

# KNIGHTLINE

## CALENDAR AUGUST

7 - Welding Camp, 8 a.m. - 12 p.m., Terry L. Bruce West Richland Center

13 - IECC District Workshop

19 - New Student Orientation, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

21 - Fall Semester Classes Begin

Free Popcorn, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m., Learning Commons

22 - Cookout & Games, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m., Student Union/Patio

25 - Club Rush, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m., Wattleworth Hall Entrance Patio

26 - Donut Stress with TRIO SSS, 7:30 a.m. - 10 a.m., Lounge

27 - Alumni Spotlight with Mark Richardson, 1 p.m., Learning Commons

28 - Self-Care 101, 12 p.m., Learning Commons

Board Games, 2-4 p.m., Learning Commons

29 - Wiffle Ball Game, 1 p.m., OCC Softball Field

## Students Explore Healthcare Careers with Immersive Learning



Students interested in healthcare careers got an intensive, hands-on look at emergency medicine and primary care during a special educational event at Olney Central College that combined real-world scenarios with expert instruction from local healthcare professionals.

"The day started with an introduction into emergency medicine. We had a local physician, Dr. Watik Maghroudi, come and speak to the students, and then we had the manager of Carle Richland Memorial Hospital come and talk about emergency medicine and emergency response," said Dr. Alani Frederick, DNP, RN, PCCN, CNE, Dean of Health Professions at Olney Central College.

The comprehensive program included emergency triage training and a mass casualty incident simulation where students cared for 19 simulated patients from a bus accident scenario. The cases ranged from simple cuts and bruises to critical situations, providing students with exposure to the full spectrum of emergency medical care.

"The end goal for the students is to be exposed to an incredibly large number of medical specialties and healthcare specialties to determine if they can find something that sparks their interest. These students all signed up knowing they wanted to do something in healthcare," explained Dr. Frederick.

The afternoon portion focused on primary care, featuring nurse practitioner Marcia





Street, who practices locally in Olney. Students followed patients through various specialties including bloodwork, X-rays, and physical therapy to understand the comprehensive nature of healthcare delivery.

"We partnered with AHEC (Illinois Area Health Education Centers) and Carle Richland Memorial Hospital to sponsor lunch and bring in providers from our local community to talk to the students about taking

care of people in our own community," noted Dr. Frederick.

The event represents an innovative approach to healthcare education, combining academic learning with practical experience and community partnerships to give students authentic exposure to medical careers.





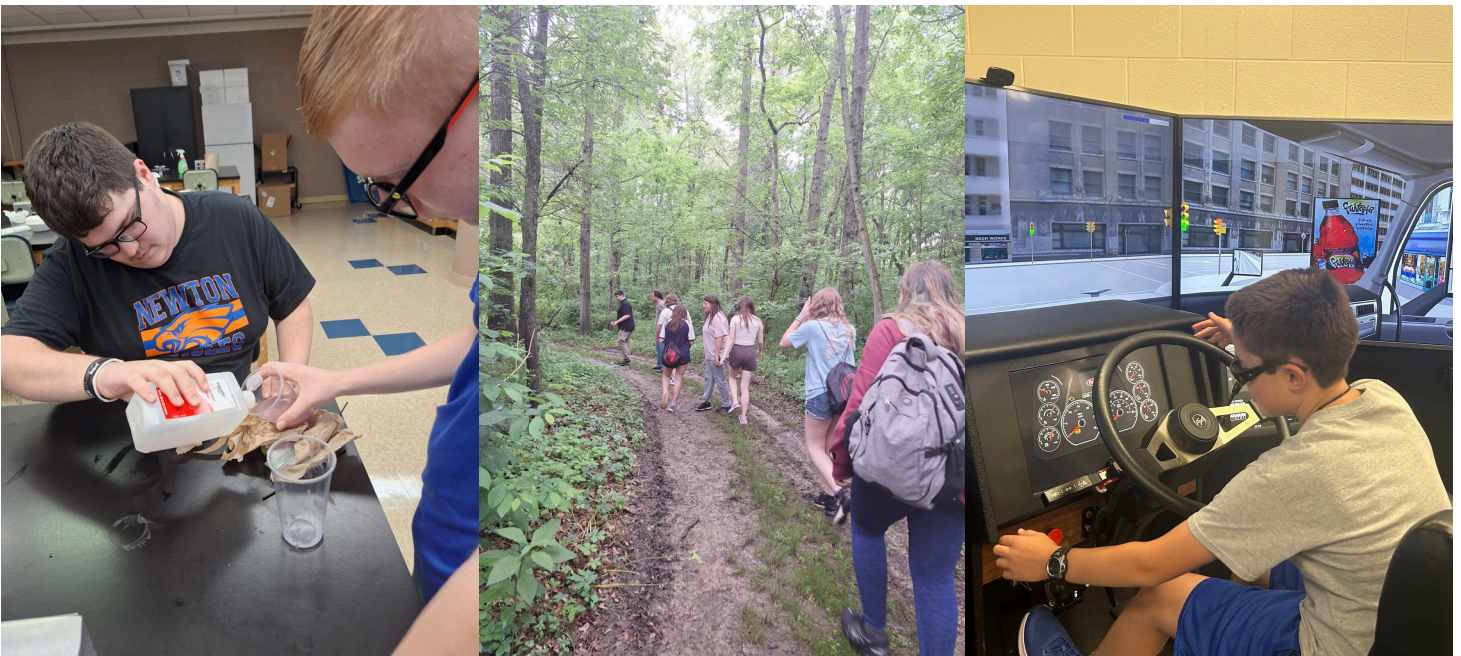
# OCC Hosts Summer of Learning and Growth Through TRIO Upward Bound Program

