



VIEW FROM THE VALLEY

JULY 2026



PAGE 3



WVC LPN PROGRAMS RANKS 2ND IN STATE

The Illinois Eastern Community Colleges Nursing Program has earned statewide recognition for excellence in nursing education.

PracticalNursing.org ranked Olney Central College and Wabash Valley College No. 1 and No. 2, respectively, in its 2026 list of the Top Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) programs in Illinois.

A trusted source for nursing education information, licensure guidance and career resources, PracticalNursing.org provides data-driven rankings to help prospective students identify quality nursing programs. The annual rankings recognize programs that demonstrate excellence in preparing the next generation of nurses.

Both OCC and WVC were singled out for the honor because of their flexible exit pathways and hands-on training, which open expanded opportunities for nursing students across Southeastern Illinois.

PAGE 3



UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST

- 3 Moonlight Mondays**
4-7 p.m., Student Services
- 5 Dual Credit Orientation**
6 p.m., Brubeck Theater
- 10 Moonlight Mondays**
4-7 p.m., Student Services
- 12 IECC Faculty & Staff Workshop**
Olney Central College
- 13 Faculty Workshop**
- 17 New Student Orientation**
8:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Student Union
- 18 Weeks of Welcome: Entrata, Canvas, and Testing Help**
7:30-4:30, Learning Commons
- 19 First Day of Classes**

Weeks of Welcome: Find Your Tribe
12-2 p.m.
- 20 Weeks of Welcome: Entrata & Canvas Crash Course**
9-11 a.m., Learning Commons
- 21 Weeks of Welcome: What's Poppin' Active Minds**
11-1, Learning Commons
- 24 Weeks of Welcome: Donut Stress with TRIO SSS**
8:30-9:30 a.m., Science Building
- 25 Weeks of Welcome: Pizza & Preparation**
12 p.m., Learning Commons
- 26 Weeks of Welcome: 15 Tips to be Successful in College**
12 p.m., Learning Commons

Weeks of Welcome: Pickleball
1-3 p.m., Mt. Carmel City Park
- 27 Weeks of Welcome: Lawn Games**
12-2 p.m., Amphitheater Lawn
- 28 Weeks of Welcome: Sno Shack**
11-1, Main Hall Parking Lot
- 31 Weeks of Welcome: Quack Attack**
12 p.m., Amphitheater

Among the program's defining features is its distinctive summer "exit" course, offered between the first and second years of the Associate Degree Nursing Program. This option allows students to earn LPN licensure while continuing their progress toward an associate degree and eligibility for registered nurse licensure.

"Our Practical Nursing Program is unique as a ladder program within the state of Illinois," said Dr. Alanni Frederick, IECC Dean of Health Professions. "We are able to educate our students concurrently and get them into the workforce faster. Due to the unique setup and strong preparation, our students are able to be successful both in licensure and at the bedside. Examining board scores, graduate feedback and employer evaluations allows us to ensure our program is prepared to educate at the highest level."

The rankings were based on several factors, including accreditation, program quality and academic excellence, affordability, learning flexibility and admission rates.

"IECC is committed to ensuring that local students receive a strong education to give back to our local communities," Frederick said. "With a program like nursing, our students learn how to care in our community and for our community."

For Frederick, the top rankings underscore the impact of the IECC Nursing Program and the opportunities it provides for students to build successful healthcare careers.

"We want our prospective students to know that a high-quality education is available in our own backyard," she added. "If you have ever thought about healthcare, now is the time."

To learn more about the IECC Nursing Program, visit www.iecc.edu/nursing.

Additional information regarding the PracticalNursing.org rankings is available at: <https://www.practical-nursing.org/lpn-programs/illinois>.



JOHNSON RETURNS TO WVC TO TELL THE STORIES THAT SHAPED HER

Kamille Johnson knows Wabash Valley College by heart.

She knows where the classrooms are, where the softball field sits and which faculty members have a knack for encouraging students when they need it most. Walking across campus today feels different than it did just a few years ago, but it still feels familiar.

Only now, she's not returning as a student.

