

NETWORK



APRIL 2025



HIGHLIGHTS



LTC welcomes 150 students to campus for Senior Start Day event.



Lincoln Trail College celebrates Community College Month.



Elmer Harness reflects on 50 years at the scorer's table for LTC basketball.

LTC, CRAWFORD MEMORIAL HOSPITAL LAUNCH COMMUNITY HEALTH COACHING PROGRAM

A new partnership between Lincoln Trail College and Crawford Memorial Hospital is launching a Community Health Coaching Program (CHCP) that will give students real-world experience in healthcare while offering crucial support to patients managing chronic health conditions in Crawford County.

The innovative program, set to begin this summer, allows students to work directly with patients under the supervision of healthcare professionals. Through classroom learning and one-on-one coaching, students will develop both clinical and interpersonal skills while helping improve the health and wellbeing of individuals in the community.

"This was an idea that Doug Florkowski brought to me almost two years ago, and I'm so glad that he did," said LTC President Tona Ambrose. "From the first time he shared how the Community Health Coaching Program worked, I saw the potential. I knew there was a



UPCOMING MAY EVENTS

- 1 **Grad Fest**
7:30-4:30, Learning Commons
- Future Educators Summit**
9-2, Campus-wide
- 2 **Last Day of Classes**
- International Graduation Party**
11-1:30, Lincoln Room
- 3 **Childrens Summer Theater Registration**
8-10 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 5-8 **Final Exams**
- 9 **Nursing Pinning Ceremony**
4 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 55th Annual Commencement**
7 p.m., Sports Center
- 21 **Leadership Crawford County Graduation**
7 p.m., DeMent Auditorium
- 22 **LTC Foundatoin Meeting**
12 p.m., Lincoln Room
- 26 **COLLEGE CLOSED - Memorial Day**
- 28 **Eagleton Book Club**
6 p.m., Learning Commons

need for this kind of health and wellness support in our county, and that this would be an awesome experience for students interested in health professions."

The program is modeled after one at Wooster College in Ohio, where Florkowski, CEO of Crawford Memorial Hospital, first encountered the concept at a leadership conference. "The CEO at Wooster Community Hospital did a presentation on their program and I was hooked," Florkowski said. "I thought this is something we could duplicate with LTC and have the same positive impact in Crawford County."

Earlier this year, Ambrose, Florkowski, and Dr. Alani Frederick, Dean of Health Professions for Illinois Eastern Community Colleges, traveled together to Wooster along with CMH Chief Practice Management Officer Sandy Steffey, CMH Director of Infection Prevention Sharri Jeffers, CMH Quality Specialist Megan Pifer, to observe the program firsthand. "Going to Wooster was what really set this initiative in motion," said Ambrose. "The minute we saw how the program worked and talked with students in the program, we knew that we could do this in Crawford County."

The CHCP is open to students with a 3.0 GPA who have graduated from high school by June 4, 2025. The program begins with a summer course at LTC, HEA 2299, taught by Dr. Jared Gullett and a team of healthcare

professionals. Students will attend weekly sessions that combine a didactic lesson approach with lectures from area experts, including physicians, nurses, social workers, and case managers.

Upon successful completion of the LTC course, students will undergo a competency orientation at CMH, where they will be matched with a patient. From August through December, students will voluntarily serve as Community Health Coaches, meeting weekly with their assigned patient and participating in regular clinical reviews with a CMH nurse and other CMH health professionals.

The program primarily focuses on patients with Congestive Heart Failure, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Hypertension, or Diabetes—individuals who often struggle with medication compliance or face frequent emergency room visits. "The Health Coach becomes another set of eyes and ears to do everything possible to set the patient up for success," said Florkowski. "This is a program that has the opportunity to prevent health crises from happening. Providing consistent, preventative care is one of the most effective ways to positively impact outcomes."

