

Geocaching in the Golden years in the Golden Heart City Fairbanks, AK

Beginning on September 11 through October 9, 13 members of OLLI (Osher LifeLong Learning Institute) got together to learn Geocaching 101 - "Alaska Style". OLLI is a program of the University of Alaska Fairbanks offering a rich array of learning opportunities for adults who are 50 or older.

Taught by 4 members of "Those Who Cache In The Banks" (Tony & Danelle Roof and Hal & Carol Meyer), the program was held for 2 hours a day, once a week, for 5 weeks. Using a range of skill sets and 8 GPS's provided by Geocache Alaska!, students were given a solid understanding of just what Geocaching is before proceeding to practice their newly found skills. Two days were spent indoors studying the Geocaching.com website, watching videos and listening to explanations on how to research and download caches before you 'log them in'. The weather gods then gave us 3 spectacular days outside locating those caches amidst the perfect fall colors.

Each cacher was excited to establish their own identity by creating handles that reflected who they are or their past history traveling the world. Once they had their handles they began to log the several caches we found during class. It was so great because we could hardly restrain these folks from taking off "into the woods" to find pre-assigned caches. One student was so excited he started hiding caches before the class was over (Wow!). It is important to note that this class was scheduled for 4 weeks yet the students "demanded" we extend it a week because the weather was so great and they were having so much fun.

At graduation the students were awarded with a Diploma, a Travel Bug, a Bison Tube, a Path Tag and a "Fairbanks Fiesta" of good food and good times! Each member of the class signed inside a "camouflaged" ammo can created by the instructors which will be placed on the University Park school grounds and dedicated to this class for use in future classes. During the "Fiesta", several folks mentioned they wanted to create a SIG (Special Interest Group) through OLLI for Geocaching so they can get together with each other more often to go caching.

As instructors we loved the fact this sector of the population got so excited about having an activity that was really fun, helped their fitness, got them outdoors, challenged their minds and yet allowed them to participate at their own level. Everyone said this was something they were definitely going to use in the future and take home and share with their friends and family.

The most important thing by far was to see the sparkle in their eyes and the broad smiles on their faces as they spent time together - enjoying each other's company! All because of Geocaching!

A HUGE Thank you to OLLI and their Fairbanks staff for giving us the opportunity to teach this course for their membership!