



## HIGHLIGHTS



Hands-on learning, real-world experience highlight CTE Month at Lincoln Trail College.



Scouts from as far as three hours away came to LTC for Scout Merit Badge Day.



LTC partnered with the University of Illinois System for a Transfer Exploration Night.

### PHILLIPS CROWNED MISS ILLINOIS FAIR QUEEN

**L**incoln Trail College alumna Krista Phillips ('24) was crowned Miss Illinois County Fair Queen, a moment she described as the fulfillment of a lifelong dream and a powerful reflection of her journey as both a student and competitor.

"I was in disbelief that my name was called," Phillips said. "I kept thinking, I really did it. My dreams were fulfilled, prayers answered, and waves of gratitude kept pouring over me."

Phillips, who represented Effingham County, is the first Miss Illinois County Fair Queen from the county since 2004, the year she was born. She said the honor carries deep personal meaning given the legacy behind the crown and the strength of this year's competition.

"There is a long line of heritage behind the crown, and I am beyond excited to add my story to it," she said. "Knowing how difficult this competition is and the amount of talented girls competing makes me feel incredibly honored."

This year's state pageant also featured a strong presence



## UPCOMING MARCH EVENTS

- 6    Midterm
- 9-13    Spring Break - NO CLASSES, CAMPUS OPEN
- 10    Celebrate Art!  
9 a.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 11    Twin Rivers Career Day  
8 a.m., Campus Wide
- 12    Young Women Lead  
8 a.m., Campus Wide
- 18    SIUE Visit  
10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Williams Hall Welcome Wall
- 25    Eagleton Reading Circle  
6 p.m., Learning Commons
- 26    Lincoln Trail College Foundation Meeting  
12 p.m., Lincoln Room
- 31    LWIA 23 APC Meeting & Community Employment Workshop  
2 p.m., Zoom



from Illinois Eastern Community Colleges, with seven contestants having ties to IECC institutions. Alongside Phillips, competitors included Miss Clark County Kamryn Remlinger, a Lincoln Trail College student studying Early Childhood Education; Miss Crawford County Madalyn Miller, a nursing student at Lincoln Trail College; Miss Edwards County Alice Robb, a dual credit student; Miss

Clay County Olivia Haun, a former dual credit student at Frontier Community College; Miss Jasper County Madalyn Rauch, a former student at Olney Central College; Miss Richland County August Michels, an agriculture student at Wabash Valley College; and Miss Wayne County Kadence Smith, a nursing student at Frontier Community College who finished in the Top 16 at the state pageant.

"To me, it is very inspiring," Phillips said. "It combats stereotypes by showing that students who go to junior colleges can achieve greatness. Upon learning there were multiple girls from IECC, I instantly felt connected because we shared that step in our lives."

Phillips said her time at Lincoln Trail College played a key role in building the confidence and communication skills that prepared her for moments like this.

"The first time I ran for Miss Effingham County Fair Queen, I attended LTC," she said. "Even though I placed first runner-up that year, I experienced incredible support from faculty, students, and my volleyball team."

She credits opportunities such as competing at the National FBLA Convention, serving as the student speaker at her 2024 graduation, and competing as a member of the volleyball team for shaping her resilience and leadership.

"LTC will always hold a special place in my heart," Phillips said. "It helped shape me into who I am today."



## HANDS-ON LEARNING, REAL-WORLD SKILLS HIGHLIGHT CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH AT LINCOLN TRAIL COLLEGE



Career and Technical Education Month at Lincoln Trail College is shining a spotlight on programs where students learn by doing, gaining hands-on experience and developing skills tied directly to in-demand careers.

Across Career and Technical Education programs such as Process Technology, Telecommunications, Certified Medical Assistant and Welding, students say the opportunity to work with real equipment and learn in active lab environments has been a defining part of their college experience.

For Process Technology student Hannah Potts, the program offered a chance to better understand an industry she grew up around.

"Growing up in Crawford County, going by the refinery every day, I wanted to figure out what was going on in there," Potts said. "Learning how everything works and getting hands-on experience in something that I'd want to learn more on."

Potts said the hands-on approach and guidance from instructors have helped her feel prepared for the workforce.

