

The VOYAGER



DECEMBER 2024



AUTOMOTIVE CERTIFICATION

The Automotive Service Technology program has earned ASE accreditation.



FIRST-GEN STUDENTS

FCC celebrates First Generation College Student Day.



NEW VOLLEYBALL COACH

The winningest coach in FCHS history is taking the helm at FCC.



DR. JAY EDGREN REFLECTS ON FCC

After more than a decade at the helm of Frontier Community College (FCC), Dr. Jay Edgren prepares to retire, leaving behind a legacy of transformation, perseverance, and growth. Known for his hands-on leadership and unwavering focus on doing what's right, Dr. Edgren reflects on his time at FCC as one of immense personal and professional fulfillment.

Dr. Edgren's leadership extended well beyond the physical borders of FCC. From the start of his presidency in January 2014, he worked to change how the local community viewed the college. "We were always the third choice, the backup plan," he says. "Changing that perception to being a first choice for students was one of my primary goals."

Athletics became a cornerstone of this transformation, not only boosting FCC's visibility but also fostering community pride. "Athletics legitimized Frontier," Dr. Edgren explains. "It gave students, families, and community members something to rally around." The new programs also deepened FCC's connections with local organizations, such as partnering with the Park District to renovate the softball field, which became a symbol of collaboration.



The broader community embraced this vision. From generous financial contributions to hands-on participation, local support became a driving force behind FCC's growth. "The community's generosity has been a pleasant surprise," Dr. Edgren says, recalling how fundraising efforts for the baseball field and other facilities raised hundreds of thousands of dollars. "People here want to see students succeed, and they're willing to step up to make that happen."

Reflecting on the last decade, Dr. Edgren notes the shifting landscape of higher education and its impact on institutions like FCC. "Recruiting students has become much more competitive," he says. "It's no longer enough to just promote your institution. You have to proactively show students why your college is the best fit for them—and sometimes, that means being honest and saying it might not be."

One area where community colleges are stepping up is workforce development, especially through programs tailored to industry needs. "The necessity of a four-year degree isn't what it once was," he explains. "Skilled trades and manufacturing careers are where the opportunities are, and community colleges are uniquely positioned to prepare students for those paths."

Dr. Edgren also reflects on the significant changes at IECC, including the shift from four independent colleges to one unified district model. "The move to one district has been one of the biggest changes I've seen," he says. "It wasn't without hurdles, but I believe it was the right decision for the long-term sustainability of the system."

While change often brings challenges, Dr. Edgren embraces it as an opportunity for growth. "I like process improvements," he says. "Getting leaner and more efficient has exposed areas where we needed to improve and helped us ensure we're meeting regulatory and educational standards."

While Dr. Edgren is proud of how far FCC has come, he's equally excited about its future. One of the most significant upcoming projects is the construction of a new athletic building, which he believes will be transformative for both the college and the community.

"This facility will be a game-changer," Dr. Edgren says with enthusiasm. The multi-purpose building will serve as a home for FCC's volleyball program and host intramural sports, tournaments, and other community events. Designed with flexibility in mind, the space will include features like



indoor pickleball courts, practice areas, and ample room for athletic and recreational classes.

“This isn’t just about athletics,” he adds. “It’s about creating a space where students and community members can connect, grow, and thrive together. Whether it’s hosting high school tournaments or offering new fitness programs, this facility will deepen FCC’s role as a hub for the community.”

Another exciting development is the gas utility construction program, which launches next year. The program is already generating interest from industry leaders across the Midwest, with many offering resources and support to ensure its success. “This program will fill a critical industry need, giving students access to high-paying, in-demand careers,” Dr. Edgren says. “It has the potential to put FCC on the map as a leader in workforce development.”



As Dr. Edgren prepares for retirement, he looks back on his time at FCC with pride, particularly in how the college has strengthened its ties with the community. From beautification projects to scholarship donations, the partnership between FCC and the local community has been pivotal. “The people here have been incredibly supportive,” he says. “They’ve welcomed me as an outsider and embraced my vision for the college. I’ll always be grateful for that.”

For Dr. Edgren, it’s the personal connections that stand out most. “I’ll miss the people—the staff, my colleagues, and the community members who have been so accepting of me,” he says. “From my pickleball friends to our dedicated supporters, the relationships I’ve built here mean the world to me.”