Johnson recently joined Wabash Valley College as its new Coordinator of Marketing and Communications, bringing her professional marketing experience back to the college she says helped shape the person she has become.

"It honestly — this sounds cliché — means the world to me," Johnson said. "I am very excited to be able to give back to a community and a place that was able to give me so much opportunity and growth. Now I get to help that place grow just as much."

A Grayville native, Johnson began her college career at Wabash Valley College, where she earned her associate degree while playing for the Lady Warriors softball team. She later transferred to the University of Southern Indiana to earn a bachelor's degree in marketing. During college, she also gained hands-on marketing experience with D-Patrick Inc., where she progressed from Marketing Intern to Social Selling Program Manager while helping lead digital communications, social media strategy and brand messaging across multiple dealership locations.

While building her marketing career, Wabash Valley College was never far from her mind.

She remembers professors who invested in her success, coaches who challenged her to grow and a campus community where she always knew someone would be there to help.



TOP: Johnson poses for her Wabash Valley College employee portrait.

CENTER: Johnson celebrates after reaching second while playing for the Lady Warrior

BOTTOM: Johnson receives her diploma from WVC President Dr. Matt Fowler



LEFT: Johnson receives her Bachelor of Science in Marketing from the University of Southern Indiana College of Business.

RIGHT: Johnson hugs Levi Johnson at her high school graduation ceremony at Grayville High School.

“Wabash being very close to home for me, it was a great starting point,” Johnson said. “Being surrounded by people who are invested in you and your growth is very beneficial. Anything I ever needed assistance with, it was quick and easy. I knew who to talk to. I knew who to go to.”

Among those who left a lasting impression was Instructor Ronda Hockgeiger.

“She was one of my most memorable teachers,” Johnson said. “She was always there for me, just an ear to have, any kind of assistance, help, anything I needed.”

Those relationships have taken on a new meaning now that Johnson works alongside many of the people who once mentored her.

“It’s such a full-circle moment,” she said. “I get to be a coworker with Ronda. I get to be a coworker with my old softball coach, Jade.”

One relationship reaches back even further.

Johnson credits Program Director of International Student Program Levi Johnson with helping shape her confidence long before she ever enrolled at Wabash Valley College.

“He has been my mentor since I was in sixth grade,” she said. “I was a shy little kid, and I would say he has had a lot to do with my growth as a person. I turned into a little butterfly.”

That sense of belonging made returning to campus as an employee feel surprisingly natural.

“Wabash is like a home away from home,” Johnson said. “I’m now an employee instead of a student, but I know my way around.”

She smiled as she talked about seeing improvements across campus, particularly the expanded athletic facilities, knowing future student-athletes will benefit from opportunities she

The campus where she once learned, competed and discovered her confidence is now the place where she'll help tell the stories of others beginning journeys of their own.


VIEW FROM THE VALLEY
 PAGE 5
 JULY 2026

KIDS LEARN STEM LESSONS WITH LEGO

Young engineers put their creativity and problem-solving skills to the test June 17 during a LEGO Battle Bots summer camp at Wabash Valley College.

During the hands-on camp, students designed, built and programmed their own LEGO robots before testing them in a series of challenges and friendly battles. The camp introduced participants to the basics of robotics and coding while giving them opportunities to experiment, make adjustments and learn through trial and error.

Campers explored how robots move and respond to their surroundings using a variety of sensors. They then customized their designs and programming strategies to help their robots complete challenges and compete against one another.

"The students were able to take an idea, build it and then immediately see how well it worked," said Curtis Miller, Director of Enrollment and Community Outreach at Wabash Valley College. "When something did not go as planned, they had to figure out what to change. That process is an important part of learning robotics and engineering."

