

NETWORK



MARCH 2025



HIGHLIGHTS



LTC welcomes area high school artists to campus for Celebrate Art! Day.



Music and the Mound: the Two Loves of Sean Stone.



LTC and Twin Rivers partner for annual Career Day event.

AMBROSE RECEIVES PHI THETA KAPPA PARAGON AWARD FOR NEW PRESIDENTS

Lincoln Trail College President Tona Ambrose has been named a recipient of the Phi Theta Kappa Paragon Award for New Presidents, a national honor recognizing college leaders who demonstrate exceptional support for student success initiatives.

The Paragon Award is presented to college presidents who have served three years or less in their role and have actively contributed to strengthening pathways to completion, transfer, and employment. Recipients are nominated by students, making the recognition particularly meaningful for Ambrose. LTC students Kylee Hosman and Chance Moscardelli submitted the nomination, highlighting her leadership, student-focused approach, and dedication to creating opportunities for academic and personal growth.

"This recognition is truly humbling," said Ambrose. "More than anything, it's a testament to the outstanding leadership of Kim Schucker and Carrie Brown, whose unwavering commitment to PTK creates life-changing opportunities for our students."

**UPCOMING
APRIL
EVENTS**

- 4 Footloose**
7 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 5 Footloose**
7 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 6 Footloose**
2 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 7 Institutional Outreach Town Hall Meeting**
1 p.m., Williams Hall Conference Room
- 8 Senior Start Day**
8 a.m., Campus-wide
- 11 Footloose**
7 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 12 Footloose**
7 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 13 Footloose**
2 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 14 Craze Daze**
12 p.m., Miller Lake
- 15 Academic Affairs Town Hall Meeting**
9 a.m., Lincoln Room
- 17 Movie Night Sponsored by Student Senate**
6 p.m., Eagle Theater
- 18 COLLEGE CLOSED - Spring Holiday**
- 22 Business Operations Town Hall Meeting**
9 a.m., Lincoln Room
- Spring Instrumental Concert**
7 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 23 Eagleton Book Club**
6 p.m., Learning Commons
- 24 LTC Foundation Meeting**
12 p.m., Lincoln Room
- 25 Spring Choral Concert**
7 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 27 Youth Recitals**
12 p.m., Lackey Music Hall
- 28-29 Juries**

It's an honor to support and encourage the work they do."

For Ambrose, the fact that students initiated the nomination makes the award especially significant. "Knowing that our students took the time to nominate me is the greatest honor because it shows that they feel valued, encouraged, and empowered," she said. "There is no greater compliment than an award from a group of students – they are the very reason I come to campus every day."

Throughout her tenure at Lincoln Trail College, Ambrose has prioritized student success, ensuring that students' voices are heard and their ideas shape campus improvements. Under her leadership, PTK students facilitated a project focused on improving food service and meal plans, engaging students in surveys and roundtable discussions to develop meaningful changes.

Ambrose also champions leadership development by encouraging students to take on active roles in clubs and organizations, including PTK, Student Senate, and Future Business Leaders of America. "From the first day of school, I encourage students to make new friends and take advantage of every opportunity at LTC," she said. "Leadership is not just about having a title—it's about learning to collaborate, problem-solve, and take initiative."

In addition to her work with student organizations, Ambrose has been instrumental in fostering a high-quality learning environment at Lincoln Trail College. She emphasizes a growth mindset, continuous improvement, and collaboration across the Illinois Eastern Community Colleges district to provide students with broader support and resources.

Ambrose will receive the Paragon Award at Phi Theta Kappa's Annual Convention, Catalyst 2025, held April 3-5 at the Kansas City Convention Center. She will be recognized

on stage during the Third General Session, an event attended by thousands of students, advisors, and college leaders. The session will also feature keynote speaker Steve Burns, best known as the original host of Blue's Clues.

"This award affirms that we're on the right path," said Ambrose. "Our students are the heart of everything we do at Lincoln Trail College, and I'm committed to continuing to support their success in every way possible."



