New Trier Extension Instructors

Don Badowski
Coach Don Badowski has been an assistant coach with the New Trier High School fencing team since 2000. He was a competitive fencer from 1994 to 2003 and is the former vice president of the Illinois Fencers Club. He is experienced at teaching beginner through advanced level fencers in foil, epee, and sabre, both individually and in classes.

Paula Chalk
I started Tai Chi as a New Trier Extension student in 2009. I was immediately intrigued by this "New" path of discovering health and wellness. It has and continues to be a lifelong journey of improving well-being in numerous ways. Since 2009, I have attended the annual Shen Long Winter Tai Chi retreats and the Shen Long Celebration Day each Spring. In 2015, I started assisting other instructors and began teaching Qi Gong/Tai Chi Foundations classes in 2017. As an advanced student of Pam Hultgren, I am grateful to be part of the tai chi community of staff and students at NTX and the Shen Long Tai Chi Association. I am a long-time Glenview resident, where my husband and I raised our 3 children.

Mike Cochran
Mike has been playing Duplicate Bridge for about 15 years. He attained the rank of Life Master in less than 2 years and has now been teaching for over 8 years. In addition to his private lessons, he is approved to teach on cruise ships, working with 9 major lines; he has taught bridge on about 30 cruises to date. He is recognized as a Master Teacher by the American Bridge Teachers Association, where he currently sits on the Board. Mike recently completed the ACBL Teachers Best Practices Workshop and earned his certification. He is a graduate of Northwestern and a resident of Glenview.

Pamela Dell
Pamela is the author of more than sixty books for children, both fiction and nonfiction, and for all age levels. She has been creating entertainment and educational content for kids since 1990, including not only books but also computer games and other interactive multimedia, educational material, and fictional narrative-based websites geared to young people. In the 1990s, she was a co-founder of Purple Moon, an acclaimed multimedia developer in San Francisco geared toward preteen girls, and she is the author of "Doodlebug & Dandelion," a fiction serial published monthly in Spider Magazine, from the Cricket Magazine Group. Pamela has also worked as an editor and content developer for Scholastic, Inc., Warner Bros., Knowledge Adventure, World Book, Inc., and many other publishers and entertainment companies. She has taught workshops for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators as well as private classes and workshops for at-risk teen girls.

Marlene Dobrin
Marlene has played MahJongg for over 30 years. While spending one New Year's weekend together one member of the group brought her Mahjong set. They seemed to remember most of the rules. They had fun and found out they still liked playing. They proceeded to continue playing still but are retired and play during the afternoons. Marlene retired after working for Glenbrook North support staff for 8 years. Before that she had many careers: teacher, parent, Office Manager (Architecture office).

Brian Earl
Captain Brian Earl, owner of Sea Safaris Sailing School, has been sailing for over 35 years on various-sized craft in a variety of waters. From the West Coast to the East Coast… the Great Lakes, Inland lakes, and internationally. This extensive experience has given him a unique perspective on various weather, water, and yacht conditions you might find where you sail. Brian is a licensed Coast Guard 100 Ton Master Captain and an ASA Instructor Evaluator. He's taught for over 25 years in several different learning environments. Brian was recently recognized by the ASA as Outstanding Instructor of the Year. He maintains certificates in Red Cross First Aid, CPR, and AED.

Emily Espinoza
Emily Espinosa is currently one of the athletic trainers at New Trier High School. She has been working for the district since January of 2020 and became a BLS CPR instructor through the American Heart Association in December of 2020. In her free time, Emily enjoys exercising with her husband and taking walks with her dog Patches.

Kevin W. Fitzsimons
Kevin is an attorney and certified public accountant specializing in the areas of estate planning, probate, income taxation, and business law. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree from Indiana University, where he was a Chick Evans Scholar and his Doctor of Juris Prudence with honors from John Marshall Law School. Mr. Fitzsimons conducts numerous seminars in the areas of estate planning and income taxation.