"I feel really prepared knowing everything and all the tips Tina has given us," she said. "I feel very prepared to go out there."

Telecommunications students echoed similar sentiments. Caleb Gephardt said hands-on learning has been key to his success in the program.

"I really do like the hands-on," Gephardt said. "I think that's the best way for me to learn — through hands-on work."



Hannah Potts (left) listens as Instructor Tina Lindley explains a piece of equipment in a Process Technology class.



ABOVE: Caleb Gephardt works on stripping a fiber optic cable.

BELOW: Khyiema Poole (left) joins classmates watching a demonstration from Dr. Jared Gullett.



helped open doors for future opportunities. "It opens a lot of doors," Wheeler said. "I'd just definitely do it. Take the chance. It's definitely worth it."

For Gage Lockhart, the program has reinforced his desire to work outside a traditional office environment. "Ever since I was little, I'm always telling myself I don't want an office job," Lockhart said. "I want to do something with my hands."

Clayton Potts said his interest in welding was influenced by his upbringing and family experience. "I grew up on an oil rig, and my dad — he's the one who got me into welding," Potts said.

Career and Technical Education Month is observed nationally each February to raise awareness of CTE programs and their role in workforce development. At Lincoln Trail College, the month highlights student experiences, faculty expertise and hands-on learning environments that help prepare graduates for real-world careers.

Gephardt said instructors not only teach technical skills but also support students as they prepare for careers. "They really, truly care about you," he said. "They do very good work for us, teaching us all the things we need to know to prepare for our jobs."

Certified Medical Assistant student Khyiema Poole said hands-on practice has helped build her confidence as she prepares for a career in health care.

"I'm a hands-on learner," Poole said. "Actually doing it and feeling it, I can understand it more and have a better grasp on what I'm doing."

Poole added that working directly with classmates in lab settings has made a difference. "Being in a class like this where we do hands-on stuff with each other is making me more comfortable," she said.

Welding students also emphasized the value of learning by doing. Carter Davis said he was drawn to welding because it fit his learning style.

"I'm kind of a hands-on person," Davis said. "It's just what I've always been."

Thane Wheeler said the welding program has

## SCOUT MERIT BADGE DAY BRINGS SCOUTS FROM ACROSS THE REGION TO LTC



Lincoln Trail College welcomed Scouts from across the region for Scout Merit Badge Day, an event that combined hands-on learning, community partnerships and campus engagement.

Scouts traveled from as far as two to three hours away to take part in the event. A total of 81 Scouts attended, earning 50 merit badges through hands-on sessions led by Illinois Eastern Community Colleges faculty, staff, students and community partners.

"What stood out to me most was how engaged and interested the Lincoln Trail College staff were throughout the day," said Blake Girdner, Redhawk District executive. "They were genuinely happy to see the Scouts on campus and consistently commented on how well-behaved and engaged they were during the event."

Participation was strong again this year, and Girdner said the quality and uniqueness of the programs offered played a key role in the event's success.

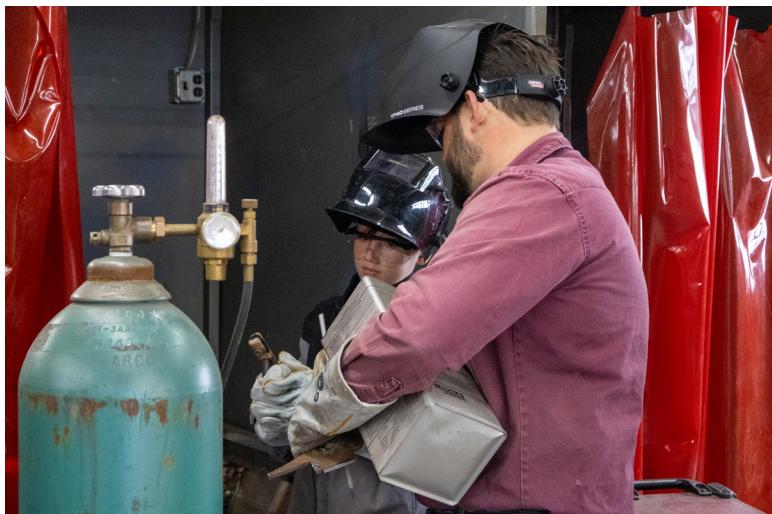
"The best way an event like this resonates with Scouts is through the programs offered and the quality of those programs," Girdner said. "Being able to offer merit badges like Swimming during the winter, or Aviation at an airport, really makes these experiences memorable for our Scouts."

