

# OLNEY CENTRAL COLLEGE KNIGHTLINE



AUGUST 2025

## CALENDAR

### AUGUST

13 — IECC Faculty & Staff Workshop, Campus Offices Closed

14 — OCC Faculty & Staff Workshop

19 — New Student Orientation, 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

21 — Fall Semester Classes Begin

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

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

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

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

28 — Self-Care 101 with Jamie Barbee, Learning Commons, noon

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

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

### SEPTEMBER

1 — Campus Closed, Labor Day

## Brandy Cochran serving as PTK Regional Vice President

Olney Central College student Brandy Cochran is serving as a Phi Theta Kappa regional officer for Illinois. She was officially seated as Vice President for the Southern District during the PTK state conference in Champaign.

"It was a great surprise," Cochran said of learning she had been elected to the post. "I was at work when I found out and my co-workers could hear me screaming when I received the news."

Cochran is looking forward to the opportunities that come with her new leadership role. As Vice President, she will assist with planning the national conference and other PTK events.

"I can't wait to start connecting and learning from my fellow PTK members," she said. "I'm excited to meet new people and hear about their experiences. This is not only an opportunity for me to grow personally, but to help OCC's Eta Psi Chapter. As the local chapter President, I'm looking forward to bringing new ideas back and implementing them at OCC."

Cochran joined the international honor society for two-year colleges in 2021 and has served as both Treasurer and Vice President for the local chapter. Her election to the regional team highlights her continued dedication to leadership and service within the PTK organization.

"We're very excited to have OCC represented on the PTK Regional officer team again," said PTK Advisor Dr. Sarah Bergbower. "Robert Wray had this position in 2022-2023. Brandy had a well-rehearsed public interview that was easily one of the top. And, I think that illustrates who Brandy is. She is committed, and she shows up. She has shown leadership on every chapter PTK endeavor — from basic volunteerism to complex events."

Cochran said participating in PTK has been a great experience, but admits she was nervous at first about getting involved and attending meetings.

"Our Advisor Shasta Bennett encouraged me to come," Cochran said. "I instantly fell in love with the group and the whole atmosphere. Everyone was so nice and welcoming. PTK is a tight-knit group, and I made a lot of friends."

As the semester starts, Cochran wants to work to increase the organization's visibility on campus and build on last year's success.

"I can't wait to start branching out," she said. "We want to get the word out about PTK."

Cochran graduated with a Medical Coding Certificate in May and is now working toward a Human Resources Degree at OCC.



**Brandy Cochran (right) is serving as a regional officer for Phi Theta Kappa. She is pictured with PTK Advisor Shasta Bennett during OCC's 2025 Commencement.**

# WOW! Kicks Off Fall Semester at OCC

OCC is kicking off the fall semester with Weeks of Welcome (WOW!), a fun-filled series of events designed to help students connect, get involved, and start the school year on the right foot.


Activities begin with New Student Orientation on Aug. 19 and continue through Sept. 4, with special events planned for new and returning students.

"The Days of Welcome are primarily intended to give students an opportunity to meet, connect and have fun with their peers," said Director of Learning Commons Chad Groves, who is spearheading WOW! at OCC. "Along with the excitement of beginning a new school year, there's also bound to be some anxiety. The Days of Welcome hope to alleviate those anxieties, by not only providing relevant information, but by also reminding students that they're not alone — that faculty and staff are here to support them each step of the way. And maybe most importantly, free food."


The WOW! calendar is packed with events for every interest. From Club Rush and a free Cookout hosted by Lady Knights Basketball to a Wiffle Ball Game with Lady Knights Softball and a Faculty, Staff, Student Ping Pong Tournament.

WOW! also includes opportunities to learn and grow. Throughout the event series, the Learning Commons will highlight campus resources and host special speakers including the Alumni Spotlight with Mark Richardson at 1 p.m. on Aug. 27 and a chance to learn tips for excelling in college from Jamie Barbee at noon on Aug. 28.










"This year's event calendar has a lot of fun built into it, and who doesn't love fun," Groves said. "It's also a fantastic opportunity to meet and connect with new people. It's often said that you get out of something what you put into it. The college experience is no different. I would encourage all students to get involved early and often as a way to squeeze the college experience for all it's worth."