LINCOLN TRAIL COLLEGE HOSTS CELEBRATE ART! DAY



High school artists from several area schools gathered at Lincoln Trail College for Celebrate Art! Day on March 4, an event designed to inspire and recognize young talent. Students had the opportunity to learn from award-winning graphic designer and educator Samantha Tableriou, participate in a creative exercise, and showcase their work in the Celebrate Art! show.

Tableriou, based in central Illinois, specializes in creating dynamic, immersive design experiences, particularly for exhibitions and interactive environments. In addition to teaching college-level design courses, she collaborates with multidisciplinary teams to develop compelling in-person experiences that foster connection and storytelling. Her passion for art and education was evident as she shared insights into her career, offering students a glimpse into the professional world of design.



She also led an interactive activity, guiding students through a game of Exquisite Corpse, a collaborative drawing exercise where each artist contributes to a piece without seeing previous sections until the end. This surrealist technique encourages creativity and unpredictability in the artistic process, and students embraced the challenge, producing unique and imaginative works.

Prior to the event, more than 100 pieces of art were submitted for the Celebrate Art! show. Each participating artist received a certificate, and several students were honored with Outstanding Artist Awards:

- Macey Hayes, Red Hill High School – Yaelokre (charcoal)
- Carmalee Treat, Red Hill High School – A Memorial to Panda (scratchboard)
- Rachel Barker, Red Hill High School – Chicken Scratch (scratchboard)
- Breana Pettigrew, Hutsonville High School – Binxe (acrylic)
- Lexie Biernbaum, Hutsonville High School – Blossoms n' Blooms (ceramic)
- Alessia Madeddu, Hutsonville High School – American Duck (ceramic)
- Madison Kelly, Lawrenceville High School – Better Days (pencil and charcoal)

Madison Kelly was also awarded Best of Show for her piece Held Down (pencil and charcoal).

During a reception following the event, attendees participated in a vote for the People's Choice Award, resulting in a tie between Atlas Clapp of Palestine High School for the oil painting Immortal and Carmalee Treat of Red Hill High School for the scratchboard piece A Memorial to Panda.

Celebrate Art! Day at Lincoln Trail College provided young artists with an opportunity to learn, collaborate, and gain recognition for their talents, reinforcing the college's commitment to fostering artistic expression in the community.

LINCOLN TRAIL COLLEGE HOSTS CAREER DAY



Lincoln Trail College partnered with Twin Rivers to host a Career Day event, giving seventh graders and sophomores from three counties an opportunity to explore career pathways and engage with local business and industry leaders.

LTC President Tona Ambrose welcomed students to campus, emphasizing the importance of career exploration at a young age. Regional Superintendent Jeremy Brush served as the keynote speaker, encouraging students to think about their futures and the skills they will need to succeed in the workforce.

Following the keynote, students participated in two breakout sessions, selecting from a variety of career fields. Local professionals shared insights about their industries, discussing job responsibilities, required skills, educational pathways, and entry-level wages. They also answered student questions about the rewards and challenges of their careers.

"This event is a great way for students to get a real-world perspective on different careers," said Erin Volk, LTC's Director of Dual Credit, who helped organize the event. "It's important that they see the opportunities available to them and understand what it takes to be successful in those fields."

Throughout the sessions, business and industry leaders provided guidance on the qualifications needed for various career paths, including options for education and training. The interactive format allowed students to gain firsthand knowledge and start considering potential career interests.

"Our goal is to help students make informed decisions about their futures," Volk said. "By connecting them with professionals and showing them the pathways to success, we're giving them the tools to start planning now."

The Career Day event is a decades-long collaboration between Lincoln Trail College and Twin Rivers to support career readiness initiatives for area students.

LINCOLN TRAIL COLLEGE HOSTS YOUNG WOMEN LEAD



Lincoln Trail College welcomed high school students from across the region on March 6 for the Young Women LEAD conference, an event designed to inspire and empower young women. The highlight of the conference was a keynote address by Jen Bricker-Bauer, a nationally recognized acrobat, aerialist, author, and motivational speaker with deep roots in Crawford County.