Dr. Frederick emphasized how impactful the program will be for students, both personally and professionally. "They're able to get hands-on experience, work with people, and have meaningful interactions," she said. "It gives them a realm to apply what they've learned and truly understand the patient experience—something that's usually not available to students until much later in their academic journey."

Students will gain insight into the social, emotional, and logistical aspects of healthcare that aren't often covered in textbooks. "It's really easy to think about social determinants of health in a book setting," Frederick said. "But it's different when you're in someone's home, helping them pick out healthy meals on a budget or start an exercise program to manage their COPD. This program gives them earlier exposure to those kinds of real-world conversations."

Ambrose noted that CMH's commitment to covering the cost of the course was key to ensuring accessibility. "We wanted all students interested in health professions to have access to the opportunity," she said. "CMH said without hesitation that they would cover the costs for students to take the HEA 2299 summer course."

Beyond immediate academic benefits, the CHCP is expected to help build a pipeline of future healthcare workers in the region. "Even if it's not in healthcare, the skills learned by being a Health Coach will help prepare you for pretty much any field," said Florkowski. "To be able to put this on a resume will give them a leg up as they pursue whatever program or career they choose. We are confident that this program will help expose students to the wonderful and rewarding world of healthcare. For students interested in careers like nursing, respiratory therapy, radiology, or other specialties, this is a structured and impactful way to explore those careers early on."

Frederick believes the program is a perfect fit for a two-year college setting. "You can have all the benefits of the university experience here in a community college—close to home, and helping the people that matter to you: your friends, your neighbors, the people you run into at the grocery store," she said.

"This is a great example of how LTC and community partners can come together to benefit students and residents alike," said Ambrose. "I envision this program being replicated in other nearby rural communities and serving countless others throughout our entire IECC district."

Applications for the inaugural CHCP cohort are due May 2, 2025. Interested students can learn more at www.iecc.edu/healthcoachCMH.

HERSHEY DONATES \$40,000 TO SUPPORT DUAL CREDIT STUDENTS

The Hershey Company has donated \$40,000 to the United Way of Crawford County to support high school students taking dual credit classes through Lincoln Trail College. The gift will help remove financial barriers for students and families by covering the cost of tuition for college-level classes taken while still in high school.

Dual credit courses allow students to earn college credit during high school, saving families thousands of dollars and helping students get a head start on their college education. The program also plays an important role in developing a college-going mindset and increasing access for first-generation college students.

"Hershey is a giving partner of the United Way of Crawford County and has a representative on the United Way Board of Directors," said Hershey in a written statement. "United Way requested allocations have exceeded the giving budget for a couple of years, causing programs to not be fully funded. The Lincoln Trail College dual credit program is a program Hershey believes is of great value to our community. Area high school students, having the opportunity to take dual credit classes that will give them college credits while still in high school, provide them with a great head start upon graduation. United Way is proud of paying the full cost of these courses that would normally be charged so that every high school student in Crawford County who qualifies for these classes can take them. Hershey is proud to commit \$40,000 to help the United Way with this funding. The Hershey Company is committed to addressing the needs of local communities where we live, work, and conduct business. The value of making a difference is ingrained in our history and our business practices."



"Lincoln Trail is grateful to offer dual credit classes free of charge for Crawford County students through our partnership with the United Way, and this generous donation from Hershey will allow us to continue to do so in the future," said Erin Volk, Director of Dual Credit at Lincoln Trail College. "We've developed our program thoughtfully with a focus on helping students start college successfully. With support like this, we're able to reduce financial barriers that might otherwise prevent students from participating."

The United Way of Crawford County has been committed to supporting local students by covering dual credit fees for years. Assistant Manager Barb Shimer said Hershey's continued support plays a vital role in making college more accessible.

"United Way of Crawford County is very grateful for the continued support from Hershey," said Shimer. "Helping every student who takes a dual credit class in Crawford County by paying for their fees is a way to encourage many young folks to get some college experience while still in high school. Many students would not be able to attend college without this help. It opens doors to so many who would otherwise not attend and provides many a chance to afford a college education."

