

NETWORK



HIGHLIGHTS



LTC students explore college governance and leadership at an IECC Board meeting.



A new \$100,000 scholarship honors Bill Thomas' legacy of service to LTC students.



LTC students spread encouragement to local schoolchildren through High 5 Friday.

MARATHON LEADERSHIP VISITS LTC, SEES FUTURE OF WORKFORCE TRAINING

Lincoln Trail College welcomed members of Marathon Petroleum Corporation's executive leadership team for a firsthand look at the college's new Career and Technology Training Center and a conversation about the future of workforce education.

Marathon President and CEO Maryann Mannen joined other company executives and leaders from the Robinson refinery during the visit, which brought together representatives from Marathon, Lincoln Trail College, Illinois Eastern Community Colleges, the IECC Board of Trustees and the Lincoln Trail College Foundation, along with students, faculty, staff and alumni.

LTC President Tona Ambrose said bringing those groups together while the new facility is taking shape made the visit especially meaningful.

"There is something powerful about bringing industry leaders onto our campus so they can see firsthand what



UPCOMING NOVEMBER EVENTS

- 1** **Treasure Island**
2 p.m., Zwermann Arts Center Theater
- 3** **CAMPUS CLOSED - Election Day**
- 7** **LTC Scholastic Bowl**
All Day, Campus-wide
- 11** **CAMPUS CLOSED - Veterans Day**
- 12** **618 Project Open House**
11-1, The 618/Activity Annex

LTC SPIN
12-6, Statesmen Store Cafe
- 18** **Softball Field Advisory Board Meeting**
12 p.m., Lincoln Room
- 19** **LTC Foundation Meeting**
12 p.m., Lincoln Room
- 25** **Last Day to Withdraw from Courses**
- 26-27** **CAMPUS CLOSED - Thanksgiving Break**

we are building and, more importantly, what we are building for our students and our region,” Ambrose said. “This visit provided an opportunity to talk about our vision for the Career and Technology Training Center, and also opened the door for future conversations about how Lincoln Trail College and Marathon can work together to prepare the next generation of skilled workers.”

Marathon has already helped advance that vision through a \$100,000 Community Investment Grant supporting the Career and Technology Training Center.

Ambrose called the contribution a vote of confidence in the college and the future of workforce development in the region.

“For our students, this investment means access to modern facilities and equipment and an educational experience designed around the skills they will actually use in the workplace,” she said. “It is an investment not only in a beautiful new state-of-the-art building, but in people and in the future of our communities.”

Scheduled to open in fall 2027, the Career and Technology Training Center will become the new home for Lincoln Trail College's Process Technology, Welding and Broadband Telecommunications programs. The facility is being designed to expand opportunities for hands-on education and strengthen connections between classroom instruction and the environments students will encounter in the workforce.

Ambrose said those connections are especially important in these programs.

“There is a difference between knowing something and knowing how to do something,” she said. “We want our students to graduate with both.”

Realistic, hands-on training allows students to work with equipment, troubleshoot problems and practice procedures before entering the workforce, Ambrose said. It also allows them to develop confidence alongside technical skills.

“When they walk into their first job, we want them to feel prepared to contribute, ask good questions, work safely and continue learning,” she said. “That confidence can make a tremendous difference in a student's transition



Lincoln Trail College President Tona Ambrose joins Marathon Petroleum Corporation executives, IECC leaders and Marathon employees for a group photo during their visit to campus.



Marathon Petroleum Corporation CEO Maryann Mannen greets a Lincoln Trail College Process Technology alumnus Cole Weber who now works at Marathon's Robinson Refinery during her visit to campus.

from college to career."

For LTC, the relationship with Marathon extends beyond financial support.

Ambrose said partnerships with employers help the college understand the technical skills, safety culture, work ethic, problem-solving abilities and professionalism students will need when they enter the workforce.

"Our strongest workforce programs are built in partnership with the employers

who ultimately hire our graduates," Ambrose said. "Having that industry perspective helps us make sure we are preparing students for the real world, not simply preparing them to pass a class."