Bricker, who was born without legs, has defied expectations throughout her life. Raised in Oblong, she was taught by her adoptive parents that “can’t” was not an option. That mindset led her to become a state champion in power tumbling, tour internationally as an aerialist and acrobat, and share her powerful story as a motivational speaker. She has performed alongside celebrities such as Britney Spears and has been featured on major media outlets, including HBO Real Sports, ABC’s 20/20, Good Morning America, ESPN, The New York Times, and People magazine.

Bricker has shared her message of perseverance and self-belief with audiences around the world through speaking engagements. Her New York Times bestselling autobiography, *Everything is Possible: Finding the Faith and Courage to Follow Your Dreams*, details her journey of resilience and determination, inspiring readers to push past their perceived limitations.

In addition to the keynote, attendees participated in breakout sessions on topics relevant to young women’s futures, including careers in STEM and the trades, money management, stress management, healthy relationships, and entrepreneurship. The sessions provided students with insights and tools to navigate their personal and professional journeys with confidence.

Young Women LEAD is a national initiative focused on leadership, education, and development for high school girls. The event at Lincoln Trail College is part of a nationwide series designed to encourage young women to explore their passions and career opportunities while developing leadership skills.

LTC HOSTS SULLIVAN HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORES OVER SPRING BREAK

Lincoln Trail College welcomed sophomores from Sullivan High School to campus over Spring Break, giving students the opportunity to explore academic programs, meet instructors, and tour campus facilities.

The students were greeted by Lincoln Trail College President Tona Ambrose and College Admissions Representative Curtis Miller before breaking into groups for a day of interactive learning experiences.

“We truly enjoyed having the Sullivan High School sophomores on campus,” said Ambrose. “It’s always exciting to see students engaging with our instructors and discovering new possibilities for their futures. Visits like these give them a firsthand look at how Lincoln Trail College can help them reach their goals.”

During the visit, students toured the Broadband Telecom building, where instructors Travis Matthews and Dennis York introduced them to career opportunities in telecommunications and technology. Dr. Alani Frederick spoke with students about healthcare pathways and the variety of options available in the field. The visit concluded with a tour of the Crawford County Recreation Center, highlighting resources available to students at Lincoln Trail College.

“It was great to host students from one of our nearby Indiana schools and show them what Lincoln Trail College has to offer,” said Miller. “Opportunities like this give students a chance to see the programs, meet faculty, and start thinking about the next steps in their education.”

Lincoln Trail College regularly welcomes high school students to campus for tours and special events to help them explore career and educational pathways. Schools interested in scheduling a visit can contact Miller or Carrie Halbert for more information.

REGISTRATION OPENS FOR SUMMER AND FALL CLASSES

Lincoln Trail College is now accepting registrations for summer and fall 2025 classes. Students can secure their schedules starting March 11 by meeting with an advisor to select courses that align with their academic and career goals.

Early registration allows students to have the best selection of classes, ensuring they get the courses they need at times that fit their schedules.

“Meeting with an advisor early in the registration process gives students the best opportunity to build a schedule that works for them,” said Jaime Carman, Director of Academic Advising for Illinois Eastern Community Colleges. “Advisors help students select courses that keep them on track for graduation, while also making sure they understand their options, whether they plan to transfer or enter the workforce.”

Lincoln Trail College offers a wide range of programs, including transfer degrees, career and technical education, and short-term certificates. The college also provides online and hybrid learning options to accommodate different learning preferences and scheduling needs.

New students should begin the registration process by applying to Lincoln Trail College. Current and returning students can schedule an advising appointment by visiting the Students Services Office or by calling the college.

MUSIC AND THE MOUND: THE TWO LOVES OF SEAN STONE



Sean Stone came to Lincoln Trail College to play baseball. He never expected that he'd leave as a musician, too.

"I always wanted to get into music, but just never did," Stone says. "By high school, I decided I wanted to learn piano, so I just sat down at the keyboard we had at home. I started pounding on it, and over time, it started sounding a little better."

What began as a hobby quickly turned into a passion. Stone taught himself to play by ear, learning songs he loved simply by listening and replicating them. He had no formal training, no sheet music, just a love for the sound of the keys and the determination to teach himself. His progress was slow at first, but by the end of high school, he realized that music wasn't just a pastime—it was something more.

