OF JULIUS AND ETHEL ROSENBERG
- TWO STORIES BY HENRY JAMES
- HEBREW SCRIPTURES IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY
- NOVELLA: "Their Eyes Were Watching God"

Spring 2026:

Twenty-nine courses were offered, comprising 157 class sessions. Some of the highlights:

- PERSONAL FINANCE: FOCUS ON INVESTMENTS

- ALCOHOL AND HEALTH
- BERMUDA AND THE ATLANTIC OCEAN ISLANDS IN WORLD WAR II
- PARTING THE VEIL: A short series on life after death
- TAPPING INTO OUR OWN VOICES (on immigration)
- WOMEN IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
- CULTS, THE OCCULT AND SECRET SOCIETIES
- CELEBRATING BLACK LIFE, CULTURE, RESILIENCE AND JOY

Summer 2026:

Twenty-three courses were offered, for a total of 57 class sessions. Highlights include:

- INTRODUCTION TO PHOTOGRAPHY
- BROADWAY COMES TO BROOKLYN
- COLLAGE
- BROOKLYN NEIGHBORHOOD LIFE
- ANOTHER LOOK AT ROBERT MOSES

In addition to the demands of finding willing speakers on suitable topics, we face two main challenges:

- **Obtaining classroom space.** Members prefer having more than one in-person class on a given day, but during the spring and fall semesters, this is difficult to achieve. The college Scheduling Office primarily restricts us to club hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Student Center won't allow us to rent rooms on those days. Therefore, we must squeeze most of our non-Zoom classes into a very small window.
- **Attendance in classes.** While originally IRPE/BLL existed as an organization that exclusively offered classes, over the years, our offerings have expanded to include bus trips, museum visits, multicultural lunches, neighborhood walks and more. As last summer's survey showed, members enjoy these non-class aspects of BLL, often to the exclusion of classes. We try to provide a variety of offerings to make sure we have something of interest to all members.

Events Committee

Report from Gail Naftalin

The Events Committee organizes outdoor activities for members and visits to sites of interest. These include walking tours and museum visits (other than those planned by Linda Silverman). Through this year our committee also planned and executed major

BLL social events. There is now a Party Planning Committee which will take over this responsibility.

This year's committee members are Candace Lieberman, Iris Brahms, Marie Romano, Mary Schoen, Virginia Noel, Gail Levine, Sheila Gerstein and Gail Naftalin (chairperson).

Walking Tours

4/10/26 Sugar Hill & Hamilton Heights, led by Robert Mishaan

10/9/2026 - Sheepshead Bay, led by Ron Schweiger

10/27/2026 - Clinton Hill, led by Robert Mishaan

5/15/2026 - African Burial Ground & Dutch Reformed church neighborhood, led by Ron Schweiger

Outings and Visits to Sites of Interest

9/26/2025 - Meditative walk along the Salt Marsh Nature Trail, led by Gail Levine

12/5/2025 - Fashion Institute of Technology exhibit, organized by Marie Romano

1/7/2026 - China Institute, organized by Iris Brahms

3/5/2026 - Studio Museum of Harlem, organized by Mary Schoen

3/25/2026 - BAM Backstage Tour, organized by Virginia Noel

4/17/2026 - Aquarium visit, organized by Candace Lieberman

5/19/2026 - Hudson River Cruise of Manhattan, organized by Marie Romano

6/5/2026 - Tour of Martha Graham exhibit, NYPL of the Performing Arts, organized by Gail Levine

7/30/2026 - Visit to "CLINAMEN" Interactive Art/Meditative Installation, Park Avenue Armory, organized by Gail Levine

Social Events

We arranged and executed two lunches, one to finish out each semester.

On December 18, 2025, 2-4 PM in SUBO, all members and faculty were invited to a catered party, serving hot & cold appetizers. All was provided including decorations. Recorded music provided a party atmosphere and Elaine Sohn conducted a demonstration and instruction of a folk dance. We welcomed ~80 attendees. This was the first time we did not have a speaker but provided more of a cocktail type atmosphere. The new format was very successful: members seemed to have a very enjoyable time.

On June 10, 2026, 12-2PM we closed out spring semester with an end of the year gala in SUBO's Gold Room. There were ~90 attendees for a catered luncheon. Bassett's catering

provided a lovely lunch, hot and cold beverages and supplies. Basic members were charged \$10 (as a commitment that we thought would cut down on no-shows). “Friends of BLL” were admitted free. The speaker was Nimet Habachy, former DJ on late night radio, playing classical music. She made an interesting and educational presentation. We received many compliments from BLL-ers who considered the event a success.

Grants

Report by Rona Goldwitz

We had one grant award for fiscal 2025. A new system in which grants are given in 3-year increments, provided us with an award of \$5000 in discretionary funds from City Council Member Farah Louis for the current fiscal year.