Evidence of that connection was present during the visit. Four recent Lincoln Trail College graduates who have since been hired by Marathon returned to campus and joined the group.

Ambrose said their presence illustrated the pathway LTC hopes to strengthen as the new facility and its programs continue to develop.

"We want our students to be able to walk onto the Lincoln Trail College campus, discover a career they may not have previously considered, receive exceptional hands-on training, connect with industry and leave here with the skills and confidence to build a successful career close to home," she said.

The college also sees opportunities to expand its relationship with Marathon through internships, job shadowing, work-based learning, refinery visits, guest speakers, equipment and other educational experiences.

"I see this as the beginning of a strong and intentional partnership, not the end of a fundraising effort," Ambrose said. "We want to continue listening to Marathon and other regional employers so that our programs remain relevant and responsive to the needs of the workforce."

Ultimately, Ambrose said the partnership reflects a shared investment in students and the communities Lincoln Trail College and Marathon serve.

"Marathon's partnership demonstrates what is possible when education and industry come together around a shared commitment to students and the future of our region," she said. "Our goal is not simply to fill jobs. It is to fulfill the IECC mission by delivering exceptional education and services that improve the lives of our students and strengthen the communities we all call home."

IECC HONORS GOWER WITH CHANCELLOR EMERITUS TITLE



Illinois Eastern Community Colleges has honored former Chancellor Ryan Gower for a decade of leadership and service, conferring upon him the honorary title of chancellor emeritus.

The IECC Board of Trustees approved a resolution recognizing Gower's distinguished service during its Sept. 15 meeting at Lincoln Trail College, where Gower began his IECC career as president in 2016.

Gower served as Lincoln Trail College president from 2016 to 2020 before becoming IECC chancellor in May 2020, a position he held until 2026. The resolution recognized his leadership through a period that included the COVID-19 pandemic, significant organizational change across the district, the advancement of guided pathways and major investments in IECC's colleges and communities.

Current IECC Chancellor Tim Taylor offered a personal perspective on Gower's leadership, recalling their time together as college presidents during the early days of the pandemic.

Taylor described a meeting of southern Illinois college presidents as members of the Great Rivers Athletic Conference wrestled with decisions surrounding athletics. As differing opinions began to raise the temperature in the room, Taylor said Gower helped bring the conversation back to a productive place.

"Ryan became one of those voices of reason," Taylor said. "He didn't need to dominate the conversation. He simply helped regulate the temperature."

That experience helped form a professional relationship that grew over the following years as the two worked together through the Illinois Presidents Council and other efforts across the state. Taylor said they eventually became sounding boards for one another.

"I valued Ryan's judgment and his ability to see beyond the immediate issue," Taylor said, adding that he particularly appreciated Gower's ability to work with people who did not necessarily share his perspective.

Taylor said there was some irony in now succeeding Gower as chancellor after first getting to know him as a fellow college president. He said that relationship gave him an appreciation for the

challenges Gower faced and the decisions he made during his tenure.

“On a personal level, I appreciate the colleague that you’ve been over the past several years,” Taylor told Gower. “I value your friendship, your counsel and the trust we developed along the way.”

Before presenting Gower with a commemorative plaque, Board of Trustees Chairman Gary Carter first recognized Gower’s wife, Tracey, presenting her with flowers and thanking her for the support she provided throughout her husband’s service to IECC.

Carter noted that Gower’s decision to come to Lincoln Trail College meant leaving the University of Illinois and beginning a new chapter in Robinson, first as LTC president and later as chancellor. He thanked Tracey for the sacrifices and support that accompanied those roles.



Turning to Gower, Carter reflected on the changes that took place during his tenure. “You brought to us leadership, you brought to us change, and you gave us a direction that we really needed to go,” Carter said.

Carter acknowledged that change was not always easy and that he and Gower did not always agree, but said their professional relationship ultimately grew into a friendship.