Most college athletes find it difficult to balance the demands of their sport with academics. For Stone, adding music into the mix only deepened his connection to both. "A lot of people are lucky to have one passion in life," he says. "I have two."

A Hidden Talent Discovered

Stone's musical journey at Lincoln Trail College took off during his sophomore year when he enrolled in a world music class taught by Yvonne Newlin. On the first day, as part of her introduction to the course, Newlin played a piece on the piano for her students. Stone listened carefully. Then, to her surprise, he sat down at the piano and played it back—entirely by ear.

"I've never had a piano student like Sean Stone," Newlin says. "When he sat down and played what I had just played, I was floored. He learned it entirely by ear."

For Newlin, who has taught piano for over 40 years, Stone's ability was



something special. Many students play by ear, but few have the discipline and determination to go beyond that. “I thought, okay, we’ll start with a beginner’s book,” she recalls. “But Sean was different. He didn’t just want to play by ear—he wanted to learn to read music, too.”

Newlin knew that would be the real test. “I’ve had many students who can play by ear, but they often don’t want to put in the effort to learn notation,” she says. “Not Sean. He dove in headfirst.”

At first, she was cautious in her approach. She knew that if she played a piece for him, he would simply replicate it. Instead, she gave him sheet music without playing it for him. “He picked it up so quickly,” she says. “It didn’t seem quick to him, but to me, it was incredible.”

Stone embraced the challenge, spending hours practicing in the music department’s practice rooms, refining his ability to read music rather than just rely on his ear. “Every minute that he wasn’t in class or on the baseball field, he was in the practice room playing piano,” Newlin says. “It was more than just an interest—it was a passion.”

Juggling Two Passions

Stone’s schedule was already packed with baseball practices, games, and classes, but he found himself drawn to the piano every spare moment he had.

For Stone, it never felt like a burden. “I get asked a lot about how I balance everything,” he says. “But it’s never felt like balancing. I enjoy every bit of it.”

His baseball coaches and professors at LTC were incredibly supportive, allowing him the flexibility to pursue both passions. When it came time to record a performance for his transfer application, his coach let him miss part of practice to do it. “They understand how important this is to me,” Stone says. “And that means a lot.”

More Than Just Music

Learning from Newlin opened Stone’s eyes to a new way of thinking about music. Before, he played songs simply because they sounded good to him. Now, he understood the deeper elements—how composers structured their pieces, how emotion could be conveyed through dynamics, and how each note carried meaning.

“She helped me realize that I could do more with music than just play for my own enjoyment,” he says. “I started to see it as something bigger—something I could share.”

His connection to music is deeply personal. “A lot of people feel closest to their faith when they’re praying,” he says. “For me, it’s when I’m playing piano. It’s one of the gifts God gave me, and I want to do something with it.”

Newlin sees that depth every time he plays. “Sean is a perfectionist,” she says. “He puts his heart into every note. That’s rare.”



Inspiring Others

Stone's love for music has started to spread. Some of his baseball teammates have expressed interest in learning instruments, and he's been their biggest cheerleader. "I tell them, 'Do it. You won't regret it,'" he says. "It's good to have something outside of baseball—something that lets you take a breath and express yourself in a different way."

Now, as he prepares to transfer to a four-year university, Stone is making sure music remains a part of his journey. "I'm extremely blessed to be able to continue both baseball and music," he says. "It's everything I've hoped for."

Newlin has no doubt that he will go far. "He's one of those students you never forget," she says. "His passion, his dedication—it's special. And whatever he chooses to do with music, I know he'll make it meaningful."

For Stone, the future is clear. He's ready to keep playing—whether that's from the pitcher's mound or the piano bench. "I've never felt like I was juggling baseball and music," he says. "I enjoy every bit of it."

TICKETS ON SALE FOR LTC'S PRODUCTION OF FOOTLOOSE.