The impact of dual credit is significant across Crawford County. According to a recent study by Illinois Eastern Community Colleges, Robinson High School students saved more than \$1.4 million in college expenses, with an average of 20.28 credit hours earned per student. At Hutsonville High School, students saved over \$273,000, averaging 16.07 credit hours. Oblong High School students saved more than \$213,000, and Palestine High School students saved nearly \$195,000. In total, these programs have helped students and their families save more than \$2 million in college costs while earning valuable college credit and experience before graduation.

"Students can explore careers within dual credit classes, and the experience can help them transition more easily from high school to college after graduation," said Volk. "It's a great option for students and families to consider."

LTC WELCOMES HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS FOR SENIOR START DAY



More than 150 high school seniors from across the region got a jumpstart on their futures Tuesday at Lincoln Trail College's Senior Start Day — an event designed to blend fun with future planning.

The day began with cheers and laughter as students packed into the Zwermann Arts Center Theater for a lively round of Minute to Win It-style games and trivia. From balancing challenges to brain teasers, students were on their feet, competing and connecting with peers from other schools.

"This event is all about making the college experience feel real and exciting," said Chris Forde, Director of Marketing and Communications for Illinois Eastern Community Colleges. "Whether they're planning to attend LTC, head to a university, join the military, or jump straight into the workforce, we want these students to feel like their next step matters — and that it can be fun, too."

Forde served as an emcee, guiding students through games, trivia, and a student panel that offered first-hand insight into life at LTC.

Following the games, students visited a college and career fair in the gym, where they explored booths highlighting Lincoln Trail College's academic programs, student

organizations, and support services. Faculty, staff, and student representatives from LTC and across Illinois Eastern Community Colleges were available to answer questions and share resources designed to help students navigate their next steps.

The event then split students into three breakout groups tailored to their post-graduation plans: one for students planning to attend LTC or another IECC college, another for those heading to a four-year university or a different two-year college, and a third for students entering the workforce, joining the Armed Forces, or who remain undecided. Each group took a guided campus tour, attended sessions about next steps, and had the opportunity to ask questions during a panel featuring current LTC students.

"Senior Start Day gives students a chance to explore what's possible, and it does so in a way that's engaging and accessible," said Lincoln Trail College President Tona Ambrose. "It's about meeting students where they are and helping them find a path forward — whether that's here at LTC or beyond."

The event wrapped up with a festive lunch served by local food trucks and an afternoon of games and activities back in the gym.

"Days like this remind us of the excitement and energy that students bring to campus," said Ambrose. "We hope they leave today feeling informed, supported, and inspired about their future."

LINCOLN TRAIL COLLEGE CELEBRATES COMMUNITY COLLEGE MONTH



There's something about Lincoln Trail College that stays with you. Maybe it's the way instructors take the time to help after class. Or how faculty and staff show up to ball games and student events—not because they have to, but because they want to. Or maybe it's the feeling of walking across the stage at graduation, knowing the whole campus has quietly cheered you on every step of the way.

This April, during Community College Month, Lincoln Trail College is taking time to celebrate what makes it so special: the people who choose to show up, support, and believe—in students, in progress, and in each other.

"LTC is the best decision ever because we offer more than just an education," said President Tona Ambrose. "We provide an incredible space where students can learn, grow, and thrive both inside and outside of the classroom."

At Lincoln Trail College, success doesn't have one look. Some students are fresh out of high school, while others are raising families or making a career change later in life. Some grew up down the road; others come from around the world. Right now, LTC serves students from 11

different countries and multiple states, adding richness to every classroom conversation.

"We often hear people assume our student body is mostly local," Ambrose said. "And while we're proud to serve our local community, we're also proud of the diversity on our campus. Our students bring so many different life experiences, and that makes LTC an incredible place to learn."

