





Several years ago, with input from a wide range of stakeholders, Ozarks Tech developed a facilities master plan for the Springfield campus. To achieve our vision of providing the best support imaginable for our students, part of this plan was to construct a state-of-the-art student union that could be the center of student life and amenities, as well as a place for workforce development. Imagine a facility featuring everything students need to be successful – including a tutoring center, library, mental health and wellness support – all combined with beautiful spaces that allow the Springfield business community to host trainings, seminars and retreats.

It was a big dream. It would require big support. But as the saying goes: If you can dream it, you can do it.

Fast-forward six years, and we're now seeing this facility – the last piece of that master plan – come to life. In September, we held a groundbreaking for the future Michael L. Parson Student Union. As college and community leaders spoke, one theme became clear: these big dreams can become reality when you are working together. It's something we've long known to be true about the Springfield region, and Ozarks Tech is a better institution because it is anchored in such a collaborative city.

What's true of our physical growth is, of course, also true in academics. In this edition of the Annual Report, you'll read inspiring stories about students, faculty and staff across our entire college system. From our growing agricultural programs at the Richwood Valley campus and our exclusive RN program at Table Rock to the popular Electrical Distribution Systems program in Lebanon, we have a footprint in the Ozarks that makes me incredibly proud.

Throughout my 18 years at Ozarks Tech and the transformations we've seen with the college as well as higher education nationwide, what I value most is that we have never shied away from big thinking, and we've made our dreams actionable by working together.

I hope you enjoy reading about the impressive things happening at Ozarks Tech. Whether you or your loved ones are interested in furthering your education or you simply want to be part of our impact, our doors are always open to make your big dreams happen, as well.

Sincerely,

Dr. Hal L. Higdon,

Chancellor, Ozarks Technical Community College

**MISSION** 

STATEMENT

The college mission is to provide accessible, high quality and affordable learning





NUMBERS HEALTH SCIENCES

Enrollment in health sciences programs at Ozarks Tech has

**GROWN** MORE \ **THAN** 

over the past two years (fall 2022 to fall 2024)

2,000+

students enroll annually in health sciences programs at Ozarks Tech

MORE THAN health sciences degrees and certificates are awarded each year at Ozarks Tech, the most of any community college in Missouri (Source: IPEDS)

health sciences students at Ozarks Tech are receiving Pell Grants

**OVER 50%** 

of health sciences students at Ozarks Tech are first generation college students

**OVER 70%** 

of health sciences students at Ozarks Tech are employed while taking classes

> largest health science programs at Ozarks Tech (for fall 2024) are:

- Biological Clinical Science
  - Practical Nursing (LPN)
- Health Information Technology
- Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN)
  - Coding Specialist
  - Occupational Therapy Assistant
    - Paramedicine
    - Dental Assisting
    - Dental Hygiene
    - Respiratory Therapy







#### **JANUARY 2** O

# **Construction begins on Technical Training Center at Richwood Valley Campus**

Ozarks Tech broke ground on the new Technical Training Center building at the Richwood Valley Campus. The new 19,600-square-foot building will provide additional classroom space for the Agriculture Program, which has experienced rapid growth since moving to the Richwood Valley campus in 2019. Plus, the building will furnish a dedicated classroom and training space for the Electrical Distribution Systems (lineworker) Program for the first time since it debuted at Richwood Valley in 2021. In addition to the classroom and laboratory space, the new building will also house the program's equipment and tools. The total project cost is \$5 million. Ozarks Tech plans to have the facility available for classes by August 2025.

## JANUARY 26 ○ Barbieland at Ozarks Tech

It was a doll-ightful evening when the Office of Student Engagement in partnership with Women in Leadership hosted Barbieland. A record number of participants enjoyed a showing of the Barbie movie in the Plaster Manufacturing Center. This fun student event featured giveaways, a photo booth, bingo, mocktails and even a Barbie dreamhouse build as well as 3D printed Barbie shoes.



#### **FEBRUARY 9** O

# Ozarks Tech offers short-term manufacturing and welding courses

Ozarks Tech announced it will offer short-term manufacturing and welding courses that can be completed in 10 weeks. The classes prepare students for entry-level positions in their chosen fields. Students earn college credit, which they can apply to an Ozarks Tech certificate or degree. Qualified individuals may use financial aid such as Pell Grants or the Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant to pay for tuition, fees and supplies.

