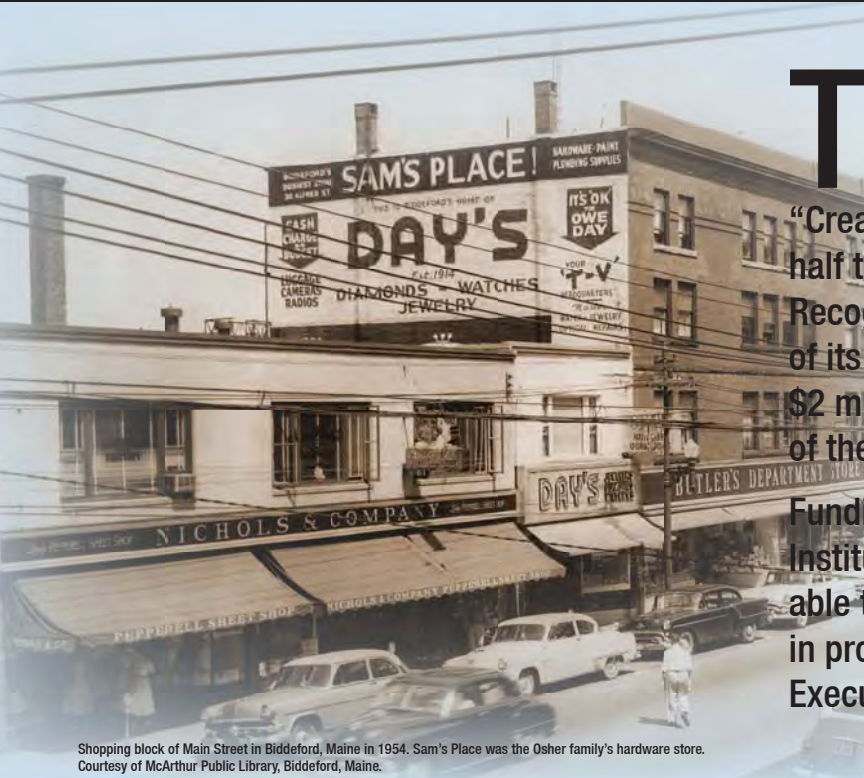


# OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE at UNC Asheville



Shopping block of Main Street in Biddeford, Maine in 1954. Sam's Place was the Osher family's hardware store. Courtesy of McArthur Public Library, Biddeford, Maine.

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UNC Asheville (OLLI at UNC Asheville) began as the North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement in 1988. Its mission: “Creating opportunities for people to thrive in life’s second half through learning, leadership, service, and research.” Recognizing the quality of its programs and the enthusiasm of its participants, The Bernard Osher Foundation awarded a \$2 million endowment fund for the center to become a part of their Osher Lifelong Learning Institute’s national network. Funding from the Foundation and membership in the Osher Institute network mean that OLLI at UNC Asheville will be able to “break new ground and continue to lead the way in programming for older adults,” said Catherine Frank, Executive Director of OLLI at UNC Asheville.



## Bernard Osher

Bernard Osher, the founder of the Osher Foundation, grew up in Biddeford, Maine, where his family operated a hardware store, Sam's Place, and a summer amusement park, Palace Playland.

Bernard's parents, Leah Lazarovich Osher and Samuel Osher (formerly Osherowitz), were Lithuanian and Russian immigrants. They instilled in their children that “giving was a normal part of life.” To them, “if you got a good education and worked hard, you could be successful—and if you were successful, you gave back,” recalls Harold Osher, one of Bernard's four siblings.

For Bernard this path meant attending Bowdoin College (class of 1948) and managing his family's hardware and plumbing supply store before moving to New York and working for Oppenheimer & Company. A move to California followed when, in 1963, he and his sister and brother-in-law acquired a two-branch savings and loan association. Named Golden West Financial, it ultimately became the second largest thrift in the US. A collector of American paintings, Bernard also purchased the fine art auction house Butterfield and Butterfield in 1970. It was the fourth largest auction house in the world when the Oshers sold it to eBay in 1999. In 2006, Bernard Osher was listed as the 746th richest man in the world and, true to the Osher family credo, 11th most



Bernard Osher and his wife, Barbro, who is the Honorary Consul General for Sweden in California. Mrs. Osher is chair of The Bernard Osher Foundation and president of The Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation which supports Swedish-related cultural and educational projects in North America and Sweden. She has received many awards and honorary degrees for her outstanding public service.

Mr. Osher feels that the value of any foundation is what the grantees are doing in their communities. OLLI participants “actively plan and carry out their own educational programs for lifelong learning, leadership, community service, wellness, and research to foster personal growth while channeling their energies back into their communities, thus benefiting members of all generations.”

generous philanthropist. Bernard and Barbro Osher are among the billionaires who have signed *the giving pledge* initiated by Bill Gates and Warren Buffet to distribute at least half of their wealth to charitable causes during their lifetime.

## The Bernard Osher Foundation

The Osher Foundation was organized in 1977. Its focus is to improve quality of life through support for higher education and the arts. The Foundation also provides post-secondary scholarships and supports programs in integrative medicine. In 2000, Bernard, then in his early 70s, visited Maine and found that many of the people he had grown up with were active and engaged in programs for lifelong learning like OLLI at UNC Asheville. He observed that people not participating in any outside activities were feeling isolated and without direction or purpose. This realization influenced him to begin supporting institutes providing educational programming to people who are 50 or older.



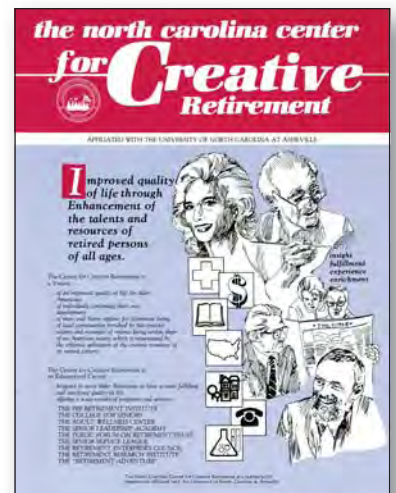
UNC Asheville chancellor David Brown (1984-92) was instrumental in the establishment of the NC Center for Creative Retirement. In 1987, the North Carolina General Assembly embraced this “revolutionary idea” by passing legislation which would fund an innovative center at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. The program's goal was to encourage active seniors to continue to learn and to share their accumulated knowledge and expertise with their communities. The first Advisory Board for the North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement 1988, left to right: Joan Tuttle; Henry Colton; Julia Ray, and Mort Cohn. Standing are Lindy Cate, Charles Lilien; Durward Everett former head of Wachovia (Western NC) and chairman of the UNC Asheville board.



Mary Bitterman, Bernard Osher, and then California Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger. The Osher Foundation pledged 70 million dollars to the California Community College students. Photograph by Sharpe Photography courtesy of the Foundation for California Community Colleges.



Funding from the Foundation and membership in the National Resource Center network mean that OLLI at UNC Asheville will be able to “break new ground and continue to lead the way in programming for older adults,” said Catherine Frank, Executive Director of OLLI at UNC Asheville. Pictured here is a summer authors series with Charles Frazier as one of its speakers.



Located on a primarily undergraduate campus, OLLI at UNC Asheville provides a unique opportunity for young and old to explore ways they can learn together and from one another. Photograph is an early program from the Center For Creative Retirement (1987).

