

Olney Central College KNIGHTLINE



November 2023

CALENDAR NOVEMBER

17-18 - OCC Theater Production, "You Can't Take It With You," 7 p.m.

19 - OCC Theater Production, "You Can't Take It With You," 2 p.m.

22 - Last Day to Withdraw from Fall Semester Classes

23-24 - College Closed - Thanksgiving Break

DECEMBER

8 - Last Day of Fall Semester Classes

9 - Choir Christmas Concert, OCC Theater, 7 p.m.

11 - Spring Semester Textbook Sales Begin

11-14 - Fall Semester Final Exams

15 - Last Day of Fall Semester

19-31 - College Closed - Winter Break

IECC Libraries/ASCs introduce new webpage

The IECC Libraries/Academic Success Centers have a new combined webpage.

Library Services, Tutoring, Accommodations, Testing and more that the department offers can now be found in one central location. Just go to <https://iecc.libguides.com/IECCLibrary>.

OCC selected as an Aspen Prize Top 150 U.S. Community College

The Aspen Institute has named Olney Central College as one of the 150 institutions eligible to compete for the \$1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the nation's signature recognition of high achievement and performance among two-year colleges.



The institutions selected for this honor stand out among more than 1,000 community colleges nationwide as having high and improving levels of student success as well as equitable outcomes for Black and Hispanic students and those from lower-income backgrounds.

OCC has been continually selected as an Aspen Top 150 U.S. Community College since 2011.

Olney Central College President and IECC Vice Chancellor of Business Operations Chris Simpson said the honor recognizes the hard work and dedication of OCC faculty and staff along with the college's commitment to providing exceptional services to students.

"The national ranking by the Aspen Institute is in line with the long legacy of educational excellence at Olney Central College," Simpson said. "For 60 years, OCC has been helping to set students on their path to a successful future."

The Aspen Prize spotlights exemplary community colleges in order to drive attention to colleges achieving post-graduate success for all students, and is a central way Aspen researches highly effective student success strategies that are shared with the field.

The 150 eligible colleges have been invited to submit student success data and narratives about strategies to achieve better and more equitable student outcomes as the next step in an intensive review process that culminates in the naming of the Aspen Prize winner in Spring 2025. The eligible colleges represent the diversity and depth of the community college sector. Located in urban, rural, and suburban areas across 30 states, these colleges serve as few as 169 students and as many as 49,619.

"The Aspen Prize is rooted first and foremost in an assessment of whether colleges are walking the walk," said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. "As community colleges face enrollment variations, enroll students with pandemic-related learning loss, and graduate students into a rapidly changing labor market, it is easy to lose track of what matters most. The best community colleges are continuing to focus on advancing the core mission: making sure as many students as

See Aspen, Page 2

OCC Hosts First Fine Arts Day



The OCC Visual and Performing Arts Programs took center stage during Fine Arts Day on Oct. 27.

Area high school students were treated to performances and demonstrations by the OCC Art, Music and Theater Departments.

Students also had the opportunity to connect with faculty in a series of workshops and to interact with OCC students.



Aspen

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possible graduate with credentials that lead to fulfilling careers and reflect the development of diverse talent that communities, states, and our nation need.”

While community colleges are an essential contributor to our nation’s success, student outcomes vary substantially among institutions. Aspen measures those variances using multiple data sources and honors colleges with outstanding achievement in six critical areas: teaching and learning, certificate and degree completion, transfer and bachelor’s attainment,

workforce success, equitable access to the college, and equitable outcomes for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.

“These 150 colleges have achieved high and improving levels of student success for all students, including those who are often failed by our institutions,” Wyner said. “We’re excited to learn over the coming months how they achieved that success so we can share the most impressive practices with others in the field.”

Simpson said Olney Central College’s selection as an Aspen Prize Top 150 U.S. Community College affirms OCC’s exceptional instruction and provides students with yet another reason to make OCC their first choice.