For Girdner ('23), the day was especially meaningful as a Lincoln Trail College alumnus.

"It meant a lot coming from this college and knowing the staff to see Scouting run a program here," he said. "It shows Scouts that college is attainable, and that it doesn't have to be a large university with thousands of students. I liked Lincoln Trail College because I could work closely with my classmates and instructors, and I hope Scouts can see that college can be comfortable and affordable for them."



LTC student James Lockhart leads the Chess Merit Badge event.



Lincoln Trail College President Tona Ambrose said the event reflects the college's commitment to community engagement and service.

"We welcomed Scouts who traveled two to three hours to be here, and that says a lot about the value of this event," Ambrose said. "When families are willing to make that kind of commitment, it reinforces that Lincoln Trail College is seen as a place where meaningful, high-quality experiences happen."

Ambrose also thanked the many IECC faculty, staff, students and community members who helped make the event possible.



"This event truly came together because of our people," she said. "Our faculty, staff and students were willing to give their time to create a positive experience for the Scouts, and we're grateful to our community partners who shared their expertise and support."

Community partnerships were central to the event's success, according to Girdner.

"Community partnerships are vital to the Scouting program," he said. "They allow us to bring in subject matter experts, grow the Scouting movement, and give Scouts hands-on experiences that help prepare them for life. We couldn't do this without our partners."

Girdner said organizers are already looking ahead.

"We're excited to continue this partnership and hope to see even greater numbers next year," he said.



TOP: Welding Instructor Maverick Fisher works with a Scout on the Welding Merit Badge.

CENTER: Scouts visited the Crawford County Airport to work on their Aviation Merit Badge.

BOTTOM: Instructor Austin Alexander leads the Citizenship in the Nation Merit Badge.

RIGHT: American Working Dog Association evaluator Mike Kennedy shows Scouts a K-9. He led the Search and Rescue Merit Badge.



## LTC HOSTS TRANSFER EXPLORATION NIGHT WITH U OF I SYSTEM



Lincoln Trail College partnered with the University of Illinois System to host Transfer Exploration Night, giving students a clearer look at affordable pathways from community college to a four-year university.

The event grew out of conversations this fall when University of Illinois System representatives visited Illinois Eastern Community Colleges campuses to discuss strengthening transfer opportunities for students in rural Illinois.

"We recognized a shared goal: making sure students in rural Illinois can see themselves at flagship universities," said Cassandra Goldman, IECC Dean of Students.

Transfer Exploration Night connected students and local high school attendees directly with University of Illinois System representatives, allowing them to ask questions and learn about guaranteed admission opportunities.

"What made this event so powerful was the direct connection," Goldman said. "Students were meeting face-to-face with representatives and learning about guaranteed admission opportunities, which helped make what can feel like a distant or intimidating next step much more real."

The event focused on showing students that beginning at a community college can lead to a bachelor's degree while staying close to home.

"Our goal was to help students see a clear, affordable, and achievable pathway to a four-year degree," Goldman said. "They can start here, stay close to home, and still transfer into some of the most respected universities in the state."

Lincoln Trail College served as the pilot location for the partnership, with plans to expand the model across IECC.



"The success of this event shows what's possible across our district," Goldman said. "We want every IECC student, no matter where they begin, to have access to clear, guaranteed pathways into the University of Illinois System."

## MORE THAN 100 PIECES SUBMITTED FOR CHILDREN'S ART SHOW



A young artist beams while showing off her artwork.

The Learning Commons at Lincoln Trail College was filled with creativity and community earlier this month as the college hosted its annual Children's Art Show, featuring artwork from students across the region.