#### **FEBRUARY 16** O

# Ozarks Tech students represent college at Missouri Governor's Leadership Conference

Ozarks Tech students Mitchell Eddings and Robert-Thomas (R.T.) Gumersell represented the college during the annual Missouri Governor's Student Leadership Forum on Faith and Values held in Jefferson City. The Forum encourages character development and reflection on decision-making skills, values and belief systems. Students learn about how to reconcile relationships, stand for truth and love others as they love themselves. The Forum's guiding principle is teaching students to embrace altruism rather than egotism.

#### **FEBRUARY 19** O

#### Bachelor's degree program experiences dramatic growth

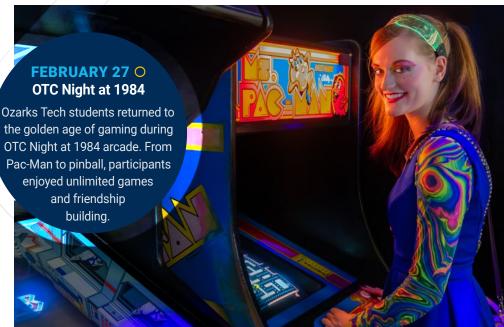
Ozarks Tech's bachelor's degree program experienced dramatic growth in its second year. The bachelor's in respiratory therapy debuted in January of 2023 with a handful of students, but when classes began for the spring 2024 semester, the new program had 16 first-year students. Ozarks Tech was one of the first two community colleges in the state granted permission to offer bachelor's degrees in 2021 when the Coordinating Board for Higher Education approved the two schools to offer bachelor's degrees in respiratory therapy. The Ozarks Tech bachelor's program debuted in January of 2023 with students in Springfield and at the college's new respiratory therapy laboratory at its location in Waynesville.

#### FEBRUARY 20 O

#### **Innovation Celebration**

Affirming that innovation at every level creates a culture of excellence, improves opportunities for students and enriches the OTC Cares culture, Ozarks Tech held its annual Innovation Celebration on Feb. 20 at the White River Conference Center. The event, which encourages, recognizes and rewards those who make exceptional contributions to innovation at the college, included Trailblazer Awards as well as Game Changer and Student Success Mini Grants.







#### **MARCH 13 O**

#### College announces year-round registration

The launch of year-round registration allows students to register for an entire year of classes at one time. Students are now able to register for the following summer, fall, and spring each March. This eliminates the short window for spring registration, which previously would have only been open from October-January.

### **Grad Prep event**

This mini celebration helps students get ready for their big graduation day. Students pick up their caps and gowns, take photos around campus, ask commencement questions, grab alumni gifts and more. Student regalia (cap, gown, tassel and cords) are provided by Ozarks Tech at no cost.



### APRIL 9 O SkillsUSA Awards

Our talented Ozarks Tech students gave a remarkable performance at the SkillsUSA Missouri competition. They brought home 24 gold, 10 silver and 17 bronze medals. As a result, 24 students qualified for nationals in Atlanta, Georgia. SkillsUSA offers chances for students to show personal, workplace and technical skills. Programs include competitions at local, district, state and national levels. At the SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills Conference, over 6,000 students competed in more than 100 skill areas.

### APRIL 11 O Nine students honored for

## leadership at MCCA

Nine Ozarks Tech students were honored at the Missouri Community College
Association Student Leadership and
Phi Theta Kappa Awards Luncheon at
Stephens College in Columbia. The PTK/
MCCA All-Missouri Team recognizes
high-achieving two-year college students
who demonstrate academic excellence,
intellectual rigor, leadership and service
that extends their education beyond the
classroom to benefit society. In total,
50 students were selected for the PTK/
MCCA All-Missouri Team.



APRIL 12 ORT Gumersell named student speaker for commencement ceremony

The college named Springfield native Robert-Thomas Gumersell as the 2024 Ozarks Tech Commencement Ceremony student speaker. RT, as he is known around the college, started attending Ozarks Tech as a dual-enrolled home school high school student when he was 18. His classes were online, but he still would come to the Springfield campus for help accessing his online courses or tutoring. RT found everyone to be welcoming and helpful. As someone with high-functioning autism, that supportive "OTC Cares" attitude was extremely beneficial. At Ozarks Tech, he quickly made friends when he started attending the Politically Active Student Group meetings. Since he appeared at all the organization's meetings, one of the faculty advisors asked if he would join Politically Active's Leadership Cabinet. Getting involved in Politically Active was a springboard to more opportunities for RT outside the classroom. By the summer of 2022, he joined the college chapter of Phi Theta Kappa and rose in the ranks of PTK to become chapter president and regional vice president for the tri-state area. In addition, the Office of Student Engagement hired RT as a student ambassador where he worked on the ambassador's communication team, making videos for Ozarks Tech's social media channels. In addition to being a student speaker, RT received his Associate of Arts in General Studies and a Certificate of Specialization in Honors Studies.