Whether students are taking general education classes to transfer or working toward a technical degree, Lincoln Trail College is built to support them. With affordable tuition, small class sizes, and a commitment to personalized instruction, the college provides a learning environment that's rigorous, flexible, and deeply human.

"Our faculty are highly qualified and genuinely care," Ambrose said. "I see instructors staying after class to help, or spending extra hours planning student life events, or showing up to cheer at a game. That kind of support makes a real difference."

And that support extends far beyond academics. From the Crawford County Recreation Center to athletic events, performing arts, and student clubs, the LTC campus has become a hub where the community gathers and students find a sense of belonging.

"I like to think of LTC as a place where people connect," Ambrose said. "That connection—to others, to opportunity, to a larger purpose—is what makes us more than a college. It makes us a community."

That community-first mindset also shapes how LTC responds to workforce needs. The college regularly collaborates with local employers to ensure students graduate ready to contribute and succeed.

One example is the Crawford County Community Health Coaching Program, a partnership between LTC and Crawford Memorial Hospital that equips students to serve as health coaches while improving community wellness. Another major investment is the upcoming Technology Center, which will house state-of-the-art facilities for broadband technology, welding, and process technology.

Even in day-to-day operations, the college looks for ways to deepen partnerships. LTC provides office space in its main academic building for the Executive Director of the Crawford County Development Association, creating intentional opportunities for collaboration between education and economic development.

"Staying closely connected to local industry is how we keep our programs innovative and relevant," Ambrose said.

To meet the evolving needs of today's students, LTC offers flexible scheduling, online and hybrid classes, and personalized support. These options make it possible for students to pursue their goals—even while balancing work, family, and life's other demands.

Still, behind every success story is something more than technology or strategy—it's people. And for Ambrose, that's what makes Lincoln Trail College exceptional.

"I'm most proud of the way everyone here works together as a team," she said. "It's not just a job to our faculty and staff. It's a shared mission. We're all here to help students succeed."

As students prepare to cross the stage at graduation on May 9, the LTC campus will once again be filled with the kind of pride and joy that defines the college experience—not just for students, but for the faculty, staff, families, and community members who helped them get there.

"That moment means everything," Ambrose said. "It's the culmination of hard work, late nights, second chances, and new beginnings. And it's a reminder of why what we do here matters."

LTC TO CELEBRATE 55TH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT ON MAY 9



Lincoln Trail College will celebrate the academic achievements of the Class of 2025 during its 55th Annual Commencement Ceremony on Friday, May 9, at 7 p.m. The ceremony will take place in the LTC Sports Center.

LTC President Tona Ambrose will preside over the ceremony, which will honor approximately 120 graduates receiving degrees and certificates. Of those, 60 students will graduate with academic distinction, earning recognition for Honors, High Honors, or Highest Honors.

New to the ceremony this year is the presentation of Student Awards. These honors include the Joseph C. Piland Excellence in Scholarship Award, the J. Rod Harmon Excellence in Service Award, and the Bev L. Turkal Excellence in Leadership Award. The awards recognize students for academic achievement, service to the college and community, and leadership qualities.

Commencement speakers will be graduating students Kylee Hosman and Nolan Hillard, representing the voices of the Class of 2025. The event will also feature musical performances by Brassmasters and closing reflections from Dean of Instruction Cynthia Boyce.

Travis Matthews, a faculty member and this year's gonfalon carrier, will lead the academic procession. Carrying the gonfalon, the college's official flag, is a ceremonial honor recognizing exemplary academic achievement and leadership.

"Our commencement ceremony is always a meaningful event, and this year, with the addition of student awards and a record number of honors graduates, it's a powerful celebration of our students' hard work and perseverance," said President Ambrose.

ENDEAVOR COMMUNICATIONS DONATES EQUIPMENT TO TELECOM PROGRAM



Lincoln Trail College's Broadband Telecom program is getting a boost thanks to a major donation from Endeavor Communications. The company has donated an Optical Distribution Frame (ODF) and other equipment valued at more than \$32,000 to help students gain hands-on experience with real-world fiber network technology.