Nearly 80 students from rural southeastern Illinois spent their summer building academic skills, exploring careers, and preparing for college success through the TRIO Upward Bound Summer Program at Olney Central College.

The six-week program welcomed students from 12 high schools across the Illinois Eastern Community Colleges district. Each day, students participated in preparatory coursework and enrichment activities aimed at helping them thrive in high school, college, and beyond.

"The goal of the TRIO Upward Bound Summer Program is to help students build a strong academic foundation that supports success in the upcoming school year, in college, and in their future careers," said Tiffany Cowger, Program Director of TRIO Upward Bound. "They complete college-level coursework and develop essential academic and life skills in a supportive environment."

The program's curriculum featured courses in financial literacy, personal development, psychology, experimental science, sociology, world music, and appropriate uses of artificial intelligence. Students also explored robotics and creative media, gaining hands-on experience with emerging technologies and cultural studies.



Participants had the opportunity to tour college campuses including Eastern Illinois University, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Vincennes University, and Lincoln Trail College. Rising seniors also completed job shadowing experiences with local businesses in fields such as healthcare, broadcasting, logistics, and public service.

"Volunteer placements and internships gave students real-world experience while also instilling a sense of civic responsibility," said Cowger. "Many students walked away with clearer career goals and a deeper appreciation for giving back to their communities."

Community partners hosting students included the Olney Fire Department, Clay County Probation Office, Claws and Paws, CARLE Hospital, AM Transport, Meraki Health, and others.

While the academic and career-focused aspects of the program were important, Cowger noted that the personal growth students experienced



was equally significant.

"At the start of the program, students often feel overwhelmed by the intensity of the college-level curriculum," she said. "But by the end of the six weeks, we see remarkable growth in confidence, perseverance, and motivation. Watching students celebrate their accomplishments and feel proud of their progress is the greatest measure of success."

The program concluded with a tri-fold showcase event, where students shared their projects and reflected on their summer experiences with family, friends, and community members.

"This program provides students with friendships, exposure, and confidence that can be transformative," said Cowger. "It's a privilege to be part of their journey, and we're proud of every student who participated."

The TRIO Upward Bound program is federally funded by the U.S. Department of Education and serves first-generation and income-eligible students.

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## Outstanding OCC Students Named to PTK All-Illinois Academic Team



**Courtney Crawford (left) and Emma Gill (right) pose by a sign welcoming students to the PTK Banquet**

Olney Central College students Courtney Crawford and Emma Gill have been named to the All-Illinois Academic Team by Phi Theta Kappa, the international two-year college honor society.

Crawford, of Noble, and Gill, of Albion, were selected from among community college students across the state on the basis of academic achievement, volunteer work, campus activities, honors and awards. The All-Illinois Academic Team initiative honors outstanding Illinois community college students and highlights the high-quality education provided by the state's community colleges.