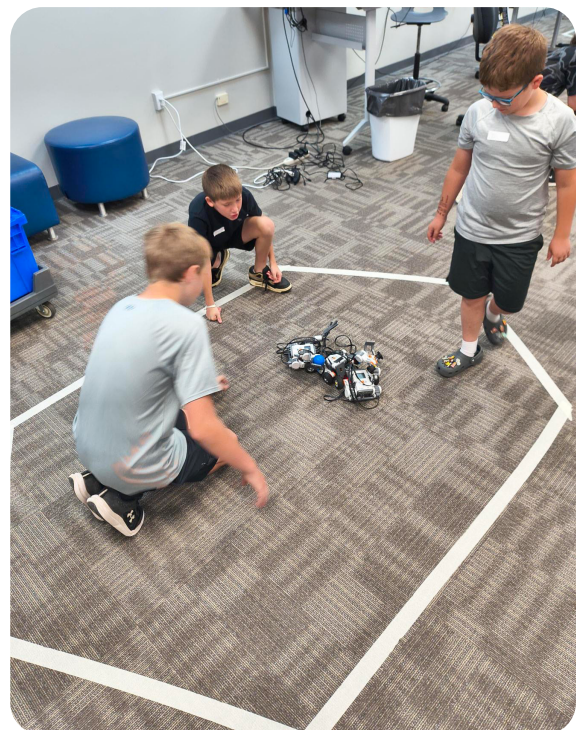
No previous robotics or coding experience was required. Students worked individually and with others throughout the camp, developing skills in creativity, communication and teamwork.

"One of the best parts of the camp was seeing the students become more confident as the day went on," Miller said. "They were excited to test their robots, learn from one another and keep improving their designs."

The camp concluded with students sending their completed Battle Bots into action for friendly competition.

"LEGO robotics makes technology approachable and fun," Miller said. "Students are learning valuable technical and problem-solving skills, but they are also having a great time while doing it."

LEGO Battle Bots was part of the Ignite Curiosity summer camp series offered throughout Illinois Eastern Community Colleges. The camps provided area students with opportunities to explore new interests through hands-on activities in science, technology, the arts and other fields.





WVC ALUMNA CONTINUES HER JOURNEY IN PHYSICAL THERAPY EDUCATION

Wabash Valley College Physical Therapist Assistant program graduate Amber Goodwin is building on her education and professional experience as she works toward becoming a physical therapist.

Goodwin, a physical therapist assistant at Crawford Memorial Hospital, is a member of the Hanover College Doctor of Physical Therapy Class of 2028. Her journey shows how students can complete WVC's PTA program in two years, enter the workforce and gain clinical experience while continuing their education.

Dr. Kinsey Whitaker of WVC's Physical Therapist Assistant program said the pathway can provide a strong foundation for students who eventually want to earn a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree.

"Students can complete the PTA program, begin working with patients and earn an income while pursuing their long-term goals," Whitaker said. "They also gain hands-on experience, mentorship and professional connections that can help them become stronger physical therapists."

After earning an associate degree and becoming licensed, graduates can work under the direction and supervision of physical therapists. The experience can help them explore clinical settings, identify areas of interest and better understand the profession before entering a doctoral program.

"Amber is a great example of what this pathway can look like," Whitaker said. "She is helping patients, gaining meaningful experience and continuing her education at the same time."

As a nontraditional student, parent and practicing physical therapist assistant, Goodwin chose Hanover College because it allowed her to advance her education while remaining close to home.

Her goal is to help patients restore function, mobility and independence. She has a special interest in neurorehabilitation for individuals affected by ALS, Parkinson's disease, strokes and traumatic brain injuries.

WVC's Physical Therapist Assistant program combines classroom, laboratory and clinical education to prepare students for careers helping patients improve movement, manage pain and regain function.



WVC BASS FISHING QUALIFIES 4 FOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

The Wabash Valley College bass fishing program will be represented by four teams at the 2026 Bassmaster College National Championship in August following a successful 2025-26 season.

The Warrior anglers earned their spots through strong performances throughout the Bassmaster regular season. Teams can qualify for the championship by either finishing in the top 10% of one of the three regular season events or finishing in the top 20 in Team of the Year points, a ranking system based on performance across all three tournaments.