The exhibit included 103 pieces of art created by students ranging from kindergarten through eighth grade. Participating schools were Hutsonville Junior High, New Hebron Christian School, Nuttall Middle School, Oblong Grade School and Junior High, and Palestine Grade School and Junior High.

Artwork was on display

in the Learning Commons from Feb. 2–13, giving students, families, and visitors the opportunity to view a wide range of styles, subjects, and creative approaches.

A reception held Feb. 3 invited student artists and their families to campus to celebrate the exhibit. The event gave students the opportunity to see their work displayed in a college setting while allowing families to explore the Learning Commons and connect with the campus.

"The reception is such an important part of this event," said Angie Compton, adjunct instructor at Lincoln Trail College and organizer of the annual show. "It gives students a chance to proudly share their work with their families and see how their creativity is valued in a space like this."

Compton said the Children's Art Show is designed to do more than showcase artwork — it also helps young students feel comfortable on a college campus.

"When kids walk into the Learning Commons and see their artwork displayed, it helps them imagine themselves here in the future," she said. "It's a simple but powerful way to build that connection early."

The Children's Art Show has become an annual tradition at Lincoln Trail College, strengthening partnerships with local schools while celebrating creativity and artistic expression among young students.

"This event brings together education, creativity, and community," Compton said. "It's always exciting to see the pride on students' faces and the support from their families."



A large crowd visited the Learning Commons during the Artists' Reception to view the artwork submitted for this year's Children's Art Show.

## LTC ANNOUNCES CAST FOR DISNEY'S NEWSIES

Lincoln Trail College has announced the cast for its spring production of Disney's *Newsies*, the Tony Award-winning musical based on the 1992 Disney film. Performances will take place April 10, 11, 17 and 18 at 7 p.m., with matinees April 12 and 19 at 2 p.m. in the Zwermann Arts Center Theater.

*Newsies* tells the rousing story of Jack Kelly, a charismatic newsboy who leads a band of young newspaper sellers in a historic strike for justice in turn-of-the-century New York City. Featuring an energetic score by Alan Menken and Jack Feldman and a book by Harvey Fierstein, the musical includes audience favorites such as "Carrying the Banner," "Seize the Day" and "Santa Fe."

The cast is led by Landon Baker as Jack Kelly, with Ashtyn Reid portraying Crutchie, Tobin Bales as Davey, and Tyler Pleasant as Les. Madison Hayes will appear as Spot Conlon, while Rebecca Trivett has been cast as Katherine Plumber.

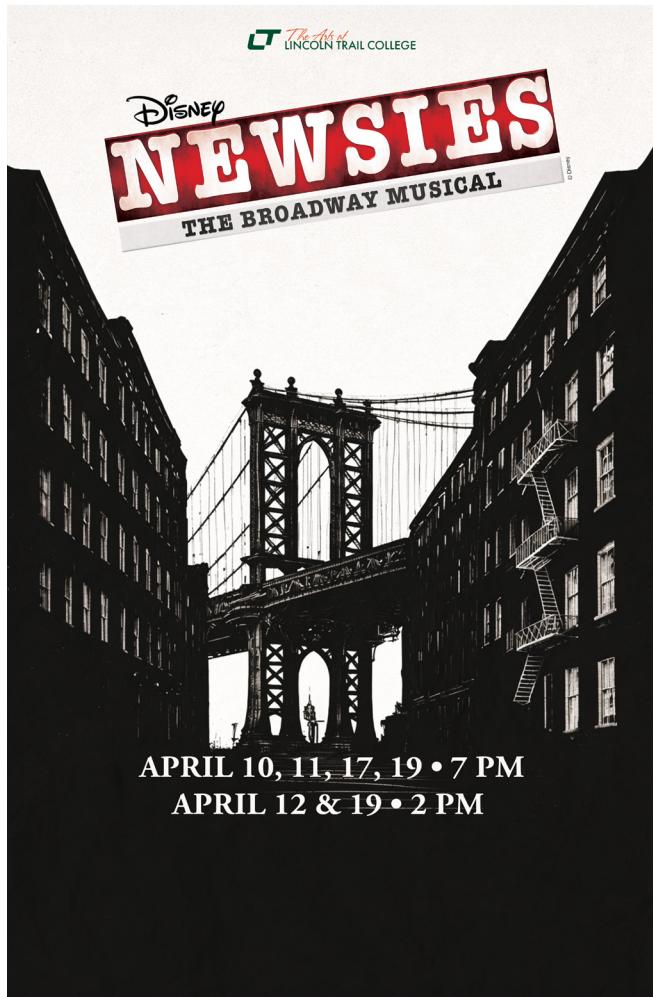
The newsies ensemble includes Caitlyn Tingley (Race), Al Crosley (Albert), Cara Batten (Specs), Violet McDonald (Henry), Chloe Davis (Finch), Wyatt Herrington (Romeo), Tessa Walton (Elmer), Katelyn Rosborough (Mush), Giselle Solis (Buttons), Makenzi Carlen (Splasher), Ariel Clayton (Tommy Boy), Allyson Miller (Jo Jo), Anna Osborn (Mike) and Lucas Aydt (Ike). Additional members of the newsie ensemble include Anna Bales, Katrina Ferguson, Jackson Schoeck, Isabel Hill, Lena Kreighbaum and Carlie Harrell.