“We haven’t always agreed,” Carter said. “But the best thing about it, at the end of the day, I can call you a friend.”

The resolution highlighted accomplishments throughout Gower’s decade at IECC. At Lincoln Trail College, his tenure included efforts connected to the Crawford County Recreation Center, Theater Renaissance and Lackey Music Hall, Statesmen Park and development of the college’s Career and Technical Training Center.

As chancellor, Gower led IECC through greater integration across Frontier Community College, Lincoln Trail College, Olney Central College and Wabash Valley College. The resolution also recognized his support for guided pathways, his work with donors and community partners and his collaboration with trustees, presidents, faculty, staff and administrators throughout the district.

After the resolution was approved, Gower repeatedly turned the attention away from himself and toward the people with whom he worked.

“Every person sitting here is a part of the change that we pulled together, and I’m incredibly proud of the work that we did together,” Gower said. “It’s work that we did. It’s not work that I did.”

Several IECC students were attending the meeting as part of a class, something Gower said was particularly meaningful as he reflected on his career.

"Students are what it's all about," Gower said. "We don't do the work for salaries. We don't do it for titles. We don't do it to put our names on the outside of buildings. We do it for the students. That's why we do the work we do. That's why we make the hard decisions we do. That's why we have the sleepless nights."

He said those decisions are ultimately about ensuring students continue to have access to a high-quality education for years to come.

Gower also expressed confidence in Taylor and excitement about IECC's future. Although his tenure as chancellor has ended, he said he and his family plan to remain part of the community.

"I want all of you to know I'm going to be your biggest cheerleader and champion," Gower said. "We're still in the community. We don't intend to go anywhere. We love it here in southern Illinois."

The board's resolution formally expressed its gratitude to Gower for his "distinguished leadership, dedication to students, commitment to community, and 10 years of service" and conferred the honorary chancellor emeritus title in recognition of his lasting contributions to IECC.

FYE STUDENTS GET FIRSTHAND LOOK AT COLLEGE GOVERNANCE

Lincoln Trail College students got a firsthand lesson in leadership, citizenship and college governance when members of First Year Experience classes taught by Tona Ambrose, Connor York, Amie Mayhall, Austin Alexander and Monte Newlin attended the September meeting of the Illinois Eastern Community Colleges Board of Trustees.

For Ambrose, who serves as both LTC President and an FYE instructor, attending a board meeting has become an annual part of the course. She said the experience helps students understand that their education extends beyond what happens in their classrooms.



"I invite my First Year Experience students to attend an IECC Board of Trustees meeting every year because I want them to understand that their college experience is part of something much bigger than what happens inside the classroom," Ambrose said.

The FYE course is designed to help students develop skills they can use both in college and beyond. Among the topics Ambrose explores with her students are leadership, citizenship and the importance of becoming informed and engaged members of their communities.

Attending a Board of Trustees meeting provides a real-world connection to those lessons.

"Our Board makes decisions that directly impact them — our students, faculty, staff and communities



— and I want students to be exposed to that process in person,” Ambrose said. “Encouraging participation in a Board meeting is one relevant way we can connect what students are learning in the classroom to the real world.”

During the meeting, students also had an opportunity to introduce themselves to trustees and share where they were from. The class included students from the local area as well as other states and countries.

Ambrose said those introductions were meaningful for both the students and the trustees.

“I also know that the trustees appreciate being able to see and meet the students who they work hard to serve,” she said.

Beyond simply observing the meeting, Ambrose wanted students to see what goes into the decisions that affect their college experience.

“I wanted students to see that decisions at a community college don’t just happen, they involve discussion, questions, research, collaboration and ultimately a vote by the Board,” she said.

The meeting also gave students a closer look at the roles trustees play in representing IECC’s colleges and communities, including the district’s student trustee.

That connection is particularly timely for Lincoln Trail College. LTC students will elect the next student trustee, who will begin serving on the IECC Board in April.