Head Bass Fishing Coach Todd Gill said having four teams qualify for the national championship is a significant accomplishment for the program. With a third of the team earning a spot in the championship and multiple teams qualifying more than once, Gill said the results reflect the consistency and competitiveness of WVC's anglers throughout the season.



ABOVE: Owen Nepple (left) and Eli Jaime (right) celebrate with their catches.

BELOW: Jaime is interviewed at Kissimmee Chain of Lakes.



Eli Jaime and Owen Nepple led the way for WVC with a historic season, finishing fourth overall in the Team of the Year standings, the highest finish in program history. The duo quadruple qualified for the national championship after strong performances throughout the season, including an 11th-place finish at the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes in January, a sixth-place finish at Sam Rayburn in February and a 17th-place finish at Kerr Lake in April.

Gill said Jaime and Nepple's season was a testament to their consistency, noting that finishing inside the top 25 in all three regular season tournaments is an impressive accomplishment against a field of more than 300 teams. Their fourth-place Team of the Year finish marked the highest placement in program history and put them among the top teams competing at the collegiate level.

Hunter Russell and Brogan Gregg also earned a spot in the national championship after a strong season. The pair double qualified after finishing fifth at Sam Rayburn and placing 12th overall in the Team of the Year standings.

The brother-and-sister duo of Brody and Braci Ault also secured their place at the championship after double qualifying with 25th-place finishes at both Sam Rayburn and Kerr Lake.

Grayson Wilson and Jaxon Funneman rounded out WVC's four qualifying teams after finishing 17th overall in the Team of the Year standings.

While the team's success on the water has been a major highlight, Gill said the leadership and character of the student-athletes has been one of the most rewarding parts of coaching the program. He emphasized the importance of teamwork, accountability and the ability of the athletes to support one another both during competition and while traveling for tournaments.

As the team prepares for the National Championship, Gill believes WVC's four qualifying teams have the ability to compete for strong finishes. He said the tournament location and conditions should provide an opportunity for the Warriors to showcase their strengths and potentially earn a spot in the college classic bracket, a pathway that allows collegiate anglers to compete for a chance to represent college fishing at the Bassmaster Classic.

The Bassmaster College National Championship will bring together top collegiate anglers from across the country, with WVC's four teams set to compete in August.

WVC STUDENT-ATHLETES COMBINE FOR 3.17 GPA

Wabash Valley College student-athletes delivered a strong year in the classroom during the 2025-26 academic year.

WVC Athletics combined for a 3.17 department GPA, with five of the college's six athletic teams finishing the year with team GPAs above 3.0.



WABASH VALLEY COLLEGE

2025-26 ATHLETICS REPORT CARD

SOFTBALL	3.58
VOLLEYBALL	3.34
WOMENS SOCCER	3.31
BASEBALL	3.27
MEN'S BASKETBALL	3.24
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL	2.28

WVC ATHLETICS OVERALL 3.17

<https://iecc.edu/wvc>  WabashValleyCollege  @wabashvalleycollege  @wvcwarriors  @wabashvalleycollege  WabashValleyCollege

"I'm proud of the work our student-athletes put in throughout the year," Athletic Director Aaron Biddle said. "They balance a lot between practices, games, travel and their academic responsibilities, and their performance in the classroom says a lot about their commitment and discipline."

The softball team led WVC Athletics with a 3.58 GPA, followed by volleyball with a 3.34 GPA and women's soccer with a 3.31 GPA. Baseball finished with a 3.27 GPA, men's basketball had a 3.24 GPA and women's basketball finished with a 2.28 GPA.

WVC President Dr. Matt Fowler said the academic performance reflects the college's commitment to helping students succeed in every part of their college experience.

"Our student-athletes represent Wabash Valley College in competition, in the classroom and throughout our community," Fowler said. "A 3.17 department GPA is something worth celebrating, and it speaks to the hard work of our students, coaches, faculty and staff. We are proud of the dedication these students show as they work toward their academic and athletic goals."

Biddle said the department's classroom success is an important part of the overall student-athlete experience at WVC.