Other featured youth roles include Makenzi Carlen as Darcy and Wyatt Herrington as Bill.

Adult and authority roles include Chase Dunlap as Wiesel, Grayson Pinkston as Morris Delancey, Kinley Bradbury as Oscar Delancey, Ryan Pinkston as Joseph Pulitzer, Katrina Ferguson as Seitz, Mindy Evans as Bunsen, Anna Bales as Hannah, Dylan Batten as Nunzio, Kimberly Schoeck as Snyder, and Brenna Keeler as Medda Larkin.

Additional roles include Bowery Beauties portrayed by Makenzi Carlen, Anna Osborn, Anna Bales and Katrina Ferguson; Stage Manager played by Mindy Evans; Mr. Jacobi by Chase Dunlap; Mayor by Dylan Batten; Police by Mindy Evans and Dylan Batten; Guard by Chase Dunlap; and Nuns portrayed by Mindy Evans, Kimberly Schoeck, Anna Osborn and Brenna Keeler.

"We're incredibly excited about this cast and the energy they're already bringing into rehearsals," said Taylor Dahlberg, theater director at Lincoln Trail College. "This group represents a wonderful mix of returning performers and new faces, and they're capturing both the heart and the high-energy spirit of *Newsies*. Audiences are in for a powerful and entertaining show."





## MARCH ATHLETIC EVENTS

### Baseball

5	John A. Logan College	2:00
7	at John A. Logan College (DH)	12:00
10	Southwestern Illinois College	3:00
11	Vincennes University	3:00
14	vs. Glen Oaks CC at Westfield, IN (DH)	12:00
17	at Southwestern Illinois College	3:00
19	at Olney Central College	3:00
21	Olney Central College (DH)	12:00
24	Southwestern Illinois College	3:00
26	Rend Lake College	3:00
28	at Rend Lake College (DH)	12:00
31	at Danville Area Community College	3:00

### Softball

3	at Jefferson College (DH)	1:00
12	Southwestern Illinois College (DH)	2:00
14	at Shawnee Community College (DH)	12:00
17	at Olney Central College (DH)	2:00
19	at Lake Land College (DH)	2:00
21	John A. Logan College (DH)	12:00
24	at Wabash Valley College (DH)	2:00
26	Southeastern Illinois College (DH)	2:00
31	Frontier Community College (DH)	2:00

### Women's Basketball

3	Rend Lake College	5:00
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Student Ana Lopes embraces the winter weather, enjoying the snowfall on campus and reminding everyone to find joy in small moments, even on the coldest days.

## LTC IN PICTURES



Students gathered for Student Senate Pancake Night, enjoying breakfast-for-dinner, good conversation, and some karaoke in the cafeteria.



Lincoln Trail College proudly recognized the Nuttall Middle School basketball team during halftime of the Statesmen's game against Vincennes University.



Students connected with representatives from the University of Illinois Chicago during Transfer Exploration Night



An LTC student takes a break to enjoy fresh snowfall on campus, turning a winter day into a moment of fun, laughter, and appreciation for the season.