Ambrose said seeing a student seated alongside the other trustees can help students better understand both the opportunity and responsibility associated with the position.

“The student trustee isn’t simply a representative who attends meetings, the position provides an important student perspective at the highest level of our college district,” she said.

She hopes the experience may even encourage some students to consider seeking the position themselves.

“Because the trustee for next year will be an LTC student, this will make more sense now when or if they consider running for this seat,” Ambrose said.

Ultimately, Ambrose hopes her students left the meeting with a broader understanding of what it means to participate in their college and community, and the realization that they do not have to wait until sometime in the future to become involved.

“I hope they walked away understanding that they can have a voice and that being engaged matters,” Ambrose said. “Being informed, asking questions, showing up and understanding how decisions are made are all important parts of being an engaged citizen.”

For Ambrose, that may be the most important lesson of all.

“I also hope they realized that they don’t have to wait until they graduate to make a difference,” she said. “They can be involved and have an impact right now.”

BILL THOMAS SCHOLARSHIP WILL CARRY LEGACY OF SERVICE FORWARD AT LTC



Representatives from First Robinson Savings Bank, the Thomas family and Lincoln Trail College Foundation celebrate the establishment of the \$100,000 Bill Thomas Scholarship. Pictured from left are Mark Hill, Harlei Payne, Leslee Thomas, Kent Thomas, Dan McDonald, Ashley Thompson and Bill Sandiford.

For more than four decades, Bill Thomas gave his time, expertise and support to Lincoln Trail College. A new scholarship bearing his name will ensure that commitment continues benefiting LTC students for generations to come.

The Bill Thomas Scholarship was established with a \$50,000 gift from the Thomas family following Thomas' death earlier this year. The Lincoln Trail College Foundation and First Robinson Savings Bank each contributed an additional \$25,000, creating a \$100,000 fund that will begin providing scholarships in fall 2027.

For LTC Foundation Executive Director Bill Sandiford, the scholarship is a fitting tribute to someone who did much more than simply hold a seat on the Foundation Board.

"On any board or committee there are those that are engaged and those that are committed. Bill was committed," Sandiford said. "He volunteered time, money and resources as a local attorney, often drafting documents or doing research on matters and never charged the Foundation for any of it."

Thomas served as an active Foundation board member for more than 40 years. Sandiford said Thomas also served for decades on the board of First Robinson Savings Bank, making the partnership among his family, the Foundation and the bank a natural way to honor his legacy.

Thomas' son, Kent Thomas, said his father's dedication to the Foundation reflected the importance he placed on both education and the community he chose to call home.

"Lincoln Trail has always been incredibly important to him. Education's always been important to him," Thomas said.

That connection was especially meaningful because Bill Thomas made Robinson his home rather than growing up in the community. Kent Thomas said both of his parents were transplants who developed deep roots in the area, something he hopes the scholarship might help others do as well.

He said many scholarships naturally focus on Crawford County graduates, but he hopes the



Bill Thomas Scholarship can also create opportunities for students who come to Lincoln Trail College from elsewhere and perhaps ultimately make the area their home.

"Hopefully, someone who accepts the scholarship, year in and year out, will move here, establish roots here and make this the place their family calls home," Thomas said.

The scholarship was created with flexibility in mind. It is not restricted to a specific academic program or traditional use. The annual award will vary based on available earnings, with only income generated by the fund used for scholarships so the principal can remain intact.

Sandiford said that flexibility reflects Thomas' personality.

"Bill lived large," Sandiford said. "There was no 'dipping his toes in the water to check the temperature.' He always jumped from the highest diving board. He was always looking to improve the life experience of others."

Sandiford said allowing future scholarship committees flexibility in how the award is used will help carry that same spirit forward.

First Robinson Savings Bank President and CEO Mark Hill said Thomas was also an important figure at the bank, serving on its board of directors for many years.

When the bank learned of the opportunity to help establish a scholarship in Thomas' memory, Hill said participating was an easy decision.