Michael Gershbein
Michael Gershbein is a former librarian who has dedicated his career to educating adults about personal technology usage and trends. His business Very Smart People teaches at libraries, senior centers, and professional organizations throughout Chicagoland. Mike also offers in-home training as well as professional consulting. He believes that if personal technology isn't fun and easy and doesn't make our lives better then it's probably not worth using.

George Glastris
George spent ten years in London at Christie's and Sotheby's, the five years at Skinner's Auction House in Boston. While there, he was also a regular appraiser on Antiques Roadshow. George keeps up with the market now as a private appraiser and auctioneer.

Vera Holroyd
Vera is a travel writer and a North Shore Mom of two teens. She contributes content to a variety of platforms and shares her travel adventures and travel-related tips on social media @passportsandspice. After years of using many "serious" SLR cameras, she retired them all and now exclusively uses her iPhone to document her travels and create content, given its practicality and the seriously great photos it produces. She is passionate about sharing her tips and tricks to help others improve their smartphone photography.

Phyllis Horn-Liparini
Phyllis has B.A. degrees in English and Theater from the University of Illinois and an M.A. in Italian from Northwestern. She has done post-master studies in Italian and Comparative Literature, lived in Italy for ten years, and taught at Northwestern, DePaul, and Roosevelt Universities. She is a Senior Lecturer in Italian at Northwestern, having taught there for twenty years. Phyllis created and directed NU's study abroad program in Italy for ten years. She is a longtime instructor for NTX and Evanston Township High School adult education. Marriage to an Italian and her many years in Italy have allowed Phyllis to develop one of her hobbies, Italian cooking. She leads trips to Italy and conducts cooking classes.

Pam Hultgren
Pam has been studying T'ai Chi Ch'uan since 1995 and has been teaching since 2000. She has participated in the Shen Long (Spirit Dragon) T'ai Chi weekend retreats, Shen Long Day celebrations, area-wide events, and international conferences held in Taiwan. She began studying T'ai Chi on a whim but quickly grew to appreciate the whole-body health benefits of T'ai Chi. Pam works for a non-profit corporation in Glenview.

Tom James
Tom is a professional illustrator, painter, and teacher. He has been teaching art to students of all ages for over 25 years. His paintings are included in the collections of Searle, Abbott Laboratories, Edens Bank, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, the law offices of McDermott Will & Emery, and many private collections. His illustrations have appeared in college and grade school textbooks, book covers, magazines, and greeting cards. Tom works in oils, acrylics, colored pencils, pen and ink, and collage. His styles range from representational to abstract and include cartooning and illustration. For more information and to see examples of his artwork, please visit www.TomJamesArt.com

Howard Kanter
Howard is a professional artist and retired art teacher with 35 years of experience in art education. A longtime Wilmette resident, he earned his Master of Arts from the University of Illinois, where he currently serves as a part-time supervisor for art education students and of course, teaches watercolor and acrylic painting to adults. Outside of the studio and classroom, he is a proud husband and father of two wonderful children.

Megan Lennon
Hello! Hola, bonjour, shalom, marhaban and selamat siang! Megan has been a science teacher since the early 2000s. She was, however, very lucky that her parents had (made) her take both Spanish and French as a student, and she eventually double-degreed in both Bioengineering and Spanish at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. After a brief stint in the corporate world, Megan went back to school and received her Master's in Teaching at National-Louis in science, Spanish, and English for non-native speakers. She has lived in many different places, but Spain tops the list at four different times and about two years total. Megan prides herself on making learning as enjoyable as possible. She likes to incorporate many different teaching styles and modes of acquisition.

Rose Marchuk
Although she was very athletic as a child, girls didn't have the same opportunities to participate in sports as they do now. Rose began rowing at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1979 after being cut as a walk-on for the tennis team. She was solicited by the rowing coaches to try the sport since she fit what they were looking for - tall and athletic. It was fun and challenging, and there weren't any scholarships for girls like there are now. Rose had many teammates who became Olympians and were able to row in the Varsity 8+, whose highest place finish was 2nd at Nationals.