“Not only will students have outstanding educational opportunities at OCC, but they will also have smaller class sizes and a variety of student support services, all at an affordable cost that will not leave them with a large amount of student debt,” he added.

In this first round, eligibility for the Aspen Prize is based on publicly available data.

Colleges must show strong, improving, and equitable student outcomes in first-to-second year retention, credentials awarded, and completion and transfer rates.

For a full list of the top 150 eligible institutions visit <https://higher.ed.aspeninstitute.org/aspen-prize/>.

Upcoming presentation by David Denton to focus on Kennedy assassination 60 years later

Olney Central College Professor David Denton will explore the most recent developments in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy during a presentation at 6 p.m. on November 21 in the Dr. John D. Stull Performing Arts Center.

The event marks the 60th anniversary of Kennedy's death, which coincides with OCC's opening. Students were just a little over two months into the semester when Kennedy was fatally shot on November 22, 1963, as his motorcade traveled through Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas. Denton said the memory remains vivid for many in OCC's first class, who can still recall sitting in the library or student union when the shocking news broke.

"We will be discussing the significance of this traumatic event in U.S. history and where we stand today," Denton said. "We will review recent developments including revelations by former Secret Service agent Paul Landis."

In a recent interview with the *New York Times*, Landis contradicts the Warren Commission's finding that Kennedy was shot by the same bullet that also injured Texas Gov. John Connally, who was riding in the front seat of the presidential limousine.

"Landis has gone on record saying he found another bullet in the back seat of the limo Kennedy was riding in," Denton said. "If what he is saying is true, it pretty much destroys the single bullet theory in the case."

Landis' claims are facing scrutiny, but Denton says they have generated attention.

"Landis has changed his story over the years and there are some questions about his credibility," Denton said. "He is going to appear at a conference in Pittsburgh this month and it will be interesting to see what he says then."

Denton's presentation is open to the public and will be available across the country through a Zoom live stream. He also has invited other experts on the assassination to participate in the discussion via Zoom.

Denton is nationally known for his extensive research into the Kennedy assassination. He has devoted more than 30 years to the subject, interviewing several people associated with the case and reviewing hundreds of documents relating to both Kennedy and Lee Harvey Oswald. He has written numerous articles and in 2020 published a collection of his works, *Essays on the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy*.

Earlier this year, Denton was featured on The History Channel in an episode of *History's Greatest Mysteries*, which focused on JFK's assassination.

Denton has hosted and participated in several conferences exploring the events surrounding Kennedy's death. He is both an organizer and presenter for the JFK Assassination 60 Years Later conference scheduled for Nov. 16-19 in Dallas, Texas.

Denton also teaches a course on Political Assassinations of the 1960s, which explores the deaths of President John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.



Welding students assist OCC Baseball

Students in the OCC Welding Program are applying their skills to a real-world project as they help renovate the OCC Baseball bullpen and batting cages. The work includes cutting metal pipes to fit blueprint specifications.

The updates are being funded in part by a \$6,500 OCC Foundation Mini Grant, which will cover supplies and new concrete for the facilities.

OCC Baseball players also are assisting with the renovations.

Peterson and Taylor join OCC Baseball

Olney Central College Baseball is welcoming two new assistant coaches.

OCC Alum Derek Peterson and Cayden Taylor just completed fall play under first-year Coach Phil Britton. The pair are looking forward to the spring season and are excited to share their experience with college players.

A native of Sarasota, Fla., Peterson grew up around the sport. His father, Rick, was a major league pitching coach for the Mets and Brewers, while his grandfather, Pete Peterson, served as a catcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates in the 1950s. The elder Peterson spent three-plus decades with the team in various roles and was the Pirates' General Manager when they won the World Series in 1979.

"Baseball is my first true love," Peterson said. "I love to play, and I am excited to work with college players. It's a pleasure to be here again. There is something really special about this place. You have hard-working kids who are dedicated to their play while focusing on academics."