"We wanted to be involved in it. We wanted to do something that was in his name," Hill said. "So we were excited to partner with them to do that."

Hill said he hopes the scholarship will keep Thomas' memory and commitment to his community alive for future generations of students.

He said Thomas demonstrated throughout his life an aptitude for giving back, and the scholarship creates an opportunity for future students to learn about both the person whose name it carries and the example he set.

For the Foundation, preserving the principal of the fund means Thomas' influence at Lincoln Trail College can continue long after those who worked alongside him are gone.

"Bill left a 40-year impact on our board," Sandiford said. "It would be a shame to not carry his name and legacy on for at least 40 more years. Again, Bill was never simply involved, but he was always committed."

Sandiford hopes the scholarship does more than provide financial assistance. He hopes Thomas' example encourages others to consider how they, too, can make a difference.

"No gift of time or money is too small," Sandiford said. "It is easier to write a check than it is to attend 40 years' worth of meetings. But the impact they both make is substantial."

His challenge to others is simple.

"Be like Bill and get committed to something."

THE 618 PROJECT OPEN HOUSE SET FOR NOVEMBER 12

Lincoln Trail College and the Crawford County Development Association will invite the community to explore a new space built around connection, collaboration and opportunity during an open house for The 618 Project.

The open house will be held Nov. 12 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Lincoln Trail College. Visitors will have an opportunity to tour The 618, learn more about how the space can be used and enjoy a light lunch.

The 618 brings together entrepreneurs, small businesses, students and community members in a space designed to support business development, workforce development and collaboration. The facility includes flexible workspaces, private offices, co-working areas and meeting spaces.



Lincoln Trail College President Tona Ambrose said the vision for The 618 goes well beyond providing a place to work.

"I envision The 618 being a place that feels active every day. A place where you might see a student working alongside an entrepreneur, a small business owner meeting with a consultant, an employer meeting with a potential employee, or a community member attending a workshop," Ambrose said.

The project expands the college's role as a place where education, entrepreneurship and workforce development can intersect. Ambrose said The 618 can provide students and community members opportunities to make connections that might otherwise be difficult to find in a rural area.

The 618 is also the new home of the Crawford County Development Association, further connecting the college with local economic development efforts. The space will provide a gathering place for CEO and Leadership Crawford County participants and will host workshops and other programming through the Illinois Eastern Community Colleges Small Business Development Center.

CCDA Executive Director Resa Shaner said the project is intended to provide entrepreneurs and business owners with both a place to work and access to resources that can help them move their ideas forward.

"This space will function as a true community hub for business development," Shaner said. "The goal is to reduce the barriers that often keep great ideas from turning into viable businesses."

For Ambrose, one of the project's greatest strengths is its ability to bring together people who may have different needs but can benefit from being connected to one another.

"Ultimately, I want The 618 to become a place on campus where people come with an idea and leave with a connection, a resource, a new skill, a business plan, or maybe even the beginning of a new business," Ambrose said.

The Nov. 12 open house will give community members their first opportunity to take a closer look at those possibilities. Visitors can tour the facility, see its different work and meeting areas and learn more about the organizations and resources available through The 618.

Those planning to attend are encouraged to RSVP by emailing Heather Watts at wattsh@iecc.edu.

TRICK OR TREAT AT THE TRAIL RETURNS TO LTC OCTOBER 22



Halloween fun is returning to Lincoln Trail College as the college prepares to welcome families for its annual Trick or Treat at the Trail on Thursday, Oct. 22, from 4-6 p.m.

The popular community tradition brings thousands of visitors to campus each year for an evening of candy, costumes and Halloween fun. With more than 2,000 people typically attending, Trick or Treat at the Trail has become one of the area's most anticipated family-friendly fall events.

Unlike traditional neighborhood trick-or-treating, the event takes place indoors, allowing families to enjoy the festivities regardless of the weather. Visitors will make their way through several campus buildings, where they will discover decorated stations, creative costumes and plenty of treats.

