

# VIEW FROM THE VALLEY

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- 
- REMEMBERING DR. HARRY BENSON
  - HOMECOMING CELEBRATIONS
  - COMMUNITY SUPPORT
  - AND MORE!

MARCH 2026

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

As we move deeper into the semester, campus continues to buzz with energy, connection, and opportunity. In this issue, we're highlighting some of the moments—big and small—that make WVC such a special place. From the cheerful start of Fist Bump Friday to hands-on learning in our new agriculture course, there's a lot to celebrate.

We're also looking back at the fun of various events and Homecoming, and checking in on students navigating the always-busy midterm season. You'll find a heartfelt tribute honoring Dr. Harry Benson, whose leadership and legacy continue to shape our campus. This edition also features a Student Spotlight, updates on the Work Readiness Lab supporting Champion Lab employees, a note on the upcoming James Taylor tribute performance, and a reminder about our community-favorite Chili Supper.

Thank you for taking a moment to catch up with us. As always, WVC is full of stories worth sharing—and we're glad you're here to read them.

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# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: CAESYN NELSON

By Max Gerlach



This month we're excited to spotlight Caesyn Nelson, a Nursing major from Albion, Illinois. Caesyn is a sophomore and serves as a student ambassador on campus. After completing her degree at WVC, she plans to become an RN and work in Women's Health. While gaining experience in the field, she also hopes to earn her Bachelor of Science in Nursing online through Eastern Illinois University.

Caesyn chose Wabash Valley College because of scholarship opportunities, its close proximity to home, and—most importantly—our strong nursing program. She spoke highly of her professors, sharing that their support and encouragement played a major role in her decision to attend WVC.

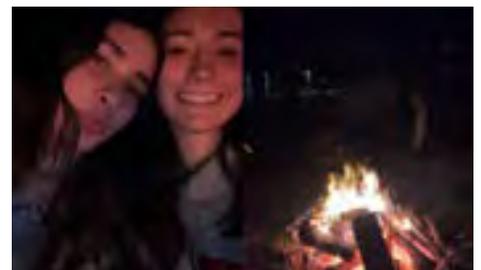
Outside of her coursework, Caesyn enjoys spending time outdoors, going to the gym, and helping with her sister's business. That experience has sparked her interest in photography and marketing. She also has a Doberman named Apollo, who joins her on all kinds of adventures.

Beyond the classroom, Caesyn finds fulfillment in her nursing internship at Ascension St. Vincent, where she is able to apply what she's learning and gain real-world experience in patient care.

We're proud to have Caesyn as part of the WVC community and can't wait to see where her path leads next. 🔥

## STUDENT FOCUSED EVENTS IN FEBRUARY

On February 25th, students celebrated a WVC Women's Basketball victory with a S'mores Night, hosted by Student Life. On March 4th, students enjoyed ice cream sundaes and cones for Midterm Meltdown prior to spring break.



# HONORING THE LEGACY OF DR. HARRY BENSON

*A leader remembered for his integrity, quiet impact, and devotion to WVC*



The Wabash Valley College community is mourning the loss of former President Dr. Harry Benson, whose leadership and dedication shaped the campus for more than two decades. Dr. Benson served WVC with professionalism, quiet strength, and a deep commitment to students—qualities that left a lasting imprint on all who knew him.

Current WVC President and IECC Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Dr. Matthew Fowler reflected on Dr. Benson's service, noting his "dedication and professionalism" and the meaningful impact he made during his long tenure. "Those who had the opportunity to work alongside Dr.

Benson will remember his commitment to students, his southern demeanor, and the positive influence he brought to our college community," Dr. Fowler shared.

The sentiments are echoed by alumni who experienced his leadership firsthand. Kyle Peach, WVC alumnus and Radio/TV Instructor, recalled Dr. Benson's influence both as a student and later as an employee. "He was president when I was a student. He hired me back in 2001. I owe him a lot. His visits to my office were some of my favorite times," Peach said. "Just this week I told a group of my current students about him and how he was admired and respected for his leadership." Peach also shared a personal memory of Dr. Benson's love for the weeping willow trees on campus, noting that a tree planted in his honor—along with a plaque—continues to stand in remembrance of his service.

For many, Dr. Benson's presence was unforgettable. Karissa Anderson, Director of WVC's Learning Commons and IECC Digital Collections Coordinator and WVC alumna, described him as "a man of few words, but when he spoke, it was impactful." She recalled being a 19-year-old student and feeling the room shift when he entered—"not just because he was a tall man, but because his presence was felt without him saying a word." She also highlighted his unwavering support of WVC athletics, a passion well remembered across campus.

Dr. Benson's legacy at Wabash Valley College lives on through the people he inspired, the programs he strengthened, and the countless students whose lives were touched by his leadership. 🌳



*Willow tree planted on WVC campus in honor of Dr. Benson's service*



*Dr. Benson with Athletic Director Paul Schnarre, 1994*



*Dr. Benson with Mrs. Benson and daughter Delanore at a WVC home game, 1987*

# A COMMUNITY UNIFIED

Illinois Eastern Community Colleges (IECC) is mobilizing campus and community resources to support workers and families affected by the sudden closure of Champion Laboratories in Albion. With more than 1,000 employees impacted, IECC has coordinated a comprehensive network of training opportunities, financial assistance, and career services to help individuals navigate this period of transition.