Shari Marcus
Shari is a former high school art and photography teacher who currently teaches crochet, along with other arts and crafts. Shari taught herself how to crochet a baby blanket when her daughter was born. The blanket fell apart. Now, after 20 years of making everything from blankets to clothing, she loves teaching people how to crochet so they don't make the same mistakes she made.

Robin Martinez
Originally from Los Angeles County, California, Robin has also lived in San Diego, Denver, San Antonio, Houston, and Central Oregon. While in high school in San Diego, she spent three consecutive summers in Guadalajara, México, studying Spanish and Latin American history. She has a BA and an MA in Spanish from Colorado State University, as well as a Certification in CSU's Latin American Studies Program. She has taught Spanish at Colorado State University, Rice University in Houston, and at COCC in Bend, OR. She also helped plan study abroad programs to Mexico, Argentina, and Spain, and accompanied students to all three countries.

Beth Mendez
Beth has 25+ years of experience teaching, motivating, and encouraging hundreds of students to stay committed to a fit and healthy lifestyle. Beth's favorite tag is: "If your heart is healthy, your body will follow". Her workouts are developed to make your heart healthy and happy, and include Beth's abundant energy and motivation for all. Beth has a host of certifications, including Step Certification, Fitness Gets Personal, GI Jabb, Katlin Zamiar TRX, AFAA Personal Training Certification, Zumba Certification, Aqua Aerobics, and AFAA Silver Sneakers. Beth's classes are a perennial favorite with NTX students.

Mary Ellen McGoey
Mary Ellen McGoey has taught a wide variety of French courses at all levels in her 32-year career. She retired from teaching in 2016 and looks forward to returning to the classroom at the New Trier Extension. Her interests include cooking, travel, reading, and, of course, all things French-related.

Scott Oldham
Scott Oldham has been a professional visual artist for the past 34 years. He was trained in illustration at the Rhode Island School of Design and in graphic design at Pratt Institute. He's provided images and designs for a diverse sampling of regional and national brands, including Mobil Oil, Highlights Early Learning, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, the Million Dollar Roundtable, and dozens of others. He lives in Evanston with his wife and teenage son.

Tom Perrucci
Originally from New Jersey, Tom studied English and Philosophy at Marquette before earning his Master of Divinity from Columbia Seminary. His eclectic career includes serving as a youth and lead pastor, running his own business, and working as an independent insurance broker for more than a decade. Now, he pairs that deep industry knowledge with a

teacher's heart to help people easily understand Medicare. When he is not teaching, you can find him officiating weddings as the "Chicago Wedding Guy" or enjoying quality time as a proud grandfather and great-grandfather.

Sue Peterson
Sue has a degree in Textiles and Clothing from Iowa State University with further studies in graphic design and website construction. Sue continues her sweater design business of twenty years, selling to small boutiques and catalogs around the country. You can see some of her designs at www.suepknits.com

Michael Poupko
Michael Poupko has been playing guitar for almost 30 years and teaching music for almost 20 years. Mike is happy to share his knowledge and is proficient in Electric and Acoustic Guitar, Bass Guitar, Ukulele, Recording, and Music Production. Prep for a gig, a big audition, or just learn a fun skill.
Mike teaches the following instruments and skills: Guitar, Ukulele, Bass, Engineering, Production, Mixing, Composition, Songwriting, Arranging, Music Theory.

Brittany Romano
Brittany Romano is the Head Varsity Field Hockey Coach at New Trier High School. A 13-year veteran of the program, she is entering her third season as head coach. In her first two seasons leading the Trevians, Romano guided the team to back-to-back state championships and a No. 8 national ranking in 2025. A New Trier graduate, Romano played field hockey at Denison University and was inducted into the Denison Athletics Hall of Fame in 2025.

Panthea Sadri
Panthea is a French native speaker. She is a licensed French Pharmacist who graduated from the Pharmacy University of Paris XI (Chatenay-Malabry). She tutored French from elementary school to High school. She worked at the French Institute in Winnetka and Lycée Français de Chicago. Her hobbies and interests include biking, cooking, traveling, and learning about different cultures.