Lincoln Trail College student clubs, organizations, athletic teams, faculty and staff help bring the event to life each year. Local businesses and community organizations also participate, transforming their stations into festive displays and helping create a memorable experience for children and their families.

"Trick or Treat at the Trail is one of those events that reminds us how special our community is," said Lincoln Trail College President Tona Ambrose. "We love opening our doors and welcoming hundreds of families to campus for an evening of fun. Our students and employees put so much creativity and enthusiasm into making this event memorable, and it's wonderful to see our community partners join us in making it happen."

Beyond the candy, Trick or Treat at the Trail provides an opportunity for families to explore the Lincoln Trail College campus and connect with the students and employees who make up the LTC community.

With thousands of visitors expected, organizers encourage families to use caution when arriving and traveling between buildings. Motorists should drive slowly, remain alert for pedestrians and avoid parking on the grass.

Local businesses and organizations interested in hosting a station at Trick or Treat at the Trail are encouraged to contact Lincoln Trail College at 618-544-8657.

TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE FOR LTC'S "TREASURE ISLAND"

Tickets are now available for Lincoln Trail College's upcoming production of *Treasure Island*, a swashbuckling adventure filled with pirates, treasure maps, mutiny and high-seas intrigue.

Performances are scheduled for 7 p.m. Oct. 29 and 30 and 2 p.m. Oct. 31 and Nov. 1.

Adapted by Joseph George Caruso and directed by Dr. Stewart Cramer, the production brings Robert Louis Stevenson's classic story to the Lincoln Trail College stage.

First published as a novel in 1883, *Treasure Island* follows young Jim Hawkins after he comes into possession of a map showing the location of buried treasure once belonging to the notorious pirate Captain Flint. Jim joins an expedition to find the treasure, but the voyage quickly becomes dangerous when it is revealed that several members of the crew are pirates loyal to Long John Silver and planning a mutiny.

The adventure leads Jim and his companions to a mysterious island, where they face betrayal, battles and a race to reach the treasure before Silver and his men.

"This is the kind of story that is especially fun to experience live on stage," Cramer said.

"There's action, comedy, suspense and a great group of characters, and our cast has really embraced the spirit of the adventure. We're looking forward to welcoming audiences to Lincoln Trail College and taking them along for the journey."

Stevenson's story helped shape many of the images now associated with pirate adventures, including treasure maps marked with an "X," one-legged pirates and parrots perched on sailors' shoulders.

Lincoln Trail College's production features a large cast of students and community members bringing the familiar characters and fast-paced story to life.

Tickets can be purchased online at <https://cur8.com/17707/project/141785>.



LTC STUDENTS SPREAD ENCOURAGEMENT



Lincoln Trail College students helped children start their school day with high fives and encouragement during the college's first High 5 Friday visit at New Hebron Christian School.

The visit launched LTC's participation in an initiative taking place at each of Illinois Eastern Community Colleges' four campuses. Through High 5 Friday, college students travel to local schools to greet children as they arrive, bringing energy and a welcoming presence to their morning routine.

"Sometimes something as simple as a high five can help a child feel noticed and encouraged," said Carrie Halbert, IECC's director of student engagement and recruitment. "We want students to begin their day knowing there are people in their community cheering them on."

Halbert organized the event, while Jessica Daugherty, enrollment management coordinator at LTC, helped coordinate the college students' participation.

This is the first year LTC has participated in High 5 Friday. Along with welcoming children to school, the initiative gives college students an opportunity to serve their communities and build connections with younger students.

"Our students have an opportunity to make a positive impression simply by showing up and offering encouragement," Daugherty said. "It's a fun way for them to give back to the community and help younger students feel excited about the day ahead."

New Hebron Christian School was the first stop on LTC's schedule. The college plans to visit Oblong Grade School on Oct. 23, with future visits planned for schools in Hutsonville, Palestine and Robinson.

"Each of our campuses has strong ties to the communities it serves," Halbert said. "High 5 Friday gives us another way to strengthen those relationships, support our local schools and share some encouragement."