Donations from members

- \$3810 was received in response to the BLL Annual Appeal. This was a marked decrease from the \$5026 received in 2025.
- Sixty members joined at the “Friends of BLL” level, which adds a \$50 donation to the basic cost to participate. A total of \$3000 was thus netted. This too was a decrease over the prior year (\$3650). We also have fourteen Lifetime members.

A total of \$11,810 in Grants and Donations was received. (\$13,941 in 2025)

Joel Duckoff is handling the responsibility of navigating the NYC grant paperwork. He is greatly appreciated!

Museum Walks and Talks

Report From Linda Silverman

These docent-led tours were among our most popular programs. Fifty-five members attended at least one museum trip. Two groups were scheduled for each date; 15-20 members attended each session.

The Jewish Museum—September 19, 2025

Ben Shahn, On Nonconformity

The Art Students League—October 3, 2025

Instructors' Art

Met Museum—October 17, 2025

Arts of the Ancient Americas

Morgan Museum and Library—November 14

Renoir

Frick--November 21, 2025

A Close Look At Selected Art

Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (ISAW)-February 27, 2026

Rodin's Egypt

Metropolitan Museum of Art—March 6, 2026

Art of Africa

The Guggenheim—March 13, 2026

Gabrielle Munter

Metropolitan Museum of Art—March 20, 2026

Helene Schjerfbeck

Asia Society—March 27, 2026

Buddha and Shiva, Lotus and Dragon

Japan Society—May 1, 2026

Kawaii Kanjiro

Travel Committee

Report from Phyllis Harris

The committee arranged full-day trips as well as a 3-day, 2-night trip. We will continue to offer such overnight experiences. Our trips include lunch and transportation by coach bus. The committee travels to places that are educational and/or entertaining. Camaraderie is always a goal of our trips.

The members of the committee have been Adly Casseus, Wendy Cruickshank, Sheila Gerstein, Phyllis Harris (Chairperson), Hyacinth John, Cheryl Jones, Annette Libert, Robert Mishaan, Algreta Prudent, Elba Rohas, and Mary Texeira.

We give a special thank you to our former committee chair, Sheila Gerstein. Sheila is an invaluable person who brings years of experience and encouragement to the committee.

THE TROPICANA HOTEL & CASINO, ATLANTIC CITY, NJ July 31, 2025

We stepped into the dazzling world of the iconic “**CHER**,” in a mesmerizing tribute performance.

HYDE PARK, NY September 10, 2025

Toured the Springwood Estate, the Family Home of Franklin Roosevelt and saw the home of Eleanor Roosevelt.

CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, HYDE PARK November 12, 2025

The Bocuse French Restaurant and the CIA Experience Tour

HUNTERDON HILLS PLAYHOUSE December 17, 2025

"A Christmas Musical Spectacular" with dazzling costumes, vibrant sets and timeless holiday music classics.

HUNTERDON HILLS PLAYHOUSE April 29, 2026

The "Some Enchanted Evening" musical revue showcased the music of Rodgers and Hammerstein.

BOSTON MASSACHUSETTS 3-DAY BUS TOUR June 13th - June 15th, 2026

The trip included a bus tour of Boston, Faneuil Hall Marketplace with Quincy Market, John F Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, tour of Lexington & Concord, tour of the Minute Man National Historic Park, and the Museum of African American History.

Multicultural Lunches

Report by Gail Weber

Participation at each luncheon has generally been between 30-40 diners. The lunches have been enjoyed by a good number of our members, who appreciate the chance to sample different cuisines as well as to socialize with other BLL-er's. In addition, the presentations given at each restaurant on regional cuisine and culture are educational and enjoyable.

The multi-cultural luncheons re-started in mid-October of 2025 at the French restaurant **Levant**. There was good attendance at this lunch, which was highly rated by the attendees.

The third week of November found us at the Israeli-themed restaurant **Safta** ("Grandma" in English), located in Crown Heights. The restaurant got a real 'thumbs up' review from diners.

Mid-December led us to the **Baku Palace** restaurant, which offered Azerbaijani cuisine. Unfortunately, while the ambiance was elegant and the food was good, the restaurant was grossly understaffed and gave a disappointing performance on the service end. This establishment will not be revisited.

The end of January found us sampling Ethiopian fare at the cozy atmospheric restaurant **Bati**. By the time lunch concluded, we had all become very adept at scooping food with our *injera* bread.

In February, we sampled Italian fare in the popular Park Slope restaurant **Sotto Voce**.

At the end of March, we returned for another successful luncheon at the French restaurant **Levant**.

The third week of April, we feasted on luscious Jamaican/Haitian fare at the atmospheric and very well-received **Bamboo Walk**, located in East Flatbush. (We'll be back!)

Finally, in mid-June, with an attendance of 45 participants, the season culminated at the Malaysian Restaurant **Makan** located in Sheepshead Bay. Hats off to this modestly appointed restaurant for their stellar food, prices and excellent efficiency. A definite 'thumbs-up' for a repeat visit.