The pair were recognized during the annual banquet in Springfield last month, where they were awarded metals and certificates in recognition of their accomplishments.

"When receiving the honor of All-Illinois Academic Team, I was filled with excitement and gratitude," Crawford said. "I was finally able to celebrate my academic excellence and be recognized for my hard work and dedication on a new level."

She added, "I really enjoyed the banquet. I was able to see familiar faces and congratulate other scholars on their accomplishments."



For Gill, the award is the culmination of her journey at OCC.

"I loved getting the All-Illinois Academic honor because it made me realize that my hard work did pay off," she said. "I know it is something that may seem small to others. But to me, it just made me feel like I really did succeed in working hard."

During their time at Olney Central College, Crawford and Gill have been actively involved in campus life. Both served as Student Ambassadors, representing OCC at various events and activities. Gill holds the distinction of being the first student to serve two consecutive years in the role.

Crawford has held several leadership positions within the PTK Alpha Theta Eta chapter, including president, vice president and public relations officer.

"My favorite thing about Phi Theta Kappa is getting to connect with other students around the country," Crawford said. "Getting to know new people and how they run their chapter is so interesting. I also really enjoy getting to serve as a chapter officer. Scholarships are an amazing benefit to support my education, as well."

In addition to PTK, Crawford is president and founder of OCC's Future Educators Club, Vice President of the Illinois Eastern Community Colleges Student Advisory Board, a TRIO Student Support Services Student Ambassador and a member of Active Minds.

"I have enjoyed many things about my time at OCC including participating in clubs, getting to know the students and staff and understanding higher education on a deeper level," she added.

Both Crawford and Gill graduated in May, earning associate in science and arts degrees.

Crawford will be transferring to Eastern Illinois University this fall to obtain a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, with a teaching certificate. She plans to minor in human services and would like to earn master's degree in education.

"I would love to teach in the Olney area after getting my degree," she added.

Gill plans to transfer to Maryville University in St. Louis to earn a bachelor's degree in forensic psychology before pursuing a master's degree in behavioral analysis.

"Being in Phi Theta Kappa has been really fun for me," Gill said. "I didn't get to be as involved this year as I was last year, though. Last year we got to do a whole bunch of events, which helped provide opportunities for OCC students to get involved and that was really fun. We also got to help with the food pantry and keep it stocked so students had some food to eat."

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## **Ward Graduates Welding Program with Records and Union Membership**

Maria Ward graduated from Olney Central College with more than just an associate degree — she's leaving with a program record and a union membership.

The Wayne County native earned more 6G pipe certifications than any other student in the five-year history of OCC's Associate Degree Welding and Fabrication Program. She also passed both the visual and X-ray welding tests required for membership in the Plumbers and Steamfitters Union Local 136 in Evansville, Ind.

"It feels pretty good," Ward said of her accomplishments. "For me, It is all about improving myself and practicing. Every time I weld, I feel like it's just another accomplishment — one after another. There are always little tweaks and adjustments you can make to improve, and that's what I love about it."

Maria 's journey as a welder began as student at Fairfield High School.

"After taking shop classes, I decided I wanted to go farther in my welding career, and so I reached out to some of the colleges around because I knew they had welding programs. I got in touch with OCC Instructor Maverick Fisher and I got into the dual credit program here."

Ward continued her studies after high school with the goal of earning her two-year degree. Fisher praised her skills and sees a bright future ahead.

"Maria is the best pipe welder that has ever come through here," he said. "She has done the most pipe welds, most positions, most different kinds of pipe welds and most sizes. Her freshman year, she excelled quickly and passed most of the students. She was doing sophomore-level course work during the second semester of her freshman year."

Ward even served as one of the judges for the 2025 Brandon Blackford Memorial Welding Competition. The OCC Welding Program hosts the annual event, which is open to area high school welding students.



Ward credits her success to the training and support she has received at OCC.

"I would say overall my instruction has been super amazing here," she said. "We do a lot of trouble shooting. You just get a lot of practice in and you get challenged too. It's super fun. I love the instruction. Things are very clean and very organized. It's exactly how I would do it if I were teaching."

She added, "Maverick has done a great job encouraging me. When I've performed bad welds, he is always like, 'It's OK. You'll get better. We'll get through it. He has been great about keeping me on course. What really is great about this program is that if I get a pipe done early, I get to continue to move on. It's kind of at your own pace, but you're still on track to graduate. You even get to do some extra certificates if you have time."