Tickets are now available for Lincoln Trail College's upcoming production of the high-energy musical "Footloose." Performances are scheduled for April 4, 5, 11, and 12 at 7 p.m., and April 6 and 13 at 2 p.m., at the Zwermann Arts Center Theater. Tickets are priced at \$15 each and can be purchased online at <https://cur8.com/17707/project/129351> or by calling 618-546-2300.

As opening night approaches, the cast and crew are preparing to bring the production to life. Rehearsals are underway, with performers refining

choreography, developing characters and perfecting vocals. The cast includes a mix of Lincoln Trail College students, area high school students and community members, all working together to tell the story of Ren McCormack, a teenager who challenges a small town's ban on dancing.

The cast is made up of a mixture of area high school students, Lincoln Trail College students, and community members. Under the direction of Taylor Dahlberg, the performers have been hard at work bringing this energetic story to life on stage.

The production of Footloose offers audiences an opportunity to experience a dynamic and inspiring musical that explores themes of self-expression, community and resilience. With an energetic score and compelling storytelling, the show aims to provide an engaging theater experience. Tickets are expected to sell quickly, and patrons are encouraged to purchase them in advance.



LTC PEP BAND BRINGS THE BEAT TO GAME DAY



The roar of the crowd, the squeak of sneakers on the hardwood, and—most importantly—the electrifying sound of the Lincoln Trail College Pep Band. Under the energetic direction of Jena Combs, this group of dedicated musicians is transforming the atmosphere at LTC basketball games, making every matchup feel like a championship event.

More Than Just Background Music

The LTC Pep Band isn't just there to fill the silence during timeouts. Their role is to bring an extra spark of excitement to every game, turning the gym into a high-energy arena where fans, players, and musicians alike feed off the rhythm of the music. "We're here to provide the soundtrack for game day—whether it's pumping up the players before tip-off, celebrating big plays, or rallying the crowd during key moments," says Combs. "A live band adds an element of spontaneity and spirit that recorded music just can't match."

Keeping the Energy High

Combs and her band know exactly how to keep the crowd engaged. Carefully selecting high-energy songs that encourage clapping, singing, and even a little bit of dancing, they create an interactive experience that makes being a fan at LTC games even more fun. "We try to strategically time our songs to build momentum, especially during timeouts or when the team needs a boost," she explains. "We also encourage audience participation—clapping along, singing, or dancing in their seats. It's all about creating an interactive experience that makes the game even more exciting."

Building School Spirit, One Note at a Time

Music has a unique way of bringing people together, and that's exactly what the LTC Pep Band aims to do. "I want people to feel excitement, school pride, and a connection to the game and the LTC community when they hear us play," says Combs. "Whether they're students, faculty, or fans from the community, I want them to walk away from a game feeling like they were part of something special."



APRIL ATHLETIC EVENTS

Baseball

1	Illinois Central College	3:00
3	Olney Central College	3:00
5	at Olney Central College (DH)	12:00
8	at Rend Lake College	3:00
10	at Wabash Valley College	3:00
12	Wabash Valley College (DH)	12:00
15	Rend Lake College	3:00
17	at Danville Area CC (DH)	12:00
18	Danville Area CC (DH)	12:00
22	at Rend Lake College	3:00
24	at Kaskaskia College	3:00
26	Kaskaskia College (DH)	12:00
29	Vincennes University	3:00

Golf

10-11	Blueboy Invitational at Springfield
14-15	MO Baptist Spring Invitational at Alton
29-29	Region 24 Championship at Springfield

Softball

2	at Southwestern Illinois College (DH)	2:00
5	Shawnee Community College (DH)	2:00
6	at Olney Central College (DH)	1:00
9	at Lake Land College (DH)	4:00
12	John A. Logan College (DH)	12:00
13	at Wabash Valley College (DH)	12:00
16	Southeastern Illinois College (DH)	2:00
18	at Rend Lake College (DH)	12:00
19	Frontier Community College (DH)	12:00
23	Kaskaskia College (DH)	2:00
26	at Spoon River College (DH)	12:00
27	Southwestern Illinois College (DH)	12:00

Looking to the Future

This is just the beginning for the Pep Band. Combs envisions the ensemble growing in size and becoming a staple of LTC athletics and student life. “My goal is to build a strong, enthusiastic group of musicians who are excited to represent the school,” she says. “I’d love to see the Pep Band grow in size and visibility on campus, becoming a staple of LTC athletics and student life. I also want to increase collaborations with local high school bands, explore performances at other LTC events, and expand our repertoire to keep things fresh and fun.”

