



Westchester Community College volunteer Edith Litt (left) is interviewed by local journalist Andrea Lublinski for a story on the innovative new Collegium program for mature adults.

The Face of Westchester Edith Litt

The discussions started nearly a decade ago. Why not have a place for mature adults to enjoy intellectual pursuits while at the same time allowing them to socialize?

Thanks to Edith Litt’s persistence, Westchester Community College now offers a membership program of classes that enlighten, entertain, and allow for friendly, intelligent conversation and intellectual stimulation.

Litt, a retired city planner from Tarrytown, was introduced to the college by Nina Jones Fink, who had been on the county’s political scene even before she represented Nelson Rockefeller locally. “Tutoring at the college fulfilled my need to be useful, but I also wanted to continue learning and meeting like-minded people,” says Litt.

“I started talking to Shirley Contino-Phillips (the college’s Vice President of External Affairs and Foundation Director). She encouraged me to start planning serious courses on topical interests. But back then, we just didn’t have the room. I wanted to start big, not small. Over time, the program gestated and eventually took shape,” she says.

The Collegium for Lifelong Learning was launched in the fall of 2004, with 74 adults enjoying classes led by educators and specialists for an affordable introductory fee of \$125. Members participate in 90-minute classes that meet for six weeks. They may enroll for up to four of the nine courses and study sessions.

Fall options included *The Art of the Orchestra* with Westchester Philharmonic Conductor Paul Lustig Dunkel, who examined the



elements of orchestral performance. Also, *Genetics and You* was team-taught by Westchester Community College Professor Iris Cook and Genetics Counselor Gay Sterns Sachs.

“What’s amazing is that all of these courses are taught by volunteers,” says Litt. Despite the intellectual subjects, there’s always time to reflect and socialize with coffee breaks and lunch.

“Westchester has an aging population and this program keeps them involved,” says Shelley Garnet, director of the college’s Mainstream Program, which provides additional educational options for mature adults. “Those in the Collegium classes range in age from their sixties to nineties, and it keeps them young,” says Litt.

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— EDITH LITT