# **APRIL 19** O Spring picnics

There was something for everyone at the Ozarks Tech Spring Picnics. From engaging games and free food to raffles and a dance party with Ozzy, these highly anticipated picnics always draw a crowd.





#### JMark partnership for cybersecurity lab

Local information technology firm JMARK and Ozarks Tech partnered to create the JMARK Cybersecurity Lab. The strategic investment of JMARK and CEO Thomas Douglas in the college's cybersecurity program helps create career avenues for students to work at JMARK or other local companies. Cybersecurity debuted at Ozarks Tech in the fall of 2022. Immediately, cybersecurity was one of the most in-demand programs for students. For JMARK, the Cybersecurity Program and Ozarks Tech's long-established Computer Information Science, Computer Science and Information Technology Infrastructure Programs are training grounds for their future employees. Over 20 of JMARK's more than 125 current employees are former Ozarks Tech students. More than 300 students were enrolled in Computer Information Science, Computer Science and Information Technology Infrastructure combined, making them some of the college's most popular programs. The first class of Ozarks Tech cybersecurity professionals graduated on May 16.



#### **APRIL 25-26** O

#### Ag students hold record-breaking plant sale

The yearly plant sale held by agriculture students at the Ozarks Tech Richwood Valley Campus proved a record-breaking event. Annuals, hanging baskets, veggies and combo planters cultivated and sold by the greenhouse operations class raised more than \$13,000.

#### **APRIL 29 O**

### Ozarks Tech Lebanon Center hosts third annual Lineworker Rodeo

Ozarks Tech hosted its third annual Lineworker Rodeo where first-year students from the Ozarks Tech Lebanon Center and the Ozarks Tech Richwood Valley Campus compete in individual and team events related to the lineworker industry. Competitions included a fuse change out, pole top rescue, obstacle climb and cross arm hang. Professionals from Laclede Electric, Ozark Electric, Southwest Electric, Co-Mo Electric, Intercounty Electric and White River Valley Electric served as judges.



#### **MAY 10** O

# Ozarks Tech named higher ed winner at Best of Southwest Missouri Gala

Ozarks Tech was recognized as the 2024 Gold Best College/University at the Best of SWMO Gala. The Best of SWMO recognizes the best businesses, organizations and people in our area.

#### **MAY 16 O**

### Commencement held at Great Southern Bank Arena

The 2024 Ozarks Tech commencement was a historic event. The May 16 graduation ceremony at Great Southern Bank Arena was the first time in the state's history that a community college conferred bachelor's degrees. Three Ozarks Tech students received a Bachelor of Science in Respiratory Therapy: Daniel Bowles, Samantha Gonzalez and Jade Humphreys. In addition, JMARK CEO Tom Douglas delivered the keynote address and attorney Ben McBride was the Ozarks Tech 2024 Distinguished Alumni. More than 800 graduates walked in the 2024 Commencement ceremony. This year, Ozarks Tech conferred 2,562 degrees and certificates to graduates, including students who completed or were pending the completion of their coursework from the summer 2023 semester through the summer 2024 semester.





#### **JUNE 1** O

#### My Dream campaign launches

Last summer you might have recognized some of your fellow students in a series of new Ozarks Tech recruitment ads. The aspirational "My Dream" ads, as they are called, included billboards, bus wraps, and television and radio spots. The campaign highlights the agriculture, health care, technology, business and electrical distribution programs at Ozarks Tech. The My Dream ads launched in June. The campaign is still running.



#### **JUNE 4** O

#### Ozarks Tech enrollment up 11%

This summer saw an 11% increase in enrollment, marking one of the biggest increases in recent years. A driver of this increase was the college's decision to offer year-round enrollment, breaking new ground as the first Missouri college to offer this benefit to students. This increase in student enrollment is also a reflection of the college's continued commitment to the new student success model, which was established in 2022.