The donation includes a GENBAND CS1500 system with fiber switches, fan controllers, fuse controls, cooling fans, and rack equipment. The ODF will be installed in the new Technology Building currently under construction on the LTC campus. Once live fiber is turned up, students will be able to splice fiber and work directly with dial tone systems.

"After the tornado, the program lost everything," said Jesse Allen, Field Services Manager at Endeavor Communications and a former instructor of the LTC Broadband Telecom program. "This equipment gives students the opportunity to once again gain real central office experience—this time with newer technology than what was previously available."

Endeavor Communications has a long history of supporting Lincoln Trail College's program and hiring its graduates. Several members of the company's leadership team, including Allen, the COO, and SVP, are alumni of the program.

"We are always in need of hires with the basic skills this program teaches," said Allen. "Exposure to real-world tools like the ODF puts students a step ahead of other applicants."

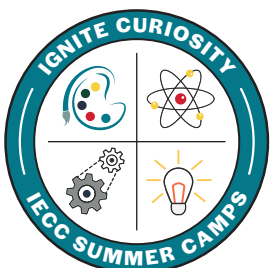
Dennis York, Broadband Telecom Lead Instructor at LTC, emphasized the impact of the donation on student learning.

"This generous donation from Endeavor will allow students to learn the operations and maintenance of a very expensive and essential part of a fiber network," York said.

"We are incredibly thankful for Endeavor's continued support of our program."

Installation of the ODF and activation of the system are expected once the new Technology Building is completed.

SUMMER CAMP INFORMATION COMING SOON



Get ready to spark imagination and fuel discovery—information is coming soon for Illinois Eastern Community Colleges' 2025 Ignite Curiosity Summer Camps! With hands-on science, creative arts, athletic adventures, and tech exploration, our camps offer exciting experiences for children of all ages. Visit iecc.edu for details as they become available—it's going to be a summer full of learning, laughter, and new possibilities!

TWENTY-THREE STUDENTS INDUCTED INTO PHI THETA KAPPA



The Alpha Iota Epsilon chapter of Phi Theta Kappa at Lincoln Trail College welcomed 23 new members during its spring induction ceremony.

Chapter Co-Advisor Carrie Brown opened the ceremony with welcoming remarks. Vice President of Fellowship Chance Moscardelli presented the candidates, and Chapter President Kylee Hosman delivered the charge. Kassey Shipman, vice president of scholarship, spoke on the symbolism of the torch, followed by Vice President of Leadership Kendyn Syfert, who shared the symbolism of the white rose.

Syfert joined Vice President of Service Cole Bonds and Shipman to present the symbolism of the Phi Theta Kappa emblem. Hosman then led the new members in the Phi Theta Kappa Pledge.

Chapter Co-Advisor Kim Schucker highlighted the chapter's recent accomplishments and encouraged new members to run for officer positions. Lincoln Trail College President Tona Ambrose concluded the ceremony.

The new members of Phi Theta Kappa are:

Chayse Aldrich, Cameron Baker, Sajjen Chester, Kaitlyn Cooper, Elliot Gallaher, Harley Jean, Rachel Livesay, Clairra McGee, Adam Newell, Peyton Osteen, Jaycee Phillips, Kollin Ramos, Jacqueline Reel, Samuel Rickman, Hayden Slate, Faith Tooloose, Brynndalyn Varner, Paige Waggoner, Catelyst Witte, Kaydence Woodsmall, Kline Woodward, Bianca Wyatt, and Melanie Wyatt.

Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) is the official honor society for two-year colleges, recognized by the American Association of Community Colleges since 1929. Founded in 1918, PTK celebrates academic achievement and fosters personal growth, leadership, and service among community and technical college students. With nearly 1,250 chapters in 11 nations and more than 4.3 million students inducted, PTK provides a transformative experience that connects its 230,000 active members to opportunities for scholarships, leadership development, and success beyond the classroom.