Peterson's ties to OCC Baseball began during the summer before his senior year when as a player for the Evansville Razorbacks' travel club he had an opportunity to attend the Olney Central College Showcase and met then-Coach Dennis Conley. The encounter led to his decision to sign with the Blue Knights.

A redshirt freshman, Peterson pitched for the Blue Knights in 2011 and 2012.

"It was a great experience," Peterson said. "I was here for two years and then went to Temple University where I finished my college career."

Peterson then spent three seasons playing in the minor leagues for the Orioles. Following his professional career, Peterson relocated to Washington, D.C., where he worked for a sports technology company, focusing on pitching and hitting biomechanics. Peterson left after several years to start his own project, Baseline Motion, which assisted in building player development through an analysis of functional movement and postures.

"Post-Pandemic, I realized my true love was being in the dugout as part of a team," Peterson said. "I really wanted to transfer to college or professional coaching. Around the same time, I learned Coach Conley was planning to announce his retirement and I got a call from Phil. He was looking for an assistant and the timing couldn't have been better."

The pair have known each other for several years as Peterson was the first coach Britton hired for his training facility, Britton's Bullpen.

"Working with Phil is such an unbelievable opportunity," Peterson said. "I love competing. I love the game and what I love even more is watching the guys develop both as individuals and as a team. So often today, the focus is on me and I. Here, it's on we and us. I like to emphasize that a lot. Those are the qualities I believe are transferable skills throughout life."

Peterson will be joined in the dugout this spring by Taylor, a Fairfield High School graduate who played college baseball for Muskegon Community College in Michigan. After graduating from MCC, Taylor chose to pursue his interest in coaching.

"I played for Phil growing up and we reconnected when I moved back home," Taylor said. "I'm really grateful for a chance to serve as an assistant coach at OCC. I've received a warm welcome here and I couldn't ask for a better first opportunity."

Since returning to the area, Taylor has given pitching lessons both on his own and in conjunction with Britton. This summer he coached the Olney-based travel team, Southern Smoke Baseball.

Taylor is thrilled with the opportunity to work with players on the collegiate level.

"I like being able to work with all different kinds of players," he said. "You have guys coming from different areas, with different personalities, and you get to help them adapt and connect as a team. We're a home to them for two years and we get to be a big part of their lives. I enjoy being part of it."

With fall play ending, Taylor is looking to the future.

"We went into this fall challenging the guys to buy in," he said. "We have really good chemistry going now. Things are meshing well. I'm excited and confident as we start gearing up for the spring."



Derek Peterson



Cayden Taylor

Amanda Nelson joins OCC as Academic Advisor

Spring registration is underway and students are getting the opportunity to meet Olney Central College's newest Academic Advisor Amanda Nelson.

An OCC alum, Nelson joins OCC's advising team after working 10 years with students in the TRIO Programs at Illinois Eastern Community Colleges. Nelson initially was employed with Talent Search before joining Upward Bound in 2016. She served as a counselor and later coordinator for the program.

"I am excited about this new opportunity," Nelson said. "I was looking for a change, but I wanted to continue working with students. Moving to academic advising gave me the chance to do that."

In her new position, Nelson will advise career and technical as well as dual credit students.

Nelson holds a bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University and a master's degree in social work from St. Louis University.

As a first-generation college student herself, Nelson knows students can face difficulties on their educational journey.

"I want to make the process as easy as possible for them," she said. "I want to help them on their career path so they can hit their goals."

She added, "I really enjoy seeing them progress. When they come back to you and they have been successful, it's exciting knowing you have had a little part in it."

Nelson resides in Olney with her children, Madison and Delaney, a senior and sophomore in high school, and Landree, a sixth grader. All three are active in sports and Nelson stays busy with games and practices.

In her spare time, Nelson enjoys antiquing and watching Netflix series.



