

OLNEY CENTRAL COLLEGE KNIGHTLINE



SEPTEMBER 2025

CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

17 — Constitution
Observance Day, Classes
in Session

19 — The Next Generation
Leahy, Southeastern Illinois
Concert Association, Dr.
John D. Stull Performing Arts
Center, 7 p.m.

22-23 — Auditions for The
OCC Theater's Production of
The Play That Goes Wrong,
6 p.m.

26 — Blue Preview Day

OCTOBER

4 — HealthFest, OCC Gym,
7:30 a.m.

10 — IECC District Faculty/
Staff Professional Develop-
ment Day

11 — OCC Theater's 50-
year Salute to Hamilton, Dr.
John D. Stull Performing Arts
Center, 7 p.m.

College Visits

Tables will be located in
the hallway outside Student
Services.

September 11 & 24 —
University of Southern Indi-
ana Representative Simone
Payne will be here from 10
a.m. to 1 p.m.



International artist and OCC alum Rudy Kistler gifted his painting *Metamorphosis* to the college. The work is on display in the Anderson Library Gallery.

International artist and OCC alum Rudy Kistler gifts painting to college

International artist and Olney Central College alum Rudy Kistler has presented the college with a remarkable gift — his large-scale abstract triptych *Metamorphosis*.

The 6- x 9-foot oil painting, completed in 1999, is now on display in the Anderson Library Gallery.

"It was the last large-scale abstract painting I created before switching to the loose realist style that I continue to work in to this day," Kistler said. "The indirect painting process involved in creating it harks back to the origins of European oil painting in the 15th Century. It exemplifies an example of the range of possibilities that oil painting offers as a medium."

Learning Commons Director Chad Groves said the college is honored to receive the donation.

"OCC is extremely excited and grateful to have received such a generous gift," Groves said. "I think it fits the space perfectly. It will serve not only as just a cool piece, but as inspiration for the next generation of aspiring artists."

Kistler said he is thrilled to have the painting on long-term display at the college.

"I love the idea that this painting is hanging here and that it might inspire some student to try something in the arts," he said.

The donation came after Kistler's recent exhibit, *The Long Road Home*, which was held on Aug. 22 in the Anderson Library Gallery. The event drew an estimated 75 to 100 visitors.

"It was great to host such an accomplished artist and OCC alum in our gallery," Groves said.

At right, Artist Rudy Kistler speaks with guests during his recent exhibit at OCC.



"Rudy was very appreciative of the opportunity and pleased with the turnout. Hosting his exhibit also helped inspire conversations about using the gallery for more events like this in the future."

Kistler said he was equally moved by the response to his work.

"My still life paintings were well received, but there was a particularly strong connection to my landscapes," he said. "One painting, *Wood River*, could have sold three or four times if I had multiples of it. Several people told me they come out every time I exhibit, and that inspires me to keep returning to Olney to create and share new work."

Of the 32 works on display, 29 were painted in July and depicted landscapes around Olney.

"Every day I would get up with the sunrise and drive through the countryside," Kistler said. "I had about a two-and-a-half-hour window when the lighting was perfect. It was a fantastic opportunity."

Returning to OCC holds special meaning for Kistler, who graduated from East Richland High School before enrolling at the college.

"It was the best place I could go at that time," he said. "It was close to home, my friends were going here, and it gave me the chance to explore what I wanted to study and who I wanted to be."

Kistler admits he struggled at first, unsure of his path.

"I remember in a physics class there were questions that I found so practical they sparked my learning," he said. "That was the beginning of my real interest in education."

While art wasn't his initial goal, it eventually became his calling.

"I was taking a lot of different classes, but ultimately art started to take more and more of my interest," he said.

Kistler graduated from OCC in 1998 and went on to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2001. That degree opened doors he hadn't expected.

"A lot of my friends were getting jobs in cafes and I wanted to see if I could take my arts degree and do something with it," Kistler said. "I remember seeing an ad in the newspaper that if you had a four-year degree, you could teach English in Tokyo. I thought that sounded like a real adventure. I went to the interview and got hired."

Kistler soon found himself living and working in Japan. He spent three years teaching, painting and becoming fluent in Japanese before earning an Artist Visa to stay another year. He traveled the country living simply and painting outdoors. He spent the winter working for room and board on a northern horse farm.

"After my time in Japan, I worked for a company where we had a company apartment and all of my flatmates were from Australia," he said. "They really peaked my interest in Australia as a place to explore and possibly live so I applied to do my grad school at the National Art School in Sydney."

His studies there focused on en plein air painting — creating art in public spaces where he could engage with audiences as he worked. He earned his MFA in 2007 and later became a dual citizen of both the U.S. and Australia.



Following his graduate studies, Kistler began exhibiting his oil paintings in galleries in Sydney. In 2009, the global financial crisis led to galleries closing and Kistler found new opportunities.

