

The Georgian Triangle Lifelong Learning Institute

As a learning organization for adults, the Georgian Triangle Lifelong Learning Institute (GTLI) is committed to expanding awareness of the wider world. And now, thanks to technology, the GTLI is reaching an even wider audience.

Founded in 1996 by a handful of local enthusiasts, the GTLI has grown to more than 1,100 members today. But the New Life Church in Collingwood, where the live sessions are held, can only seat about 400 people. With regional population growth, an influx of more retired and semi-retired people, and increased interest from all age groups, the fall, winter and spring lecture series have sold out quickly in recent years, leaving many unable to get tickets.

To keep up with demand, this year the GTLI has begun livestreaming the lectures to three additional locations across Southern Georgian Bay: the Simcoe Street Theatre in Collingwood, Station on the Green in Creemore and the RecPlex in Wasaga Beach. The lectures are also professionally recorded, with videos available online to view on your TV, computer, tablet or phone at any time.

"We're finding that the livestream venues are proving very popular, because people can come in and still have the social aspect and discussion at the coffee break," says chair Sarah Dennis, adding the GTLI has sold about 170 tickets to the livestreamed lectures so far. Meanwhile, the videos are reaching out to people who are not yet retired and may be unable to attend the live or livestreamed lectures on Friday mornings, but still want to absorb the content. "We also have a lot of interest from retirement homes wanting to access the videos, as well as some high schools," adds Dennis.

The fall lecture series dealt with fascinating aspects of the brain, the winter series focuses on water issues in Ontario, and the spring lectures will look at Canadian foreign policy from 1968 to today, "basically from Pierre Trudeau to Justin Trudeau." In each series, the calibre of the material is extremely high. "These are university-level lectures by university professors and experts," says Dennis, adding, "We're so impressed by the quality of educated seniors in this area, all very interested in all different types of topics, who have really thoughtful questions. We want to make complex issues really understandable for everyone, and keep the discussion going."

In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." And by that standard, the GTLI is helping to make our community an ever more powerful force for change, at every age.

by Janef Lees

For more information, visit gtli.ca