OCC students help capture national title

OCC students Brett Kocher and Colleen Steber assisted the Olney FFA Agronomy Team in capturing the national championship.

The team competed during the 96th National FFA Convention in Indianapolis and clinched the national title with four members placing in the Top 10 on testing. Steber finished 3rd overall and Kocher tied for 7th.

OCC student Avery Schneider received the American FFA Degree, which is awarded by the National FFA organization. Less than 1 percent of the National FFA participants receive this honor.



The Olney FFA Agronomy Team clinched the national title during the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis. OCC students Colleen Steber, third from left, and Brett Kocher, sixth from left, were among the team members.

Schedule your Spring registration advising appointment

Spring registration is now open at Olney Central College. Call 618-395-7777 to schedule an appointment with an advisor.

New students can apply online

for free at www.iecc.edu/apply. The Spring 2024 schedule is available at www.iecc.edu/schedules.

OCC is offering several spring Community Education classes includ-

ing community band, woodworking and open art studio. Visit www.iecc.edu/occ/communityed for a complete course listing.

Spring classes start Jan. 8.

OCC Theater to present 'You Can't Take It With You'

The Olney Central College Theater will present three performances of *You Can't Take It With You* on November 17-19 at the Dr. John D. Stull Performing Arts Center.

One of the most popular and successful plays of modern times, *You Can't Take It With You* is an over-the-top comedy featuring a loveably dysfunctional New York City family that will have the audience laughing from beginning to end.

Grandpa Vanderhof and his wacky family, the Sycamores, have been happily living their zany lives in his house in New York for many years. This family (and their friends) are a madcap group of eccentrics, marching to the beat of their own drums, with pride and joy.

Their hobbies include collecting snakes, building fireworks in the basement, writing plays that never get finished, and taking ballet lessons. Things like stress, jobs, and paying taxes are for other people, not for them! But when practical young Alice Sycamore becomes engaged to her company's Vice President, Tony Kirby, the Vanderhof/Sycamore clan must straighten up to meet the new in-laws. After disaster ensues, the Sycamores teach us about the importance of living life to the fullest and that love conquers all.

Performances are Friday, Nov. 17, and Saturday, Nov. 18, at 7 p.m., and Sunday, Nov. 19, at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$13. All seating is reserved, and tickets can be purchased online at www.iecc.edu/occ/theater or by leaving a message at 618-395-7777, ext. 2408. This show is sponsored by TrustBank.



Students study psychosocial care with poster project

Second Level nursing students are diving into the world of psychosocial care this semester. During class, they created informative posters about the different conditions and disorders they may encounter while caring for patients. This is an active learning strategy that uses presentations where students teach their peers while learning themselves.

Sports Schedule

Men's Basketball

Nov. 18 — OCC at Triton, 3 p.m.

Nov. 20 — OCC vs. Southeastern Iowa, 7 p.m. at home

Nov. 25 — OCC vs. Olive Harvey at Parkland Classic, 1 p.m.

Nov. 26 — OCC vs. Marshalltown, Parkland Classic, 1 p.m.

Dec. 2 — OCC at Three Rivers, 7 p.m.

Dec. 6 — OCC vs. Mineral Area, 7 p.m. at home

Dec. 9 — OCC at Bosco Institute, 3 p.m.

Dec. 13 — OCC vs. Lincoln Trail, 7 p.m. at home

Dec. 16 — OCC at Kaskaskia, 2 p.m.

Women's Basketball

Nov. 18 — OCC vs. Danville Area, 1 p.m. at home

Nov. 19 — OCC vs. Lake Land, 6:30 p.m. at home

Nov. 25 — OCC vs. Brescia JV, 2 p.m. at home

Nov. 29 — OCC at Parkland, 5:30 p.m.

Dec. 2 — OCC at Missouri Baptist JV, 1 p.m.