John Schroeder
John Schroeder, CPRC, brings a wealth of experience to retirement coaching. As an adjunct professor, he has taught marketing to MBA students, fostering strategic thinking and personal development. John has also moderated industry panels on topics such as AI agents, remote work, and healthcare challenges, demonstrating his ability to navigate complex subjects. As a Certified Professional Retirement Coach (CPRC), he is dedicated to helping individuals transition smoothly into retirement by focusing on often-overlooked non-financial aspects. John's approach emphasizes proactive planning to ensure a fulfilling and purposeful retirement

Kathy Sheridan
I became a student of Shen Long Tai Chi through NTX in the fall of 2009. I was immediately hooked by this “different” type of exercise. Learning and refining the form has given me endless health benefits achieved with a dedicated group of like-minded students. I have enjoyed sharing this experience as a teacher of Qigong/Foundations of Tai Chi since 2017.

Jason Slezak
Jason is a Registered Investment Advisor, registered in the State of Illinois and registered with the National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD), working in various capacities in the Securities Industry for over 21 years. Jason is a member of Omicron Epsilon Delta, International Economics Honorary Society, as well as a member in good standing with the Bond Club of Chicago, an organization founded in 1894. Jason has specialized in the area of Financial Planning for his primary clientele. Areas of expertise range from portfolio management and retirement planning to Trust planning and administration. Jason also works with business professionals in the crafting of different types of company-sponsored retirement plans, most notably in the area of 401(k) plans. Working with individuals to help them prepare for retirement with the use of financial planning techniques is especially key to forming the bond of a solid business advisory relationship that Jason enjoys with much of his clientele.

Shawn Smith
Shawn is a New Trier alumnus (‘92) with over 25 years of fencing experience. He graduated from Michigan State University in ‘97 with a B.A. in Political Science, has a master’s degree in education from National-Louis University, and is certified in Secondary Education. At Michigan State, he was a four-year varsity letter winner in fencing and the Assistant. Coach in 96/97. Shawn has been the Assistant Coach of the Varsity and Junior Varsity Fencing team at New Trier since 97/98 and Head Coach of the NTX Fencing program since then as well. Other sports that Shawn enjoys include volleyball, gymnastics, swimming, and diving.

Frank Sullivan
After graduating from college, Frank first taught high school History. For fun, at night, he taught a series of courses in the History of Scotland and Ireland here at NTX. Later, he taught at the college level, retiring from full-time teaching as Associate Professor of History and Psychology at the Illinois Institute of Art. Frank very much looks forward to returning to teaching these topics he loved so much as a young teacher just starting out.

Marc Tadelman
Marc is a Kinetic Wellness teacher, adviser, and coach at New Trier High School. He is a 27-year veteran teacher and coach with a passion for teaching life lessons through the great sport of wrestling and improving physical fitness. Marc was a college wrestler, Master's National Champion, and world medalist. He has coached many IHSA state medalists, Central Suburban Leagues, and Regional Championship teams.

Xin Tian
Xin Tian moved to the USA from China to pursue higher education. She earned her Ph.D. in Civil Engineering from the University of Illinois at Chicago. While working in the engineering field, she developed a great interest in Chinese medicine. She went on to obtain her master’s degree in Chinese medicine. This led to her interest in Tai Chi and how that helps to establish and maintain good health.

Fran Vail
Fran has an MFA from Syracuse University and has continued to take numerous workshops with some of the Midwest’s best artists. She has been teaching watercolor and pastels on the North Shore for over fifteen years. Her work has been shown in many juried and invitational art shows and is represented by the Paint Box Gallery, Ephraim, WI.

Nicole Weissman
As a French and Spanish teacher, Nicole gets to teach her students a new life skill. Working with them and watching them improve their French or Spanish fluency makes her feel extremely fulfilled and rewarded. She deeply enjoys getting to know her students and sharing with them her knowledge. Their world opens up, so does hers because they teach her a lot too. Throughout the years, she has brought many students of all ages and levels to become fluent in a relaxed, engaging, yet well structured learning environment.

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