"We want our student-athletes to compete at a high level, but we also want them to leave Wabash Valley College prepared for what comes next," Biddle said. "Their success in the classroom is a big part of that, and this year's GPA shows they are taking that responsibility seriously."

SPRUANCE TO LEAD WARRIORS BASKETBALL

Wabash Valley has hired John Spruance as their new men's basketball coach. Spruance will join the Warrior family after a stint with the University of Southern Indiana.

Coach Spruance had this to say about Wabash Valley.

"Wabash Valley College has a rich tradition of excellence, and I am incredibly honored to be entrusted with leading one of the premier junior college basketball programs in the country. The history, the passion, and the expectation to compete at the highest level make this a truly special opportunity for my family and me."

"I want to thank President Dr. Matt Fowler, Athletic Director Aaron Biddle, and the entire Wabash Valley administration for their belief in my vision for the program. My family and I are excited to become part of the Mt. Carmel community, and we cannot wait to get to work."

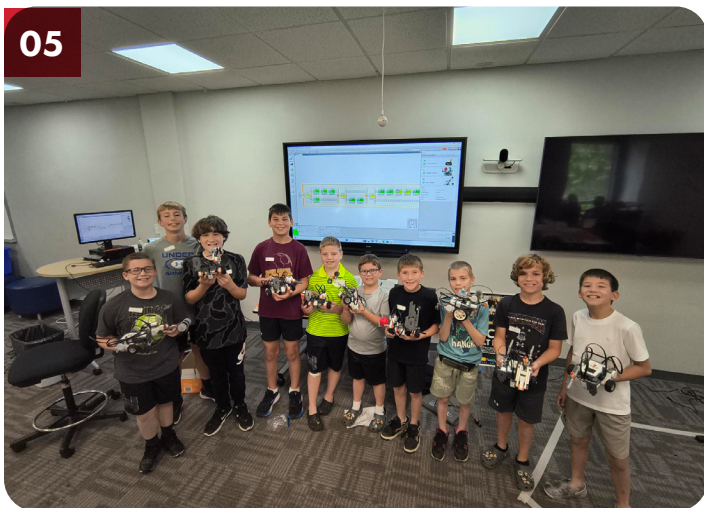
"Throughout my coaching career, I've been fortunate to learn from outstanding coaches and work with exceptional student-athletes at every level. Those experiences have prepared me for this moment, and I'm excited to bring a culture built on accountability, toughness, relationships, and daily improvement to Wabash Valley."

"Our goal is to develop young men who are prepared to succeed both on the court and in life. We will recruit competitors with character, embrace the hard work required to win championships, and create an environment where players can maximize their potential and reach the next level."

Before joining Wabash Valley College, Spruance built an extensive coaching résumé at the University of Southern Indiana, the University of Indianapolis and Lewis University. At Southern Indiana, he helped guide the program through its transition to NCAA Division I competition while serving as recruiting coordinator and lead guard development coach. His teams earned postseason berths, conference honors and national rankings, while his recruiting and player development efforts helped produce numerous all-conference and all-region performers. Spruance previously contributed to successful runs at Indianapolis and Lewis, including conference championships, NCAA Tournament appearances and victories over nationally ranked opponents.

Spruance began his coaching career as Video Coordinator at the University of Hawaii, assisting with scouting, film analysis and opponent preparation. Silver Waves Media named him one of the nation's Top 50 Most Impactful Assistant Coaches in 2020, recognizing a career marked by strong recruiting, player development and relationship-driven leadership. He earned a bachelor's degree in Communication from Hope College and a master's degree in Coaching Education from Ohio University.





01 Campers sharpen their comedy skills during an improv workshop at WVC Theatre Camp.

03 Summer sunshine frames the lake and sculpture on the Wabash Valley College campus.

05 Campers show off the LEGO robots they designed, built and programmed during WVC's Battle Bots camp.

02 Colorful characters gather in the Brubeck Theater before bringing *The Frog Prince* to life.

04 Green lawns, blooming flowers and blue skies brighten a summer day at Wabash Valley College.

06 Musicians cap off Monday Music Camp Workshop Night with a lively community jam session.