When asked what he hopes his legacy will be, Dr. Edgren emphasizes his commitment to integrity and collaboration. “I pride myself on being able to look in the mirror every day, knowing I’ve done my best in an ethical and fair way,” he says. “Leadership isn’t about one person—it’s about empowering others to achieve a shared vision.”

Dr. Edgren offers similar advice to his successor: “Keep decision-making at the lowest level possible, involve everyone, and don’t try to be an autocrat. It doesn’t work.”

As he turns the page to retirement, Dr. Edgren looks forward to strengthening his new marriage, enjoying time with his wife, and staying active—especially on the pickleball court. But he also acknowledges the bittersweet nature of leaving FCC. “This has been the most exciting, fun, challenging, and rewarding time of my professional life,” he says. “I hope people are as proud of the last 11 years as I am.”

Dr. Edgren’s legacy is one of transformation—not just of buildings and programs, but of lives and communities. His leadership has set FCC on a course for continued growth and success, ensuring it remains a beacon of opportunity for students and a source of pride for the region it serves.

As he departs, his philosophy remains clear: “It takes many hands, many minds, and many talents to accomplish much. That’s how we’ve succeeded at FCC, and that’s how the college will continue to thrive.”



AUTOMOTIVE PROGRAM RECEIVES NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

The Automotive Service Technology program at Frontier Community College in Fairfield, Illinois has received ASE Training Program accreditation by the ASE Education Foundation.

To achieve this coveted recognition, the school's automotive training program underwent rigorous evaluation by the ASE Education Foundation. Nationally accepted standards of excellence in areas such as instruction, facilities, and equipment were used.

"This is great news for automotive-minded young people and their parents," said

Michael Coley, ASE Education Foundation President. "Because this program increases cooperation between local education and industry leaders, it gives added assurance that Frontier Community College's graduates will be employable entry-level technicians. As a result of the quality education provided by Frontier Community College, the motoring public will benefit since better repair technicians will join the work force." Upon completion of the evaluation, Frontier Community College became accredited by the ASE Education Foundation. The ASE Education Foundation is a non-profit, independent

organization that evaluates and accredits entry-level technician training programs against standards developed by the automotive industry.

Rodney Maxey, Automotive Service Technology Lead Instructor, stated, "During the past few months, we have worked closely with the ASE Education Foundation to make certain that our program would meet strict industry standards, and now we are delighted to join the ranks of the ASE accredited training programs. Students will be assured of a quality education, and shop owners will be assured of getting quality job applicants."



PREP YOUR CAR FOR WINTER

As the days grow shorter and the temperatures drop, the last thing you want is to be stranded in the cold with a vehicle that's unprepared for winter's challenges. The month of December is the perfect time to ensure your car is equipped to handle icy roads, snowstorms, and frigid temperatures.

Ben Morgan, Assistant Automotive Instructor at Frontier Community College, advises motorists to monitor their tires regularly.

"When the weather cools, tire pressure will decrease slightly because it is affected by temperature. You should add 4-5 pounds of PSI to compensate. Additionally, ensure that the coolant is at the proper level for freeze protection."

Freezing temperatures can drain the energy from a vehicle's battery. Morgan emphasizes the importance of checking the battery's charge.

"The battery can be checked using a capacitance checker to determine its life, or a load tester for some types of older batteries. If the battery is weak in cold weather, it is likely to fail. However, if you test it before the cold sets in, you'll know whether you might encounter an issue. Note that a load tester cannot be used on AGM-style or gel batteries."

Accidents can occur when road conditions deteriorate due to inclement weather. Morgan emphasizes the importance of having supplies on hand in case you are involved in an accident or get stuck.

"I encourage people to keep supplies in their vehicles, such as a warm or thermal blanket, bottled water, and food like granola bars for nourishment. A cell phone charger or power bank is also a good idea. You can run your vehicle while idling to maintain heat but try not to do it more than necessary. If you're low on fuel, be sure to monitor your fuel level."

Morgan added that if you are unable to check your vehicle yourself, you can take it to an auto mechanic for inspection.