NOVEMBER ATHLETIC EVENTS

Men's Basketball

3	Triton College	6:00
6	Southeastern CC (at Moberly Classic)	5:00
7	Link Year Prep (at Moberly Classic)	2:00
14	Brescia JV	3:00
16	Millikin JV	7:00
18	Saint Mary-of-the-Woods JV	TBA
21	at Danville Area Community College	7:00
27	at Southeastern CC (Broadway Classic)	7:00
28	Ellsworth CC (Broadway Classic at SCC)	3:00

Women's Basketball

2	John Wood Community College	5:00
7	at Volunteer State Community College	5:00
10	Brescia JV	5:00
13	at John Wood CC (Town & Country Classic)	7:30
14	at Danville Area CC (Town & Country Classic)	1:00
18	at Brescia JV	5:00
21	at Danville Area Community College	1:00
24	Kaskaskia College	5:00
27	at Moberly Area CC (MACC Classic)	5:00
28	at Mineral Area College (MACC Classic)	1:00

Watch LTC home games live on
ltcathletics.com

LTC SOFTBALL TO HOST FALL SHOWCASE, HIGHLIGHT FUTURE FIELD PROJECT



Lincoln Trail College softball will welcome travel softball teams from Illinois and Indiana to campus Oct. 18 for a round-robin event designed to showcase prospective student-athletes, promote the Lady Statesmen program and share plans for a new softball field.

The event will feature travel teams from the Champaign and Mattoon areas of Illinois, along with teams from southern Indiana and other parts of the state. Participating teams will compete in a series of games, giving LTC head softball coach Eva Richardson an opportunity to evaluate prospective recruits while introducing them to the college.

Richardson said the event is an important opportunity to build relationships with young athletes and increase awareness of the program.

"I'm excited to get kids on campus," Richardson said. "I get to talk to them. I'm going to talk with each of the teams."

By bringing multiple travel teams together for a day of competition, Richardson will have an opportunity to see prospective student-athletes in game situations while making personal connections with players who could become future Lady Statesmen. The event also gives participants a chance to become familiar with Lincoln Trail College and its softball program.

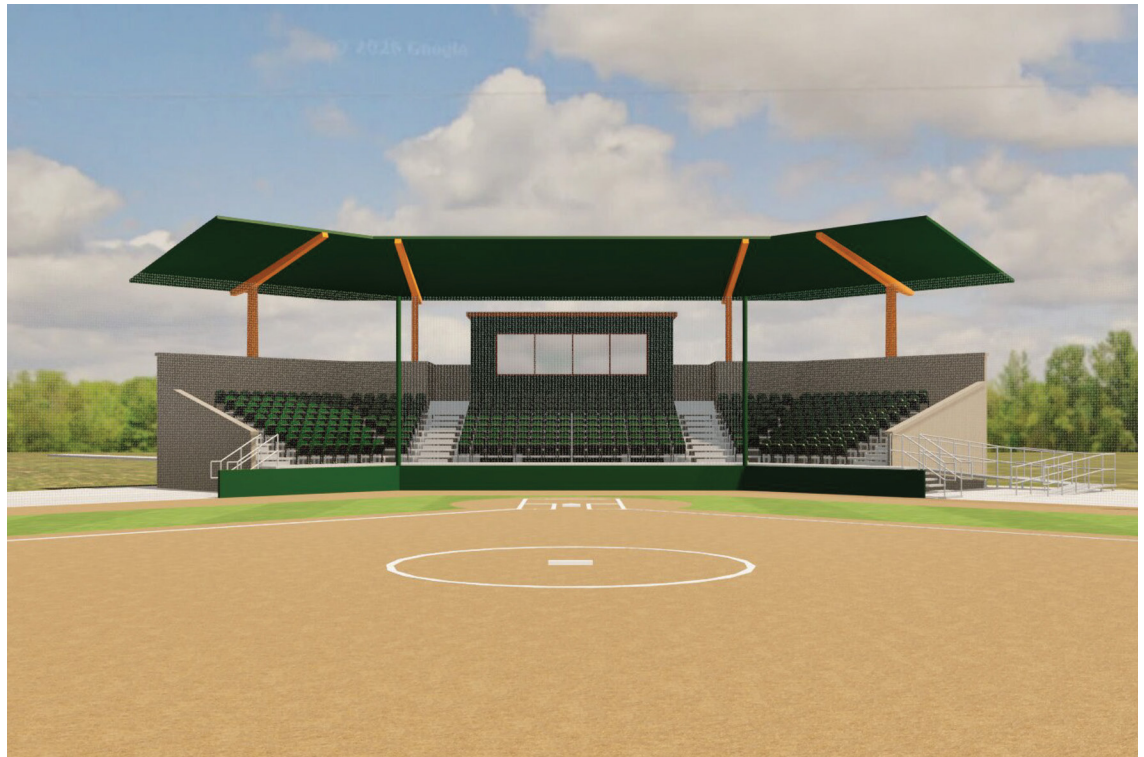
Richardson said increasing the program's visibility is one of her primary goals for the event. Bringing teams from across the region to LTC allows her to introduce the college to athletes who might not otherwise have considered continuing their playing careers in Robinson.