## WEEKS OF WELCOME!



**AUGUST 19-SEPTEMBER 4, 2025**

 <p><b>August 19 9-1</b></p>				<b>21 THURSDAY</b>	<b>22 FRIDAY</b>
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classes Start</li> <li>First 10-Day Duck Hunt - Find and return lost ducks to the Learning Commons in exchange for prizes.</li> <li>The Learning Commons: Not Your Grandparents' Library. Explore resources like games, massage chairs and study pods.</li> <li>11-3: Free Popcorn, Learning Commons</li> </ul>	 <p>11-1: Free Cookout &amp; Games, Student Union/Patio Hosted by Lady Knights Basketball Menu includes: Smoked pulled pork sandwiches, chips, cookies and drink</p>
<b>25 MONDAY</b>	<b>26 TUESDAY</b>	<b>27 WEDNESDAY</b>	<b>28 THURSDAY</b>	<b>29 FRIDAY</b>	
<p><b>CLUB RUSH</b></p> <p>11-1: Club Rush, Main Entrance Patio, Wattleworth Hall</p> <p>Explore campus life! Discover clubs, meet new friends and get involved at OCC.</p>	<p>7:30-10: Donut Stress with TRIO SSS, Student Services Lounge</p> <p>Enjoy a donut with us! Find out about TRIO and if you qualify.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Learning Commons: Not Your Grandparents' Library. Explore resources like games, massage chairs and study pods.</li> <li>11-3: Free Popcorn, LC</li> </ul>	<p>1: Alumni Spotlight, Learning Commons</p> <p>Mark Richardson is a former Blue Knight Basketball player who serves as a wealth strategist for TrustBank in Olney.</p> 	<p>12: Self-Care 101 with Jamie Barbee, Learning Commons</p> <p>Enjoy pizza while getting tips for excelling, not just surviving.</p> <p>2-4: Board Games, Learning Commons</p> 	 <p>1: Wiffle Ball Game, OCC Softball Field</p> <p>Kick off the holiday weekend with some fun in the sun! Join the Lady Knights Softball team for wiffle ball and snacks.</p>	
<b>1 MONDAY</b>	<b>2 TUESDAY</b>	<b>3 WEDNESDAY</b>	<b>4 THURSDAY</b>		
<p><b>HAPPY LABOR DAY</b></p> <p>No classes - college closed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Learning Commons: Not Your Grandparents' Library. Explore resources like games, massage chairs and study pods.</li> <li>11-3: Free Popcorn, Learning Commons</li> </ul> 	<p>12: Students, Faculty &amp; Staff Ping-Pong Tournament, Student Union</p> <p>Show off your skills, cheer on your friends and battle for campus bragging rights and prizes.</p> 	<p>8-4: First 10-Day Survey, Learning Commons</p> <p>Complete your survey and register for giveaways.</p> <p>11-3: Free Popcorn, Learning Commons</p> <p>1: Diversity &amp; Inclusion Presentation with Kristine Lisy, Learning Commons</p> <p>Join us and enjoy pizza!</p>		

## **OCC CELEBRATES 22 NJCAA ACADEMIC ALL-AMERICANS**

### **SOFTBALL**

**3.65 GPA - RANKED 16TH IN THE NATION**

### **MEN'S BASKETBALL**

**3.46 GPA - RANKED 6TH IN THE NATION**

### **WOMEN'S BASKETBALL**

**3.27 GPA**

### **BASEBALL**

**3.17 GPA**

## **OCC Student-Athletes Earn NJCAA Academic Honors**

Olney Central College student-athletes excelled in the classroom during the 2024–2025 academic year, achieving impressive results that earned national recognition.

All four athletic programs were recognized as NJCAA Academic Teams of the Year — with each having players recognized as NJCAA Academic All-Americans.

"We had 22 individual Academic All-Americans, which is roughly 30 percent of all athletes," said OCC Athletic Director and Softball Coach Nick Short. "That is a crazy, high number."