#### JUNE 22-23 O

#### OTC at the Zoo

Summer wouldn't be complete without some fun in the sun. Ozarks Tech students, faculty and staff didn't let temps in the 90s stop them from enjoying OTC at the Zoo. Members of Ozarks Tech, including Ozzy, enjoyed the free event at Dickerson Park Zoo, which features more than 500 animals from all corners of the world.



The Richwood Valley campus got a new addition this summer: the Flying Eagles Disc Golf Course. The course was created by Ozarks Tech employees with the goal of offering a fun and accessible activity for everyone. The 9-hole course is open to students, staff and the public. It's a great spot for anyone looking to unwind or pick up a new hobby. Whether you're a student, a staff member or a local resident, the Flying Eagles Disc Golf Course is worth a visit!

#### **JULY 15** O

#### Students get hands-on learning during Manufacturing Camps

In June and July area grade school students took advantage of hands-on learning during the Explore Automation & Robotics Camp and the Advanced Manufacturing Camp. Students entering grades 7 and 8 manufactured a project that provided experience in designing, precision machining, welding, and wiring an electrical circuit. Students entering grades 9-12, as well as those who just graduated, gained basic knowledge of robotics as well as how automation, cybersecurity and manufacturing are integrated in our local workforce. These popular camps, now in their third year, also featured guest speakers from local industry leaders and tours of Springfield area manufacturing sites.



JULY 1 O

#### **Greg Davis joins college for new plumbing courses**

Greg Davis, a master plumber with more than 35 years in the field, brought his handson knowledge to the classroom as an instructor for Ozark Tech's new Plumbing Technology Program. The southwest Missouri native not only knows the ins and outs of the trade, he also knows the opportunities the plumbing industry offers and what it can mean to someone willing to learn and apply those skills. It is that understanding and passion for the field that he is sharing with the first class of students.

The program was developed in conjunction with local plumbing companies and focuses on residential installation and maintenance. To help cover the program's startup costs, OTC received a \$1.3 million grant from the Missouri Department of Economic Development for construction, equipment and scholarships. The classrooms and labs are in the Industry Transportation and Technology Center on the Ozarks Tech Springfield Campus.

Plumbing is eligible for the Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant, which pays tuition and fees for non-traditional students in high-demand career fields. A portion of the Missouri Department of Economic Development grant is allocated for scholarships for under-resourced or underemployed students.





# AUGUST 2 O Remembering OTC supporter Sam Hamra

Ozarks Tech recognizes the legacy of kindness and generosity of Mr. Sam Hamra who passed away Aug. 2, 2024. The cherished friend, board member and benefactor impacted many Ozarks Tech students and the Springfield community. From establishing the Sam F. and June S. Hamra Scholarship in 2009 and funding the Springfield campus library in 2015, to his support of the annual OTC Foundation golf tournament, Mr. Hamra's contributions will forever be remembered.

#### **AUGUST 9** O

# Ozarks Tech announces Eagle Summit internal professional development event

Ozarks Tech announced it will hold a new internal professional development event for faculty and staff called Eagle Summit. The event aims to advance the college's strategic plan and contribute to strategic initiatives and goals. It is also designed to foster collaboration that encourages learning and the sharing of innovative ideas and best practices. Eagle Summit, which is scheduled for Feb. 18, 2025, will be an opportunity for employees to learn from internal and external subject matter experts.

# AUGUST 19 ○ STEM Honor Society started at Ozarks Tech

Students pursuing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education now have an opportunity to further stand out in their fields with the addition of a National STEM Honor Society chapter at Ozarks Tech. The introduction of the new STEM Honor Society was a move initially driven by students. From the beginning, students expressed an interest in bringing opportunities beyond the club that were academically rigorous and recognize excellence. They wanted greater interactions with other like-minded students and opportunities to increase their marketability after

college. A STEM Honors Society chapter at Ozarks Tech will

open doors to scholarships and attendance at conferences and competitions. Ozarks Tech started the National STEM Honor Society chapter this fall with eight members. To qualify, members must maintain at least a 3.0 in STEM courses and be enrolled in three credit hours if part time and six credit hours if full time.