"About this time the street art movement was really heating up around the world — big murals, 3D murals were popular and I had an agent that represented me and sent me around the world creating murals," he said. "I think one of the highlights culminated in 2015 when I was sent to represent Australia in the World 3D Art Championship in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. The grand prize was a half-million dollars. I didn't win it, but I had a lot of fun, and I worked with four other artists from around the world. Top-tier artists that I still keep in contact with on social media and it was definitely a highlight of my career."

The art world shifted again with Covid in 2019.

"It sort of shut down the mural side of my artwork and the traveling so even though I had a good 15-year run of going to places like Singapore, Kuwait and Japan and creating murals in Australia and America, that sort of came to an end," Kistler said.

He has since returned to oil painting, bringing him back to where his career began. His recent exhibit at OCC felt like a "full circle" moment.

"I don't think I would have been as successful if I had gone straight to a large university," Kistler said reflecting on his time at OCC. "Education is one of the best investments you can make — not just for knowledge, but for learning how to learn. OCC gave me that beginning. I had no idea the twists and turns my life would take, but the foundation I built here helped prepare me for all of it."

To see more of Kistler's work, follow him on [Instagram](#) or explore his tutorials on YouTube.





Weeks of Welcome at OCC included Club Rush, which gives students an opportunity to learn more about college organizations and to get involved in campus life.

Weeks of Welcome engage students in campus life



WOW! events like the Wiffle Ball game provide students the opportunity to celebrate.

Olney Central College students launched the fall semester by engaging in a variety of activities during OCC's annual Weeks of Welcome (WOW!).

The events are designed to help students connect with one another, explore campus resources and feel at home as they begin a new academic year.

This year's WOW! featured a full calendar of activities, from fun competitions to casual gatherings. Student favorites included the free cookout hosted by Coach Clint Burris and the Lady Knights, the First 10-Day Duck Hunt, TRIO SSS's Donut Stress event and a lively Wiffle Ball game with the Lady Knights softball team.

Learning Commons Director Chad Groves praised the turnout and spirit of the events, noting the positive impact on campus life.

"The Weeks of Welcome events were great," he said. "We had good student engagement in every event on the calendar."

Groves is already looking ahead to next year's WOW!

"We will take what we learned from this year to work toward creating an even better Weeks of Welcome next fall," he said. "I want to give a special thank you to everyone involved — faculty, staff and students. I think WOW! really helped get the year off to a great start."

At right, students enjoy the free cookout hosted by OCC Lady Knights Basketball. Below left, the Student, Faculty and Staff Ping Pong Tournament was a big hit, with Nathan Legg crowned the champion. Below right, students pick up donuts while learning more about TRIO Student Support Services. At bottom left, OCC student Kristine Lisy gives a thought-provoking presentation on Diversity and Inclusion. Bottom right, OCC alum and former Blue Knights Basketball player Mark Richardson shares his path from the court to his career as a wealth strategist at TrustBank and his service on the OCC Foundation Executive Board.





OCC Nursing and Radiography Programs celebrate 100 percent pass rates for 2025

Olney Central College is celebrating big wins in healthcare education.

The 2025 Nursing Program graduates achieved a 100 percent pass rate on the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX), far surpassing the national average of 87 percent. The Radiography Program also recorded a 100 percent registry pass rate for its 2025 cohort, along with a 100 percent employment rate for graduates.

As a whole, Illinois Eastern Community Colleges attained its highest-ever district-wide pass rate with, IECC nursing students achieving a 98 percent NCLEX pass rate across all campuses. Frontier Community College recorded a 94 percent pass rate, while Lincoln Trail College, Olney Central College and Wabash Valley College each posted a perfect 100 percent.

"Our commitment to a student-centered environment has guided every decision within our nursing program," said Dr. Alani Frederick, IECC Dean of Health Professions. "We continually evaluate our curriculum, teaching methods, and clinical experiences to ensure students have the best chance to obtain their RN license. The results speak for themselves."

Frederick, who is serving as Nursing Department Head at Olney Central College, notes that this success reflects the strength of both OCC's students and the faculty who support them.

"The 100 percent pass rate at OCC emphasizes the high commitment from both the students and faculty," she said. "In our collaborative education environment, both students and faculty work together to ensure success."

Frederick emphasizes that the program's accomplishments have far-reaching affects.

"The success impacts our local communities by ensuring that our graduates are workforce ready and competent to take a leading role in healthcare," she said. "This will allow our local hospitals to be staffed by nurses who are a part of their community and committed to making the area healthier."

With such outstanding results, OCC is a natural choice for students wishing to prepare for careers in the healthcare fields.

"This will allow our students and future cohorts to be able to have confidence in the quality of education available

in our area," she added.