One of the most exciting recent collaborations involved students from Robinson High School joining the Pep Band for a game. This initiative allowed high school students to experience playing in a collegiate pep band setting, and the results were electric. “This collaboration was an effort to strengthen our relationship with local high school music programs and give students a taste of the college band experience,” Combs explains. “We invited local high school bands to join us for a game, play alongside us, and get a feel for what it’s like to perform in a collegiate pep band. Robinson very excitedly took us up on that offer. It was a fantastic experience—having the extra musicians brought even more energy, it was great to see high school students getting excited about continuing music beyond graduation, and it was amazing to see musicians of all ages play together and have

Choosing the right songs is key to the band’s success. A mix of classic pep band staples and contemporary hits keeps both musicians and audiences engaged. “I look for songs that are upbeat, recognizable, and fun to play,” says Combs. “We mix classic pep band staples with newer pop and rock hits to keep things interesting for both the players and the audience. I also try to incorporate music that

resonates with our students so they feel more connected to what they’re playing and hearing.”

Join the Band!

Want to be part of the action? The LTC Pep Band is always looking for enthusiastic musicians to join the team. No audition is required—just a love for music and a desire to contribute to the vibrant atmosphere of LTC athletics. “Anyone who plays a band instrument and wants to be part of a fun, supportive group is welcome to join! No audition is required—just enthusiasm and a willingness to be part of the team,” Combs encourages. Interested students can reach out to her at combsj3@iecc.edu for more information about joining next season.

As the band continues to grow, one thing is clear: the LTC Pep Band is more than just music—it’s the heartbeat of game day. And with Combs at the helm, that beat is only getting stronger. “The Pep Band is an exciting part of the LTC experience, and we appreciate the support and can’t wait to keep making music for our team and community!” she says.

LTC IN PICTURES



Kline Woodward keeps his eyes on the prize as he and his partner, Isaac Waggener, battle their way to victory in the LTC Ping Pong Tournament.



Kendyn Syfert returns the shot as partner Kylee Hosman watches. The LTC Ping Pong Tournament was all about teamwork, competition, and fun!



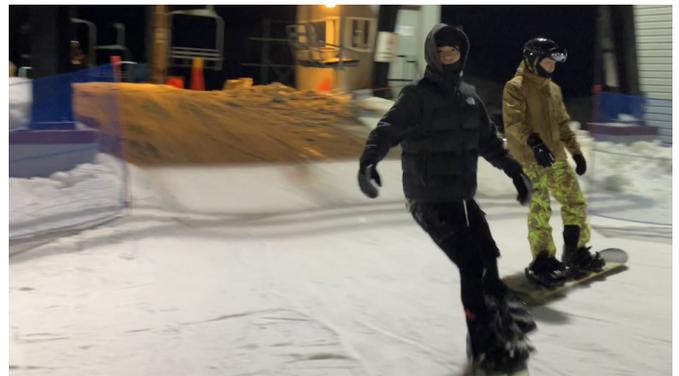
Travis Matthews gives Sullivan High School sophomores a look inside the Broadband Telecom program during their campus visit.



Sullivan High School students learn about careers in health from Dr. Alani Frederick. They also toured the Crawford County Recreation Center while they visited campus.



Lincoln Trail College students gear up for an adventure at Paoli Peaks, ready to hit the slopes for a day of skiing, snowboarding, and unforgettable winter fun!



Shredding the slopes! LTC students carve up the snow at Paoli Peaks, making the most of a winter night on their boards.



Sweet relief! LTC students take a well-earned break during midterms, enjoying ice cream, laughter, and a chance to recharge at the Ice Cream Social.



The Student Advisory Board helped make midterms a little sweeter with an ice cream social. It gave students a chance to take a break and enjoy a treat.