Ozarks Tech held a naming ceremony for the college's newest automotive and transportation partner: Springfield Nissan Kia. This event marked a generous six-figure donation from the local dealership to the Ozarks Tech Automotive Technology Program. Springfield Nissan Kia joined several area businesses and individuals whose support is recognized throughout the Industry and Transportation Technology Center. These funds will help the department stay current with changing technology and assist students facing barriers not related to academics. John Widiger, Springfield Nissan Kia managing partner, explained the role Ozarks Tech plays developing the next generation of automotive professionals makes the partnership ideal. "Whether it is in service, parts, sales or auto body, this industry gives individuals the ability to provide for their families and thrive financially. We are happy to support all OTC does to help to spread these opportunities for success," Widiger said.



#### **AUGUST 28** O

#### Eagle Days help welcome students back to class

In August, students headed back to classes for the fall semester. Ozarks Tech had more than 10,000 students enrolled for the first day. To help all students feel welcomed and prepared, the college held its annual Eagle Days. The week-long set of fun activities and events helped students get back into the groove of classes. Eagle Days included mini golf at Fun Acre, the Eagle Mixer where students could mingle and make new friends, as well as the Eagle Pride Celebration to mark the completion of the first week of classes. New to the event this year was the Eagle Expo, which highlighted campus offerings and resources in one convenient activity.



Thanks to the generosity of the Springfield community and area golf enthusiasts, the annual OTC Foundation Golf Tournament was another successful event. More than 140 golfers took to the links at Hickory Hills Golf Club on Sept. 16. The goal of this popular fall event is to support students by raising money for scholarships. Financial aid is often the deciding factor if a student can attend college, and more than 73 percent of Ozarks Tech students qualify for some form of financial aid. Scholarships and fundraising events like the golf tournament through the OTC Foundation are vital to helping individuals further their education. With the help of participating golfers and 34 sponsors, the event raised over \$60,000 this year.

### **SEPTEMBER 17-20** Fall Picnics

The semi-annual picnic is a celebration of our students and the Ozarks Tech community. These highly attended picnics take place every fall and spring and offer plenty of food, fun and friendship.



# SEPTEMBER 27 O Pickleball Night

Another big dill for students (pun intended) was the free Pickleball event held at DropShots in Ozark. Students filled the courts to compete in this fast-paced sport that is growing in popularity. Pickleball is mix between tennis, ping-pong and badminton. Even when pickled – meaning scoring zero points – Ozarks Tech students enjoyed the fun, friendship and exercise.





#### **SEPTEMBER 30** O

#### **Lincoln Hall construction complete**

Lincoln Hall – built in 1931 and the oldest building on the Springfield campus – got some welcomed upgrades this year, including the main conference room, restrooms and health science offices. A fun trivia fact about this project: more than 800 lights in the building were replaced with more energy efficient LED lighting.

#### **OCTOBER 2** O

#### **Foundation Scholarship Reception**

Each year, the OTC Foundation proudly awards over \$650,000 in scholarships to more than 350 deserving students. The annual Scholarship Reception event celebrates the life-changing connections between our Eagles and the generous donors who believe in their potential. By supporting these scholarships, donors are helping to fuel the future of our students and the entire Ozarks Tech community. The Scholarship Reception event offers the opportunity for donors to see firsthand the impact their support creates, and it gives students the chance to meet their donors and share their thanks.



## OCTOBER 8 O College Development Day

Ozarks Tech administration, faculty and staff gathered as a team at the Oasis Convention Center for this once-a-year event that provides an opportunity to recognize the work being done at the college, celebrate the Excellence in Education winners and reflect on what lies ahead for higher education in our region. Attendees heard from special guest speaker Spencer Harris, president of local advertising agency Mostly Serious, as well as the State of the College update from Ozarks Tech Chancellor Dr. Hal Higdon. The Excellence in Education Award winners were recognized for their genuine care for students and colleagues, and their commitment to fostering success both inside and outside the classroom.



The 2024 Excellence in Education Award winners are pictured from left to right: Timothy Capehart, IT Help Desk Technician; Piper Wilson, Director of Early College Programs; Mike Vest, Networking Technology Instructor; Steven Smith, Adjunct Graphic Design Instructor; Charla Hampton, High School Programs Assistant Coordinator



#### **OCTOBER 10** O

# Table Rock Campus receives grant for child care program

Thanks to a partnership with the Ozarks Regional YMCA and Skaggs Foundation, Ozarks Tech students who are parents and quardians will soon have an additional resource to help them succeed in their academic journey - a new child care program at the Ozarks Tech Table Rock Campus. Thanks to a \$35,075 grant from the Skaggs Foundation, space has been renovated on the ground floor of the Ozarks Tech Table Rock building. While Ozarks Tech is providing the space, the child care program is being administered and staffed through an agreement with the Ozarks Regional YMCA. The Skaggs Foundation's mission is to support and lead initiatives that improve health and wellness in Stone and Taney counties and the Ozarks Regional YMCA has more than 30 years of experience partnering with local schools to provide care. The program will provide safe and accessible care for children aged six weeks to 12 years old. Students can purchase packages for care, up to 20 hours a week, that best match their class schedule needs. The new child care program became available to students at the Ozarks Tech Table Rock Campus in January 2025.