Ward highly recommends the program for those interested in a welding career.

"I would encourage people to take this program, especially women," she said. "This is a male-dominated industry, and I absolutely love welding. I think any other women or men who are interested in this should enroll at the program. Because it is such a fun thing to do. You get to come in every day and enjoy your work."

She especially hopes students will complete the associate degree.

"A lot of people just go through the freshman program with their certificate and don't go all the way to get their associate degree. I would absolutely encourage everyone who goes through the program, especially if they are wanting to go furthering it their career, to get their associate degree because you come into jobs so much more prepared. You have all of your 6G Certificates. The highest certificates that you can use in this industry. It just better prepares you for future jobs."

# Driver's Ed at OCC Builds Skills - and Connections - For Locals Teens



Olney Central College is helping area teens take their first steps toward independence through its Driver's Education program, while also creating early connections to higher education. This summer, 21 students participated in the program across two cohorts, gaining both the knowledge and experience needed to earn their Illinois driver's licenses.

The Driver's Education course at OCC combines classroom instruction with behind-the-wheel training to equip students with the tools to become safe, responsible drivers. The program follows the guidelines set forth by the Illinois Secretary of State and is open to high

school students age 15 and older who meet state eligibility requirements.

"This program is about more than just passing a driving test," said Tona Ambrose, President of Lincoln Trail College and Vice Chancellor of Institutional Outreach for Illinois Eastern Community Colleges. "It's a way for us to connect with young people in our communities, many of whom are thinking about their futures, and help them build life skills in a supportive, educational setting."

Among the students served this summer were several homeschooled students, a group that often has fewer options when it comes to accessing Driver's Education. By offering local, affordable courses on a college campus, OCC helps bridge that gap.

"Our Driver's Education program provides a valuable service, especially to families who may not have other convenient or affordable options," Ambrose said. "And for many students, it's their first experience in a college environment. It's an opportunity for us to show them what's possible at Olney Central College and within the IECC district."

To meet continued demand, OCC will offer two Driver's Education sessions this fall. Both courses run September 2–25, Mondays through Thursdays. Students can choose from a 1 to 3 p.m. afternoon session or a 5 to 7 p.m. evening session.

"We're proud to be offering a flexible schedule this fall so more students and families can take advantage of this resource," said Ambrose. "It's a strong example of how community colleges can meet local needs and foster early engagement."

More information and registration details are available at [iecc.edu/driversed](http://iecc.edu/driversed).



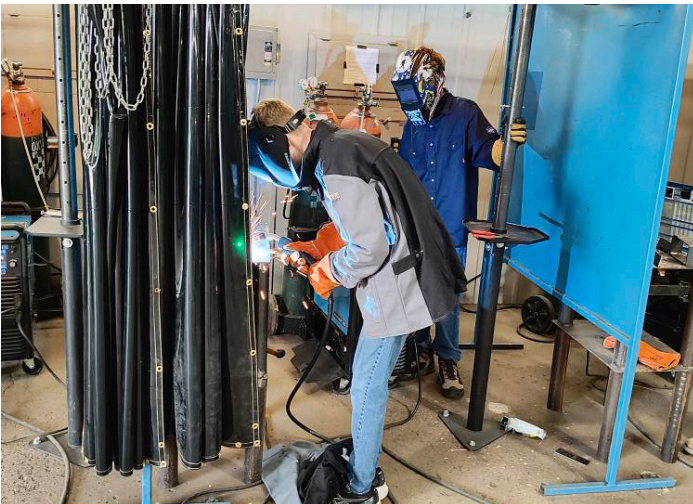
# OCC in Pictures



Participants at the Girls Welding Camp learn foundational welding techniques while exploring career pathways.



Participants in the Girls Welding Camp take a break from hands-on learning to share a laugh and celebrate their progress.



A student focuses on his welding technique under the guidance of an instructor at the Boys Welding Camp at OCC.



Students celebrate the end of a fun and educational welding camp experience at Olney Central College.



From bottled water to OCC swag, everything's ready to make Walk-In Wednesday a great experience for incoming students.



Red, white, and blue took over OCC for a Patriotic Day celebration.