To qualify for membership, students must complete at least 12 credit hours of college-level coursework and maintain a minimum GPA of 3.5.

DESSERTS & DRINKS AROUND THE WORLD

Lincoln Trail College is bringing the world to campus with a special cultural celebration on Thursday, April 24. Desserts & Drinks (non-alcoholic) Around the World invites all LTC Foundation Board members, faculty, staff, and students to sample international flavors and connect with the College's international community.

The event, hosted in the Statesmen Grill from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m., will feature desserts and non-alcoholic beverages from around the globe. International students will share treats from their home countries and offer a glimpse into their cultures and traditions.

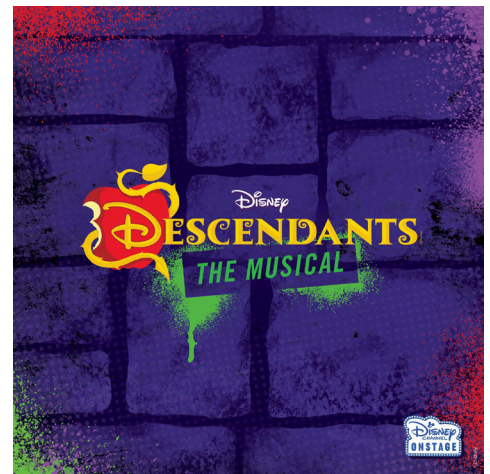
"This event is a fun and meaningful way to celebrate the diverse cultures that make up our international student body," said Rachel Greenwood, LTC's International Student Liaison. "We have students from 11 different countries, and this is a great opportunity for the campus community to learn from them and show appreciation for their unique perspectives."

The idea for the event grew from the desire to recognize and honor the global community at LTC, while also providing a space for connection and conversation. Attendees will be able to enjoy a variety of international desserts and drinks and hear directly from students about the stories behind them.

Greenwood expressed gratitude for the support of the Lincoln Trail College Foundation, which is sponsoring the event. "We're so thankful to the Foundation for making this possible," she said. "Their support helps us create experiences that foster inclusion, engagement, and cross-cultural understanding."



CHILDREN'S SUMMER THEATER PRODUCTIONS ANNOUNCED



The Arts at Lincoln Trail College announced its 2025 Children's Summer Theater productions and something new. Once again, LTC will have two Children's Summer Theater productions. In addition, LTC is adding a new program called Young Adult's Theater for students 14-18 years old.

The youngest cast members of Children's Summer Theater, who are students going into first grade to those going into fifth grade, will perform Disney's The Aristocats KIDS. Based on the beloved Disney animated film and featuring a jazzy, upbeat score, Disney's The Aristocats KIDS is a non-stop thrill ride of feline fun, complete with unbelievable twists and turns. In

the heart of Paris, a kind and eccentric millionairess wills her entire estate to Duchess, her high-society cat, and her three little kittens. Laughs and adventure ensue as the greedy, bumbling butler pulls off the ultimate catnap caper. Now it's up to the rough-and-tumble alley cat, Thomas O'Malley, and his band of swingin' jazz cats to save the day.

The oldest cast members of Children's Summer Theater, who are students going into sixth grade to those going into ninth grade, will perform Disney's Alice in Wonderland JR. When young Alice finds herself in a strange world where everything seems upside down, she must find her way home...and find herself along the way. As she travels through Wonderland, she encounters all of the iconic characters that audiences have come to love, including the ever-tardy White Rabbit, the grinning Cheshire Cat, a cool Caterpillar, the wacky Mad Hatter, and the hot-tempered Queen of Hearts. Alice in Wonderland JR. features Disney favorites such as "The Golden Afternoon," "The Unbirthday Song," and "Painting the Roses Red," along with brand-new songs, including music from the 2010 live-action film.