Dec. 11 — OCC vs. Greenville JV, 6 p.m. at home

Dec. 13 — OCC vs. Lincoln Trail, 5 p.m. at home

Dec. 16 — OCC at Kaskaskia, 1 p.m.

Keep Vehicles Locked

Students utilizing the OCC parking lots are advised to keep their vehicles locked when unattended.

Lost & Found

If you have lost an item, please stop by Student Services.

Trio Upward Bound hosts October workshop

IECC TRIO Upward Bound hosted its first Saturday Workshop of the year on Oct. 21. Students from 11 of the 12 target schools participated, making the total attendance 41 students.

The day started off with three groups of students rotating between breakout sessions. These breakout sessions are led by TRIO Upward Bound Counselors and are intended to be fun and educational. The sessions offered included oil, pastel, crayon art, the game of life, and a murder mystery.

“We have so many talented and artistic students and giving them the opportunity to work with art materials they may have not been able to use before is something we strive to do,” said Annie McGrail, TRIO Upward Bound Assistant Director.

The game of life breakout session consisted of a real-life recreation of the classic board game “Life” intending to teach the students financial literacy and budgeting. Students participating in the murder mystery collaborated with their partner to figure out who was the culprit. The students were able to role play and act out the mystery by dressing up and reading the script provided.

After the breakout sessions, students enjoyed lunch provided by the OCC Knight Kafe, then headed into the afternoon activities, which included a presentation from PAWSitive Pet Perfection, an Olney-based family-owned business that addresses several pet needs in central and southeastern Illinois.

Owners Shawna and PJ Zeilstra along with their family are on a mission to help animals live long and happy lives. They provide boarding, poochie playcare, full grooming services, and dog obedience training. They brought many different exotic animals to show and teach students about including chinchillas, hedgehogs, a macaw, and several types of iguanas, lizards, and snakes. The students absolutely loved learning about these animals, and they were even able to hold some of them.

Next some students went on a nature walk on a path behind the college while others stayed and learned about therapy dogs. Animal-Assisted Intervention expert Cyndie Kieffer, and her therapy dog, Norm, taught the students about the process dogs go through to train and become therapy dogs. Kieffer also told them about her background and how she got to where she is now, by receiving her master’s in social work. Kieffer now works with therapy dogs and people of all ages.

“We are so glad that we can provide our students with these educational experiences,” McGrail said. “Through our workshops our students form relationships with students from different schools, learn new things, and spend their Saturday learning while doing something they can enjoy. TRIO Upward Bound is lucky to have such determined young people who dedicate their time to becoming the best version of themselves. We are looking forward to our next workshop on Nov. 18.”

The TRIO Upward Bound programs are 100% federally funded by the Department of Education for \$324,979 (LTC), \$376,462 (OCC), and \$309,505 (WVC).



Halloween Fun

OCC Professor David Denton surprised his class Nov. 1 with a post Halloween Batman skit featuring Dr. Andrew Pittman and his students.



Meet the Knights

OCC Basketball hosted its annual Meet the Knights event on Oct. 23. The evening included a Blue Knights shoot-around and a Lady Knights scrimmage. Both teams signed autographs for fans.



Baseball players celebrate High 5 Friday

The Blue Knight Baseball team represented OCC at Richland County Elementary School for High 5 Friday on Oct. 13.





Nursing students learning from guest speakers

OCC nursing graduate Jessica McCorvey, APRN, MSN, PMHNP-BC, (center) met with Second Level nursing students to discuss mental health concerns related to nursing. Pictured with McCorvey are fellow OCC nursing graduate Rachel Fritschle, RN, and Tara Wheeler from SIHF Healthcare in Olney. They discussed nursing opportunities available for students.



Above left, representatives from McKendree University in Lebanon spoke with OCC nursing students about the university's RN to BSN program. They also provided lunch for the students. Above right, representatives from Good Samaritan Hospital in Vincennes, Ind., met with nursing students to discuss employment opportunities at their facility.