FCC CELEBRATES FIRST-GEN STUDENTS

Frontier Community College celebrated National First-Generation College Student Day on Friday, November 8, honoring the journey and achievements of first-generation students.

The origins of this celebration trace back to the Higher Education Act (HEA) signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965. This landmark legislation created federal financial aid programs to help fund students' education and invested significantly in colleges and universities. Among the HEA's programs, the Federal TRIO initiatives have been especially impactful, promoting postsecondary access, retention, and completion for

limited-income, first-generation students.

Annie Lankford, a TRIO advisor at Frontier Community College, reflects on her own experience as a first-generation college student. "I remember feeling a lot of doubt and uncertainty," she recalls. "I was stepping into a world that my parents hadn't navigated, and that was both exciting and intimidating. They were very supportive of my decision to pursue higher education but didn't know how to guide me. That's where my TRIO Student Support Services Federal Advisor at FCC made all the difference, supporting me from community college to university."

Her advice to today's first-generation students is clear and encouraging: "Be confident and proud of your decision to go to college. You belong here as much as anyone else. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and consider joining TRIO SSS!"

As the head of TRIO Student Support Services at FCC, Lankford is dedicated to helping first-generation students succeed. For more information on TRIO SSS at Frontier, she can be reached at lankforda@iecc.edu or by calling 618-842-3711.

SNYDER BEGINS A NEW CHAPTER



The numbers speak for themselves; an overall record of 543-210, 13 conference titles, six regional titles, two consecutive sectional championships, a 73% winning percentage, and never experienced a losing season. Chet Snyder is the winningest coach in Fairfield Community High School history – not just in volleyball, but across all sports. In his debut season coaching FCHS Lady Mules Volleyball in 2004, Snyder led them to a 19-14 record. In his second year, the team finished 15-14. From there, he went on to achieve eighteen 20+ win seasons and five 30+ win seasons. Many coaches and programs would envy such accomplishments.

Now, he begins a new chapter in his life as the Frontier Community College Bobcats Head Volleyball Coach and

Student Life Coordinator at FCC. Snyder officially assumed his duties on December 2.

“I’m super excited. I’ve loved every minute of my time at FCHS. It was a fantastic 22 years. Sometimes, you just need something new and fresh. I’m excited about the opportunity to stay in our hometown and take on something totally different with Frontier Bobcats Volleyball and student life. I’m excited about both roles.”

Snyder’s coaching journey began in Martinsville, Illinois, in Clark County, at the junior high level. He later moved south, coaching at the former Merriam Grade School east of Fairfield. His next stop following Merriam was FCHS, where he started as an assistant coach under Tim Pearson during Pearson’s second year. Snyder eventually took over as head coach, becoming the third in FCHS volleyball history, following Pearson and Marilyn Book. Under his leadership, Lady Mules volleyball flourished.

“I never imagined it would grow into what it did. Sometimes, small schools experience down years and losing seasons – but we didn’t. We just kept winning and winning. The support from the community kept growing, and it was such a wonderful time. We even had the high school

band play at our home games, which doesn’t happen often.”

After taking over as coach, Snyder aimed to raise awareness of girls’ sports in southern Illinois. When he began at FCHS, Norris City-Omaha-Enfield (NCOE) and Edwards County were among the region’s strongest volleyball programs. Over the years, high school volleyball in southern Illinois has grown significantly. Snyder credited Cathy Black, Tony Phelps, Jaclyn Melton, and the late Linda Oxby Brown as key inspirations who contributed to the development of volleyball in the area.

Now, as head coach of the Frontier Community College Bobcats Volleyball team, Snyder is eager to implement his coaching philosophy and begin recruiting both locally and abroad.

“We must serve tough and pass well. At the college level, there are many players who can score, swing hard, and block. Recruiting efforts may include local, statewide, national, and even international players. I’ve already been in contact with a couple of international clubs.

Last season, Bobcats Volleyball finished 2-31, but I feel like we’re hungrier now. We can improve, strengthen the roster with more athleticism, and increase our scoring ability. To

build team chemistry, we're going to foster an awesome family culture and grow together from there.