Frederick also praised the Radiography Program, noting how the curriculum and faculty support prepare students for immediate success in the workforce.

"Radiography is an incredibly in-demand program at OCC, and for a great reason," she said. "Our students learn from faculty and local clinicians in a model that ensures they can easily earn their license. These results show our students are workforce-ready at graduation."

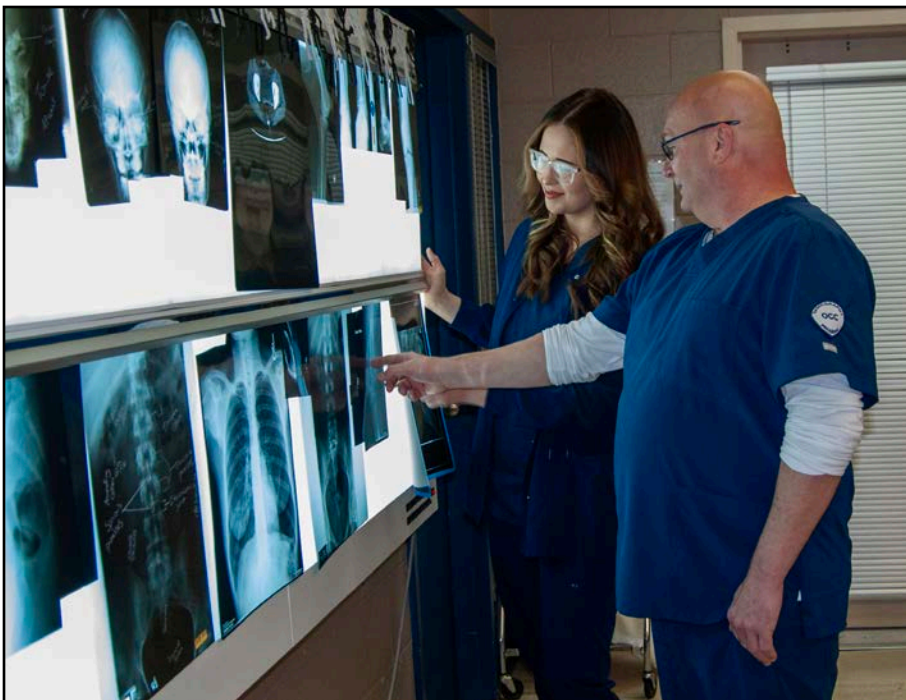
The Radiography Program's perfect pass rate is a point of pride for Radiography Program Director Lisa Rauch, highlighting the program's reputation for excellence and its impact on graduates' futures.

"I am incredibly proud of the 2025 IECC-OCC Radiography Program cohort for achieving a 100 percent pass rate on the ARRT registry exam," she said. "This accomplishment reflects not only the hard work and dedication of our students, but also the commitment of our faculty to delivering high-quality education and clinical preparation. It highlights the strength of our program in preparing graduates who are ready to enter the profession with confidence and skill."

The celebration is shared by Radiography Program Clinical Coordinator Brittany Ochs, who has guided students closely throughout their training.

"As someone who has watched these dedicated individuals work tirelessly through their studies, seeing every single one of them succeed fills our hearts with joy," she said. "This incredible milestone shows us that we're not just teaching radiography; we're nurturing confident, competent professionals who are ready to make a real impact in their careers from day one. It's about the dreams and futures of our students, and it reminds me that our Radiography Program is truly making a difference in their lives. We're not just educators here — we're part of their journey, and moments like this remind me why I love what we do."

Applications for OCC's Nursing and Radiography programs will open this fall for a Fall 2026 start.



OCC Baseball Golf Outing Oct. 17

The OCC Blue Knights Baseball team invites you to grab your clubs and enjoy a fun-filled day at its Golf Outing on Oct. 17 at the Richland Golf Club.

This annual event promises a great day of golf, food and camaraderie — all in support of the Blue Knights.

Funds raised will directly benefit the OCC Baseball program, helping provide student-athletes with the resources they need to succeed on and off the field.

Sponsorship opportunities are available for individuals and businesses looking to show their support.

To register or become a sponsor, contact: Head Coach Darrell Handelsman at 910-964-1979, or Recruiting Coordinator Matt McLaren at 317-796-0622.

Support the Art Club at OAC Fall Festival

The OCC Art Club will take part in the Olney Arts Council's Fall Festival on Sept. 27.

Students will be selling artwork and baked goods, as well as offering face painting and henna tattoos.

The club will also host the "Little Picassos" children's area, where kids can explore arts and crafts and enjoy face painting.

SNA collecting items for Olney firefighters

The OCC Student Nurses Association is collecting donations of water and Gatorade for the Olney Fire Department.

Items will be accepted now through Sept. 22 and may be dropped off in Wattleworth Hall Room 228A.