On March 9, Wabash Valley College hosted the first session of the Work Readiness Labs, a hands-on initiative designed to equip displaced workers with practical tools for their next steps. During these sessions, former Champion Labs employees can receive assistance with résumé writing, job applications, GED advising, interview preparation, and more. The goal is to provide meaningful, immediate support while opening pathways for continued education, new careers, and long-term stability.

Additional information and ongoing updates can be found at: [www.iecc.edu/championlabs](http://www.iecc.edu/championlabs). 🔥



## CHILI DINNER HOSTED BY WVCF



The Wabash Valley College Foundation hosted a Chilli Dinner on February 28th for the community at large. Many showed with families for dinner and support of the Foundation's endeavors - to support students at WVC.

### TURNING AN "OOPS" INTO OPPORTUNITY

In the wake of the Champion Laboratories closure—and alongside IECC's ongoing support efforts—Wabash Valley College Foundation has found a creative way to help students affected by the sudden loss of local jobs. What began as a simple overproduction in the kitchen has turned into a meaningful community initiative.

After preparing for the chili dinner, the WVC Foundation discovered they had made far more than expected. Instead of letting it go to waste, the foundation decided to turn the extra gallons of frozen chili into a free-will donation chili drive, with 100% of proceeds benefiting WVC students impacted by the Champion Labs closure. Community members simply pulled through, picked up chili, and give whatever amount they felt comfortable contributing. Every donation directly supports students whose academic and financial stability may be affected during this uncertain time. 🔥



# WVC IN THE COMMUNITY

## WVC STUDENTS VISIT LOCAL GRADE SCHOOL

WVC students once again kicked off the morning this time at the local grade school by participating in Fist Bump Friday, greeting students with smiles, encouragement, and—of course—plenty of fist bumps. The goal of the event is and will always be simple: create a positive start to the school day and remind young students that their community is cheering them on.🔥



WVC Originators recently hosted a series of Classic TV Trivia Dinners celebrating The Andy Griffith Show, offering guests an evening of great food and friendly competition. Held February 13 and 14, the event treated attendees to a delicious homemade meal featuring chicken and noodles, vegetables, hot rolls, and dessert muffins.

The WVC Originators led the fun with themed trivia, bonus rounds, and even reenactments of favorite scenes from the beloved show. With multiple seatings and a strong turnout, the event brought together fans, families, and community members for two days of lighthearted nostalgia.



# ANNUAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS EVENT IS A SUCCESS AT WVC

**W**abash Valley College welcomed more than 500 area high school students to campus for the 13th annual Health Careers Day, an event designed to spark interest in the growing field of healthcare. Students explored hands-on activities, connected with health professionals, and participated in one of the most anticipated components of the day—a live cadaver presentation offering an in-depth look at human anatomy.

The event was made possible through strong partnerships with Illinois AHEC and Wabash General Hospital, whose support helps inspire the next generation of healthcare providers. Each year, Health Careers Day continues to open doors for students considering careers in nursing, emergency services, imaging, therapy, and more.

WVC is proud to play a role in guiding future healthcare professionals and looks forward to continuing this impactful tradition. 🌟



# HOMECOMING 2026

WVC celebrated Homecoming 2026 on February 28 with a night full of Warrior pride. The event doubled as Sophomore Night, recognizing cheerleaders and both the Women's and Men's Basketball sophomores for their dedication and contributions to Warrior athletics.

Congratulations to our Homecoming royalty: King Brendan Mullin (not pictured due to a baseball game) and Queen Lauren Fisher.

The celebration continued on March 4 with a festive, carnival-themed Homecoming event. Students enjoyed inflatable attractions, a mechanical bull, refreshments, and a variety of activities that kept the fun going.

WVC is proud to honor its student-athletes and create opportunities for the campus community to come together in true Warrior spirit. 🔥



# CALENDAR

## March

- 10-15 - Spring Break
- 10 - BSB vs Frontier Community College
- 12 - BSB vs Lake Land College
- 12 - WVAC Production of Willy Wonka: The Musical
- 13 - WVAC Production of Willy Wonka: The Musical
- 14 - WVAC Production of Willy Wonka: The Musical
- 15 - WVAC Production of Willy Wonka: The Musical
- 17 - Summer/Fall Registration Begins
- 17 - SPIN Night
- 17 - SOF vs Frontier Community College
- 19 - SOF vs Southeastern Illinois College
- 24 - BSB vs Frontier Community College
- 24 - SOF vs Lincoln Trail College
- 27 - How Sweet It Is: The Music of James Taylor
- 28 - BSB vs Shawnee Community College
- 28 - SOF vs Spoon River College
- 31 - SOF vs Southwestern Illinois College

## April

- 2 - BSB vs. Southeastern Illinois College
- 3 - Campus Closed - Spring Holiday
- 3 - SOF vs Olney Central College
- 7 - SOF vs Lake Land College
- 9 - SOF vs John A Logan
- 9 - BSB vs Southwestern Illinois College
- 14 - BSB vs John A Logan
- 16 - SOF vs Rend Lake College
- 18 - BSB vs Lincoln Trail College
- 21 - SOF vs Kaskaskia College
- 23 - BSB vs Olney Central College
- 24 - Last Day to Withdraw from Class
- 28 - BSB vs Mineral Area College
- 28 - SOF vs Shawnee Community College



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# **VIEW FROM THE VALLEY**



[iecc.edu/wvc](http://iecc.edu/wvc)