Both shows will be directed by Mindy Evans, and produced by Taylor Dahlberg. Registration for Children's Summer Theater will be on Saturday, May 3rd from 8-10 a.m. in the Zwermann Performing Arts Center hallway. There is a limit of 50 students per show, and registration is first come, first served. The cost to participate in CST is \$150 per student.

Rehearsals for The Aristocats KIDS and Alice in Wonderland JR. will begin on May 27th, with The Aristocats KIDS cast meeting from 9-11 a.m. Monday-Friday and the Alice in Wonderland JR. cast meeting from 12-2 p.m. Monday-Friday. Auditions for roles will take place on the first day of camp. Performances for The Aristocats KIDS will be June 26th and 27th at 7 p.m., and performances for Alice in Wonderland JR. will be June 28th at 7 p.m. and June 29th at 2 p.m.

Additionally, The Arts at Lincoln Trail College is so excited to present the first ever Young Adult's Theater for those aged 14-18 years old. This group of students will be performing Disney's Descendants: The Musical, directed by Taylor Dahlberg. Based on the popular Disney Channel Original Movies, Disney's Descendants: The Musical is a brand-new musical jam-packed with comedy, adventure, Disney characters, and hit songs from the films. Imprisoned on the Isle of the Lost – home of the most infamous villains who ever lived – the teenage children of Maleficent, the Evil Queen, Jafar, and Cruella De Vil have never ventured off the island... until now. When the four troublemakers are sent to attend prep school alongside the children of beloved Disney heroes, they have a difficult choice to make: should they follow in their parents' wicked footsteps or learn to be good?

Our Young Adults Theater students will begin rehearsals on July 7th and meet from 6-8:30 p.m. Performances of Disney's Descendants: The Musical will be on August 1st and 2nd at 7 p.m. at The Zwermann Performing Arts Center at Lincoln Trail College.

Registration for Young Adults Theater will be on Saturday, May 3, from 8-10 a.m. in the Zwermann Performing Arts Center hallway, and the cost \$150 per student. For students who want to be involved, but who don't want to be on stage, technical positions will be available. Students will have the opportunity to work alongside and assist the production's designers in areas of lights, sound, and costumes. These students will gain hands-on experience in these areas. Auditions for roles will be on the first day of camp, and if there is more than one student interested in each area of tech there will be an interview process on the first day of camp as well. Please contact Taylor Dahlberg at dahlbergt@iecc.edu with any questions.

LTC GETS READY FOR SPRING CONCERTS



Lincoln Trail College's Zwermann Arts Center Theater will come alive with music this April as the College presents two end-of-semester concerts showcasing student and community talent.

The LTC Concert Band will perform on Monday, April 22 at 7 p.m., under the direction of Jena Combs. The concert features an energetic and eclectic program, including jazz favorites, classic pop arrangements, and student soloists.

"This performance really celebrates the work our musicians have put in all semester," said Combs. "They've tackled some challenging pieces and brought them to life with passion and creativity. Audiences can expect a high-energy, entertaining night."

Highlights include arrangements of Bohemian Rhapsody, Love Will Keep Us Together, and The Fool on the Hill, along with solo features from talented student performers on saxophone, trumpet, vocals, and more.

Combs also shared exciting news about the group's growing ambitions. "Recently, we submitted recordings of The Swizzler and 'Round Midnight to audition for a performance spot at the Illinois Music Education Conference held every January in Peoria. We'll find out by the end of May if we're selected for this incredible opportunity."

Later that week, the LTC Community Choir, directed by Dr. Andrew Pittman, will take the stage on Thursday, April 25 at 7 p.m. The concert program, titled From Gershwin to Sondheim, blends musical theater and film selections with a few surprises, featuring works by George and Ira Gershwin, Gilbert & Sullivan, and Stephen Sondheim, among others.