Winning always makes the experience more enjoyable. I'm not used to losing – I've never had a losing season. I believe there is always a way to defeat the other team. We're going to do things the right way, bring in great kids with strong character, build a winning culture, and strive to make a significant turnaround in my first year."

Former Bobcats Volleyball Coach, Nixie Hnetkovsky, is assisting Snyder as he transitions from high school coaching to NJCAA Division I – a new and unfamiliar territory for him. Snyder said her assistance and insight have been invaluable. In addition to his volleyball responsibilities, Snyder will also serve as the Student Life Coordinator, a role he is excited to embrace as he works to enrich student and campus life.

"I'm excited about this opportunity. I feel like I've done similar work through The Journey Church in Fairfield and within the community. I'm looking forward to meeting and working with the staff at FCC, getting input from students, and creating more events on campus. These two years are such a pivotal time in students' lives. We want their experience at Frontier to be the best it can possibly be."

News of Snyder's hiring went viral across southern Illinois with many coaches, current and former players, and fans telling him congratulations and wishing him the best of luck. Snyder expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to coach Bobcats Volleyball and serve as Student Life Coordinator.

"I'm incredibly thankful for this opportunity. I'm grateful to Jeremy Ellis, our Athletic Director, Dr. Jay Edgren, Nixie, and the IECC Board of Trustees. I'm committed to doing my best to create the best environment for our student-athletes and an exceptional experience for every student involved in campus life."

FCC Athletic Director, Jeremy Ellis says, "I'm excited about the hiring of Chet Snyder. Chet has been a part of the community for a long time and has been a very successful coach at the high school level. I'm looking forward to the opportunity he has to come to Frontier and help build our tradition here."

Ellis added, "We're looking forward to growing and expanding, and this is an opportunity for students to engage in more activities on campus. We plan to organize events in the future, providing more opportunities and a better experience for our students and student-athletes. I believe both aspects of his role present an exciting time for Frontier and our athletic department."

What other coaches are saying about Snyder:

"I could not be more excited for Chet taking over the Frontier volleyball team and program. Chet is known for fostering a family-like, team-first environment, and he has a strong, supportive connection with many local coaches. This will help him with recruiting local talent. His ability to inspire players will undoubtedly create a winning culture at Frontier that extends beyond the court. Frontier is gaining not only an incredible coach, but also an exceptional mentor for their student-athletes. Congratulations, Chet, and best of luck!" - Jaclyn Melton, Norris City-Omaha-Enfield High School Head Volleyball Coach

"I am so happy and proud of Chet! He has been a close friend and mentor for the past 15 years. When I first began coaching at the high school level, I quickly noticed Chet's dedication to the growth of southern Illinois volleyball. Although he is a fierce competitor, he is the first to congratulate you and commend your team's efforts and abilities. He is an amazing person and the opportunity to play against learn from him and become his friend, has been one I will cherish forever. I appreciate all his encouraging words over the years and how he will do an amazing job with the Frontier Volleyball program." - Katherine Shaneyfelt, Pinckneyville Community High School Head Volleyball Coach

"I've had the privilege of coaching against Chet throughout my entire career, and I've learned so much from him on the other side of the court. Chet is a tremendous leader, and the respect and admiration his athletes have for him is a testament to his impact. At Fairfield, he established an incredible volleyball culture rooted in his WE/ME philosophy, which always shone through in his team's play and mindset. I have no doubt that Chet will be a fantastic fit for Frontier, and I'm confident he will bring out the very best in his athletes." - Jill Kistner, Newton Community High School Head Volleyball Coach



VOLLEYBALL, BOOKS, AND DREAMS: THE JENNA RHINEBURGER STORY

When faculty, staff, and students walked into Learning Commons in Cox Hall at the start of the fall semester, they may have been surprised to see a familiar face behind the main desk – someone who graduated from Frontier Community College in May 2024. Jenna Rhineburger, who earned an associate degree in arts and sciences, also played volleyball for the Bobcats during her freshman and sophomore years.

“The college I applied to was College of the Ozarks in Point Lookout, Missouri. It has a 10% acceptance rate, so when I applied, I wasn’t accepted until the spring of 2025, not the fall of 2024,” Rhineburger explained. “I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do, so I reached out to FCC Bobcats Volleyball Coach Nixie Hnetkovsky after I graduated, and she gave me the opportunity to come back and serve as a volunteer assistant coach.”