In addition to providing a recruiting opportunity, the event will serve as a fundraiser for LTC softball through team entry fees.

Visitors will also have an opportunity to learn about plans for a new softball field at Lincoln Trail College, which Richardson

said is expected to arrive in 2028.

An informational display will showcase the proposed facility, including its planned location, design and anticipated cost. Attendees will be able to see the vision for the project and learn more about what the new field will mean for the future of the program. Donations toward the field project will also be accepted during the event.



The field project represents another part of Richardson's efforts to build the program's identity and generate excitement about its future. By sharing plans for the facility with visiting teams and their families, she hopes to give prospective recruits a clearer picture of the opportunities that could await them at LTC.

Richardson said the showcase provides an opportunity to generate excitement about the facility while demonstrating the direction she wants to take the Lady Statesmen program.

"I hope the people are going to take away what I'm trying to do here at Lincoln Trail College," Richardson said. "We're here to win, and we're going to be a winning program."

While the new facility represents an important step forward, Richardson said her greatest excitement comes from the culture she is working to establish within the program.

"What excites me the most about the future of Lincoln Trail softball is the field, but mainly the culture we're building here," Richardson said. "A culture of toughness, hard work, respect, accountability, family."

Richardson said she is focused on bringing in student-athletes who embrace those values, want to compete at a high level and are committed to improving their skills as they prepare for the next stage of their athletic careers.

The Oct. 18 event will offer an early look at that vision, connecting prospective Lady Statesmen with the program while giving the community an opportunity to see what lies ahead for LTC softball.

LTC IN PICTURES



Lincoln Trail College student Jeykol Mosquera captures the lunar eclipse with his phone, taking advantage of a rare celestial event to photograph the nighttime sky overhead.



Students in Carrie Brown's Environmental Biology class explore Miller Lake, identifying plants, insects and animals while studying the local ecosystem.



Dr. Phil Thorsen guides students through an interactive classroom exercise mapping neurons, helping them visualize how nerve cells communicate within the nervous system.



Cast members of Lincoln Trail College's Treasure Island joined students and staff at the Heath Harvest Festival Parade, celebrating community spirit and promoting their upcoming production.



LTC students practice introductions during a First Year Experience class in The Landing, building communication skills, confidence and connections with their fellow classmates.



LTC student Devon Cheesman plays guitar at the new Socrates Rock Garden. Look for a full story about the garden next month.



Construction continues on Lincoln Trail College's Career and Technology Training Center, with structural steel and exterior walls taking shape as the project moves toward completion.



LTC students embraced the fall spirit during Student Senate's Pumpkins & Pizza event, enjoying an evening of pumpkin painting, food, friendship and fun.