Late in the Fall 2016 semester, the Office of Adult Learning (OAL) began the search to name the new lounge. It wasn’t long before the perfect candidate came to light.

Erick Lujano, an adult learner studying human resources at Wichita State had the idea of naming the lounge after the oldest graduate at WSU. A little research lead to the name Joe Stone.

It didn’t take long for the OAL to realize Joe Stone wasn’t just the oldest graduate of WSU, he was truly an inspiration. “In my search for a name was the need to find someone who I could look at and remind myself ‘I have no excuses’” said Lujano about finding a worthy person. He added, “I just simply made a recommendation of someone who moved me in my world.”

Lujano also said it was the staff at the OAL who recognized the impact Stone makes. Indeed, it wasn’t a hard task to recognize this impact. From being a detective, to serving in the Coast Guard, to writing an episode of the western series, “Gunsmoke” (in which Stone’s brother won an Emmy for his performance), Stone had an adventurous and diverse life.

Stone put college on hold for his career as a detective with only 23 credits short of graduation. Throughout his life, he talked about how not completing his degree was one of his biggest regrets. But, he returned in 2003 and at the age 90, finally graduated at last completing the one thing he had left so long undone. Only months later Stone passed away, but, luckily, not without achieving his goals.

In attendance were four of Stone’s five children, who also got the opportunity to cut the ribbon for our grand opening.

At the dedication, Lujano, O’Neal, Susan Norton, Provost Tony Vizinni and President John Bardo all spoke briefly about the importance of adult learning, and the impact of Joe Stone and his legacy as an adult learner.

Following the dedication and ribbon cutting, those in attendance were invited to tour the lounge. There his children spoke about Joe Stone and his legacy. The day came to end by watching the episode of Gunsmoke which Stone wrote.

“Meeting Joe’s family was definitely the highlight of the day. I got a real sense of who he was through the stories the family told,” said O’Neal.

The ceremony was an emotional one for many. The OAL came to know and love Joe Stone like family. Tears, laughter, and stories of Stone from his children was an affirmation that the right decision was made in naming the lounge after him.
New members join Alpha Sigma Lambda

On Sunday, April 30, 2017, the Sigma Iota chapter of Alpha Sigma Lambda Honor Society held its 2nd annual induction ceremony. In March, invitations were sent out to adult learners who met the criteria for membership.

To be invited to join the Sigma Iota chapter of ASL, 24 credit hours must be completed, but a student must be in the top 10 percent of adult students based on GPA. This requirement is different due to the overwhelming number of adult students with high GPAs at WSU.

At the ceremony, four new members were inducted into the society. Karen Abshire-Gordon, is a psychology major and sociology minor. She has two children, Michael and Phoebe. Michael is a WSU alumni, while Phoebe is in high school. In her free time, Karen says she enjoys attending LGBTQ events and journaling.

Elizabeth Barnett, is an accounting major at Wichita State. She is a partner at Criser Gough & Parrish, LLC. Elizabeth’s family includes her husband, John Barnett, and her children, Jonathon, Joseph, and Ruth. In her free time, Elizabeth enjoys being with her grandchildren and reading. She says that she has always enjoyed school and learning new things.

Anthony Heitman is a business administration major at WSU with a minor in management information services. He is a Vulnerability Management Engineer for the Air Force Air National Guard at Phacil, Inc. In his free time, Anthony enjoys woodworking.

Allison Keith is a general studies sociology major. She works as the Executive Assistant to the Chairman of the Board and Chief Development Officer at Citizens Bank of Kansas. Allison’s family includes her husband Greg, children Kelsey, Conner, Sarah, and Dean, and grandsons Braedon, DaeSin, Trae, and Ryder. In her free time, Allison enjoys spending time with her grandsons and dog, Bear, as well as playing keyboard in the worship band at the Reformation Lutheran Church.

Alpha Sigma Lambda is an adult honor society whose purpose is to recognize the special achievements of adults who accomplish academic excellence while facing competing interest of home and work. Alpha Sigma Lambda has just wrapped up its first year of being a recognized student organization at WSU. Currently, there are 22 members in the society, including the four new members. Last December, three members graduated, and one graduated this spring.

The organization is primarily student run, with an executive board consisting of a president, vice president, and secretary/treasurer. During the 2016-2017 school year, Lance Chastain served as president, Kelly Patton served as vice president, and Amy McClintock served as secretary/treasurer.

These officers were elected by the chapter and have served for the last year. The chapter has elected new officers but are still in need of a secretary, so if you are a member of Alpha Sigma Lambda and interested in taking on a leadership position, contact the Office of Adult Learning regarding how to apply by emailing complete@wichita.edu or calling 316-978-8325.

The Office of Adult Learning now has a Coffee Bar!!

Come join us in the Joe Stone Lounge for an assortment of caffeinated drinks!
Farewell to graduating student assistants

Two student assistants from the Office of Adult Learning (OAL) graduated this spring. Both Riley Hazard and Nicholas Bender worked for the Office of Adult Learning since the Fall Semester of 2015.