"This semester, we've leaned into fun and accessibility," said Pittman. "The choir is not just singing well—they're performing with real confidence and artistry. I believe this could become the best choir within 100 miles."

Pittman praised the group's progress, especially in challenging repertoire such as the Sweeney Todd finale. "Rebecca Geff's high D in Sweeney Todd has this metallic ring to it—it's electric. The energy and ownership the singers bring is inspiring."

Both concerts are free and open to the public. Community members are encouraged to attend and enjoy an evening of music made possible by the dedication of LTC's students, faculty, and community performers.



APRIL ATHLETIC EVENTS

Baseball

1	at Southeastern Illinois College	12:00
2	Southeastern Illinois College (DH)	12:00

When Elmer Harness first sat down at the scorer's table for a Lincoln Trail College basketball game in 1975, he figured he'd be there for a night or two. Fifty years later, he's still at it.

"I didn't plan on being here this long," Harness says with a smile. "It just happened, one game at a time. But I've enjoyed it. I've learned a lot, and I've always loved basketball."

Harness was recruited by legendary LTC athletic director and coach P.D. Highsmith. A familiar face at games even before joining the staff, Harness had known Highsmith through tennis matches and community ties. One evening, Highsmith asked if he could fill in. He never stopped.

"I was nervous that first game," he remembers. "I was really afraid I'd mess up. But it went okay—and now, after 50 years, I'm starting to figure out what I'm doing," he said with a chuckle.

Over the decades, Harness has witnessed the evolution of college basketball firsthand. He's worked through the introduction of the shot clock and the three-point line, and he's watched LTC teams grow faster and more skilled. "People really miss out when they don't come out to these games," he says. "It's not like high school. These kids can really play."



One moment that still brings a chuckle was when an LTC coach was tossed from a game by a referee who had to step in unexpectedly. "He gave him two technicals in about ten seconds," Harness laughs. That referee happened to be Highsmith. "I would've liked to hear that conversation afterward."

His stories are peppered with mentions of favorite players—like Fly Gray, who "could get up in the air"—and reflections on the many coaches, officials, and colleagues he's worked alongside. Frank Loll, LTC's first coach, holds a special place in his memory, as does current head coach Junsie Cotten. "He's a super guy. I like him a lot."

Harness isn't just a scorekeeper. He's an athlete himself. Over the years, he's played a variety of sports, including basketball and pickleball. In 2022, he finished tenth in the nation in pickleball at the Senior Games. "The best I ever scored in a basketball game was 32," he says. "But if we'd had the three-point line back then, it would've been 49."

What keeps him coming back is simple: the love of the game and the people. "I enjoy working with everyone on the bench. I think we all get along pretty well. And it's fun—when the game starts, everything just clicks."

Harness isn't sure if he'll return for a 51st season, but if they still want him—and his health holds up—he just might.

"I'm proud to have served the community and the college all these years," he says. "It's been a great ride. I've really enjoyed it."

ONE GAME AT A TIME: ELMER HARNESS MARKS 50 YEARS AT THE TABLE



LTC IN PICTURES



Ariel (Rebecca Trivett), Rusty (Sicily Rawlings), Urleen (Anna Osborn), and Wendy Jo (Isabel Talamantes) perform Holding Out for a Hero during Footloose.



Ren (Dulan Batten) teaches Willard (Al Crosley) how to dance during LTC's production of Footloose.



The full company of Footloose performs the finale of the show.



The cast of Footloose poses for their photo.



Samantha Brown, owner of Sammie's Smoothie Bar, talks to Dr. Jared Gullett's nutrition class about her nutrition and fitness journey and about starting her business.



Lincoln Trail College students participate in the Spikeball Tournament put on by Student Senate and ISAB.



Area high school seniors have fun with a Minute to Win It-style game at Lincoln Trail College's Senior Start Day.



A high school student uses LTC's virtual welding machine at the College and Career Fair at Senior Start Day.