All four teams earned GPAs above 3.0, a benchmark that Short says reflects a strong culture of academic excellence. He noted Men's Basketball posted its highest team GPA in his 19 years at OCC at 3.46, tying for sixth nationally.

The OCC Women's Softball team led the way with the college's top team GPA of 3.65, followed by Women's Basketball at 3.27 and Baseball at 3.17.

Short credits the combined effort of student-athletes, coaches and campus support staff for the department's continued success.

"Obviously, it begins with our athletes doing the work, and they did a fantastic job this past year in the classroom," he said. "We would not have success without our advisors, front office and support staff making sure students know about the resources available to them. Our coaching staff also plays a role in accountability and creating a culture where academics are prioritized. They all did a great job."

The NJCAA recognizes student-athletes with a 3.60 GPA or higher as Academic All-Americans. This honor is divided into three tiers: First Team for those with a 4.0 GPA, Second Team for those earning GPAs between 3.80 and 3.99, and Third Team for GPAs between 3.60 and 3.79.

Short said this year's accomplishments reflect the standard OCC athletics strives to uphold each season.

"We expect this level of commitment in the classroom every year," he said. "I believe we have had department GPAs over 3.0 every year I have been here, and we expect it to continue."

OCC's 2024–2025 NJCAA Academic All-Americans include:

First Team: Rylee Bloomer, Emily Czerwonka, Alli Downes, Brooklyn Garrett, Morgan Kehl, Kayla Kocher, Ashton Mayes, Becca Minor and Kennedy Odum, Softball; Hunter Kaplan, Brett Kocher and Bradey Moad, Baseball; and Lexi McKinney, Women's Basketball.

Second Team: Amyia Stickland and Kadence Simmons, Softball; Sammy Hallada, Baseball; and Kasym Nash and Cristobal Vargas, Men's Basketball

Third Team: Lauren Payton, Softball; Logan Webb, Men's Basketball; and Brock Bitterman and Isabella Slocum, Women's Basketball.



# OCC Hosts Exhibit by Artist Rudy Kistler

The Olney Central College Library Gallery will showcase the work of alumni artist Rudy Kistler in a special one-night-only exhibition from 5 to 8 p.m. on Aug. 22.

Titled, *The Long Road Home*, the exhibit features new landscape and still life paintings, all of which will be available for purchase that evening.

Kistler's artistic journey began at Olney Central College, where he first honed his creative skills. He later advanced his studies at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and The National Art School in Sydney, Australia.

Raised in Olney, Kistler has spent the past 20 years living and working in Australia, where he continues to create and exhibit his work internationally.



## OCC Wraps Up Ignite Curiosity Summer Camps

More than 180 students participated in the 2025 Ignite Curiosity Summer Camps.

"This year's summer camps were a great success," said Director of Student Engagement and Recruitment Curtis Miller. "We had students from first grade all the way up to 12th grade attend. I am confident these camps have left a lasting impression on these young minds."

The camps are designed to spark curiosity and encourage students to try new subjects.

"This year certainly has delivered from Welding camps to Plush Pals Hospital, many of these students won't forget the experience that these camps have offered," Miller added.



**Above: OCC Instructors Dr. Sarah Bergbower and Chris Mathews hosted, Yikes, Parasites! Gross Pathology and Medical Lab Science. At left, Plush Pals Hospital enabled future healthcare heroes to care for cuddly patients.**





# Fall Semester Community Education Classes

Olney Central College invites community members to expand their skills and explore their passions this fall through a wide variety of Community Education classes.

With both in-person and online options, OCC offers opportunities for lifelong learning that fit any schedule.

This semester's offerings include:

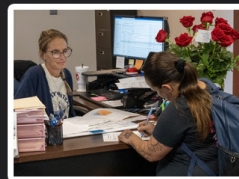
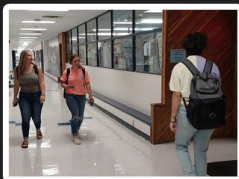
- **Woodworking** – Learn the basics of woodworking in a fun, supportive environment. From beginners to experienced hobbyists, all are welcome to create, build and gain confidence using tools and techniques. The class meets Wednesdays from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Terry L. Bruce West Richland Center in Noble.
- **Concert Band** – Love music? Play an instrument? Come be a part of the OCC Concert Band. Whether you're a seasoned player or just want to get back into music, all skill levels are welcome. The class meets from 2:15 to 3:30 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays.
- **Community Choir** – Join the OCC Community Choir and be part of a welcoming group that celebrates music. Community Choir is open to students and local singers of all experience levels. The class meets from 6 to 9 p.m. on Tuesdays.
- **Art Open Studio** – Whether you're into ceramics, painting, drawing or just want to try something new, this flexible, come-as-you-are studio time is perfect for all skill levels. Work independently with guidance from experienced instructors in a supportive, creative space. The class meets from 6 to 7 p.m. on Tuesdays.
- **Teen Driver's Ed** — This comprehensive Driver's Ed course is designed to provide teen drivers with the knowledge needed to become a safe and responsible driver.

For those who prefer to learn from home or need a flexible schedule, a wide selection of online classes are available.

Popular choices this fall include: Discover Digital Photography, Computer Skills for the Workplace, How to Get Started in Game Development, Spanish, Stocks Bonds and Investing: Oh, My! and Conversational Japanese.

Community Education classes are open to anyone with an interest in learning, whether you are looking to develop a new hobby, enhance professional skills or simply want to meet others with similar interests.

Classes begin August 21 and fees vary. To learn more, visit [iecc.edu/communityed](http://iecc.edu/communityed).



## WE'RE STAYING OPEN LATE FOR MOONLIGHT MONDAYS

ADMISSIONS • ADULT EDUCATION • ADVISING • BOOKSTORE • BUSINESS OFFICE • FINANCIAL AID • LEARNING COMMONS • RECORDS

**AUGUST 11, 18, 25**  
**4-8 PM**

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT OR JUST WALK IN

# Kristie Markman's Work at OCC Highlighted in Eastern Illinois University Alumni Spotlight

Kristie Markman is making a difference in the lives of students at Olney Central College, and her dedication has earned her recognition as an outstanding alumna on the Eastern Illinois University [website](#).

Markman serves as OCC's TRIO Upward Bound Academic Counselor, where she helps students explore their potential and plan for bright futures. Her work guiding students toward meaningful academic programs and career pathways has not only impacted the local community, but also earned her a feature in EIU's alumni spotlight, celebrating her success and the lasting influence of her graduate education.

"Working with these students to match their unique backgrounds, passions and interests with meaningful academic programs and a focused career trajectory is extremely rewarding," Markman said in the EIU article. "Our success is a shared outcome that reflects positively on the students we serve, at Olney Central College and the whole Illinois Eastern Community Colleges system, and the communities and districts we serve — educationally and economically."

Markman earned her master's degree in EIU's online Higher Education and Community College program in May 2025. During her graduate studies, she developed two impactful initiatives for OCC.

Inspired by her Governance and Finance class at EIU, she established a food pantry on campus while serving as Student Support Services Specialist for the TRIO Student Support Services program, addressing food insecurities many students faced. Later, as part of her EIU academic capstone project, she researched, helped design, and is now implementing a STEM lab that will support high school students transitioning to college through the TRIO Upward Bound Program. OCC plans to host an official ribbon cutting for the new lab in the near future.

"EIU helped to give me a platform, and their experienced faculty helped to broaden my proficiency in the workforce," Markman said. "As a graduate of EIU, an employee of OCC, and a resident of Illinois, it is important to let people know about the work our institutions and communities do to advance the public good and to reinforce the economic resiliency of our region and state. Giving students a chance to succeed in their classrooms and communities and giving them the skills they need to be high performers with their future employers is a win for everyone."



## Order Your Fall Course Materials Through eCampus

Olney Central College students can now order their course materials for the fall semester through IECC's official online bookstore, eCampus, and enjoy convenient pickup at the OCC Bookstore.

The eCampus bookstore offers students everything they need to start the semester prepared. With eCampus, you'll find the largest selection of professor-approved course materials. Students can choose from new, used, rental, digital, or Marketplace formats.

To order your materials, visit [iecc.ecampus.com](https://iecc.ecampus.com) and select your courses to view all available textbook options.