Rhineburger always dreamed of becoming a coach. From sporting yellow and black on the court, to holding a clipboard on the sideline, she said the experience was both unique and rewarding.

“It was very different and eye-opening – a totally different atmosphere transitioning from player to coach. You have a new perspective and see things in a completely different way. I never thought I would become an assistant coach so soon, but it has strengthened my interest in pursuing coaching in the future,” Rhineburger said.

There are countless volleyball coaches across various levels of competition, but one coach at a university a few hours east of Frontier has particularly captured her attention.

“I’ve recently become interested in University of Louisville Women’s Volleyball. During high school, I attended a Louisville volleyball camp,



environment is amazing. Robert has been a huge help in teaching me new things, and Lori has been a light in the library. She's helped me so much in answering my questions, and I've gotten to work on a variety of different projects."

Rhineburger plans to major in Exercise Science with a double minor in Business Administration and Coaching. She's also interested in becoming a physical therapy assistant. As she prepares to move west to start school at College of the Ozarks in the upcoming spring semester, she's been reflecting on the memories she's made at Frontier and in the Fairfield community.

"Fairfield has been my home for almost three years now, and it's truly amazing. I come from a small town (Wadesville, Indiana), and I've loved every second here. The community is incredible. When I was a lifeguard at Leo French Park, I got to meet so many residents. Fairfield has left a mark on my heart."

"For Frontier, it's been a home away from home. I've met and talked to so many wonderful people, and it's been such a fun, fulfilling time," she said.

and I loved the players and the coaches," Rhineburger shared. "I aspire to be like their head coach, Dani Busboom Kelly. Whenever I watch her coach, she's very calm and trusts her players to perform. She's the kind of coach who prepares her players in practice and then lets them play the game."

Towards the end of her sophomore year at FCC, Rhineburger worked as a student assistant in Learning Commons. By the fall of 2024, she became a part-time library assistant under Learning Commons Director Lori Noe and Learning Commons Specialist Robert Tennyson. Rhineburger shared that reconnecting with returning students and chatting with her former instructors has been a rewarding experience.

"It's been interesting seeing students from last year that I know. I've really enjoyed interacting with them again. It's also been great catching up with instructors I've had in the past – they've been asking me about my future. I've had so much fun working here, and the work





BOBCAT BASEBALL PLAYERS SIGN LETTERS OF INTENT

On Wednesday, November 14, four Bobcat Baseball players signed their National Letters of Intent to further their academic and athletic careers. They are Cole Sims, Trenton Creek, Ethan Payne, and Byler Reither.

Sims will travel northwest next season to go to Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois. Last season for the Bobcats, the outfielder Sims had a batting average of .354, with four home runs, 46 RBI, notched 42 runs, and stole 16 bases. Sims is from Perryville, Kentucky, and attended Boyle County High School in Danville, Kentucky.

Creek will be heading east to Indiana University – Southeast the following spring in New Albany, Indiana. After playing for the Bobcats as a catcher during his freshman year, Creek decided to redshirt for his sophomore year. The veteran catcher is from Mount Washington, Kentucky, and played at Bullitt East High School.

Payne will travel southwest next fall to Missouri University Science & Technology in Rolla, Missouri. A sophomore right-handed pitcher, Payne is from Bentonville, Arkansas, and played high school baseball at Bentonville High School.

Reither will head down to Florida next fall to Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. Reither, a sophomore right-handed pitcher, hails from Joplin, Missouri, and transferred in from Missouri Southern State University.

Coach Matt McCue said, "We are so proud of all these guys who have all taken different paths in their careers. We are very thankful their paths brought them to Fairfield and we're excited to follow their futures."

FCC IN PICTURES



1 Electrical Distribution Systems students get a hands-on education by doing a pole removal.

2 The FCC campus on a fall day.

3 An Automotive Service Technology Student works on an engine.

4 FCC volleyball players helped decorate light posts in downtown Fairfield.

5 FCC Student Ambassadors and student-athletes have been visiting local schools for High Five Fridays.

6 FCC's Active Minds chapter held a popcorn bar for students, faculty, and staff.