Bender was an English major, his after graduation goals are to work in publishing or journalism. Hazard studied health service management and community development with a minor in general business. Following graduation, Hazard plans to attend KU School of Medicine to get her Masters in Public Health and hopes to work in health education.

Bender is from the Wichita area and, when asked why he chose WSU, he said he wanted to stay close to home.

Hazard, however, grew up in Tonkawa, Oklahoma. Initially, she started out at South West Oklahoma State University, but transferred to WSU her sophomore year after visiting the campus and falling in love with it.

When asked what their favorite part about working at OAL, Bender said the people, while Hazard said the flexibility was a good factor.

Hazard is married with two dogs, and has stayed at OAL for the summer, whereas Bender decided to enjoy his summer with various trips.

Student assistants are an important part of OAL. Hazard described her duties as “data tracking, as well as taking some of the smaller tasks, such as filing and making copies, so that Susan and Pam can better focus on the bigger tasks.”

But, in shorter terms, as Bender put it, they do “a little bit of everything.”

Nick, Riley- we’re so proud of your accomplishments and sad to see you go. But, we know your futures hold great things and can’t wait to see where life takes you next!

Osher Scholars Program provides financial assistance to adult learners

In late April, graduating recipients of the Osher Scholarship program met and received their stoles for graduation and celebrated a job well done in the completion of their degrees.

Seven Osher scholars graduated in Spring of 2017, approximately a third of the total recipients of the scholarship.

The Osher Reentry Scholarship Program is designed to help undergraduate students who have experienced a five-year cumulative gap in their education. Scholarships of up to $2,500 a year are available for qualified candidates.

WSU is proud to be the only university in the state of Kansas to offer this program, as it has been a beneficial program for adult students.

"The Osher Scholarship was extremely instrumental in allowing me to not only further my college education, but to also allow me to grow as an individual by being involved on campus," said Stephanie Merritt, an adult learner and Osher Scholar who graduated this year with a bachelor’s degree in women’s studies.

Financial need is a huge part of why some adults do not return to school. As we all know, college is expensive, and as an adult sometimes there are other financial priorities. However, the Osher Scholarship can lift a significant amount of debt off students’ shoulders.

“Between work, school, children, and other responsibilities, any time we can help with a financial burden for a returning adult student, we want to do that. We are fortunate enough to have a program that allows us to do so,” said Susan Norton, Director.

The qualifications for eligibility include: being a fully admitted WSU student pursuing your first bachelor’s degree, having a cumulative gap in education of at least five years, demonstrating financial need according to your FAFSA, maintaining a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 in all coursework, and showing academic promise and commitment to completing a degree.

There is a link to the Osher Scholarship application on our website: wichita.edu/osherscholarships
Goodbye to Graduate Intern and Student Mentor

Suzanne Shugart was the office’s Adult Student Mentor. Shugart was a joy to have around the office, but has left us for her next internship with Student Conduct.

Shugart is currently a student in the Mast of Social Work program, and is preparing for her second year.

When asked about her job at the OAL, Shugart said, “My job was to get to know the needs of Adult Learners so that we could expand on our services to better serve this populatoin. My job was [also] to support the OAL staff and any Adult Learners that needed it.”

Shugart expressed her love for the Office of Adult Learning, and the relationships she has formed here. “I have been privelged to build some amazing relationships here at OAL,” she said, “and to get to know some amazingly resilient adult students.”

Shugart hopes to finish her Masters of Social Work in May of 2018.

Shugart will be missed dearly by coworkers and Adult Learners that she came to know, but during the summer she will be working with Student Conduct if, when we need her.

“I’d also like to adopt an ostrich,” said Shugart when we asked what is in store for her next.

Have any stories to include in our Newsletter? Email us at complete@wichita.edu to let us know so we can include it in our next issue!

When and why did you begin attending Wichita State?

“About two years ago now, my husband had a stroke brought on by a work injury, and it completely upended our lives... Although my husband fortunately recovered about 97% of his previous function and returned to work, we decided the wisest course would be for me to finish out my degree before another crisis happened. I started official WSU classes for the Fall 2016 semester. About half were online, the others on nights and weekends.”

What’s your major?

“...We put together a Field Major in English with Communications as one of my allied departments, then I picked Psychology for my second allied department. Eventually, I ended up adding in a Sociology minor, as well.”

What would you like to do post-graduation?

“I don’t yet have firm plans for where I’m going from here... Ideally, I would like to take this year off, and then begin graduate study at WSU in English or possibly Liberal Studies.”

How has the Office of Adult Learning helped you in your college experience so far?

“The Office of Adult Learning was amazing! From convincing me it was possible to finishing my degree in the first place, to being available any time I had questions, Adult Learning was there at every step. I’m not sure I would have been able to see this through without them.”

What advice do you have for other Adult Learners?

“Get connected and get involved... take advantage of the resources available in the Office of Adult Learning... Be persistent! You’ve taken the hardest step. Now stick with it and take any obstacles one at a time. You can do this!”