#### OCTOBER 12 O

#### **OTC Car & Motorcycle Show a resounding success**

Students and community members "got their motors running" for the Ozarks Tech Car and Motorcycle Show. Everything from hot rods and vintage cars to motorcycles and even tricked-out trucks helped make this year's event a resounding success. With nearly 120 vehicles and multiple vendors, each year this event continues to grow in popularity for the college and community. The show was originally started in the 1990s and is now hosted and organized by students of the Ozarks Tech Transportation Department. Students handle show registration and judging, as well as work with vendors, local employers and attendees who take part in the daylong event. The 2024 Ozarks Tech Car and Motorcycle Show raised approximately \$2,000 to benefit the Transportation Department and help with the cost associated with SkillsUSA membership and competitions.



More than 1,000 students from 26 southwest Missouri schools participated in this year's ExploreOTC, the annual event where sophomores from area high schools learn about opportunities to attend classes at the college during their junior and senior year. ExploreOTC began in the new Plaster Manufacturing Center and rotated between different programs at the college where students engaged in hands-on and interactive activities to help them determine what programs they are most interested in pursuing. This year's invitation-only event was also combined with I-Create, a manufacturing expo that was first held at the college in 2022.



# OCTOBER 16 Early Childhood Education Center Fall Harvest Parade

It was cuteness overload when our youngest Eagles got into the spirit of the fall season. Preschoolers donned their best costumes and paraded around campus as part of the Early Childhood Education Center Fall Harvest Parade. More than 60 children participated and received treats along the campus-wide parade route.



### OCTOBER 22 OPTK Induction

On October 22, the historic Gillioz Theatre provided the backdrop for the induction of Ozarks Tech students into the prestigious Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society. PTK, an international honor society committed to recognizing the academic achievements of college students, provides members with career training, transfer preparation, leadership training, professional development, research skills and health care

employment preparation. Alpha Psi Tau, the Ozarks Tech chapter of PTK,

was established at the college in the 1990s and now boasts more than 1,000 student members. In addition to the induction of new members, this year's ceremony included a special performance by the Ozarks Tech Jazz Band and remarks by guest speaker Ashley Rowan, Alpha Psi Tau alumna and assistant director of the Ozarks Tech Tutoring and Learning Center.



Students got swept away to a galaxy far, far away, all while in the wild west for this year's Ozarks Tech's annual Fall Ball. The theme for the event, which was voted for by students, was Cowboys vs. Aliens, included a DJ, photobooth, food, games and a costume contest.



#### **OCTOBER 23** O

# Frankie Fahringer represents college at Association of Community College Trustees Leadership Congress

This was a banner year for Frankie Fahringer. In the spring she graduated from the Ozarks Tech Physical Therapy Assistant Program. That hard work and dedication further paid off in August when she landed her dream job working with pediatric patients experiencing autism and developmental delays. In February, she was named the PTK New Century Workforce Pathway Scholar winner. New Century Workforce Scholars are selected based on their academic accomplishments, leadership, activities and how they extend their intellectual talents beyond the classroom. Over 2,200 students from more than 1,300 college campuses nationwide are nominated. Only one New Century Workforce Scholar is selected from each state.

This scholarship is the first of its kind to support students at associate degree-granting institutions on a national scale as they plan to enter the workforce. The program is sponsored by The Coca-Cola Foundation and Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society.

Further rounding out her stellar year, on Oct. 23, Fahringer traveled to Seattle, Washington where she officially accepted her New Century Workforce Pathway award and represented Ozarks Tech at the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) Leadership Congress.

"I couldn't be where I am without OTC, so I encourage everyone to take advantage of all the college has to offer," she said. "Join PTK, work hard and use the resources and opportunities they provide. It will help you get where you want to be."

#### **NOVEMBER 1** O

# LEAGUE employee giving campaign exceeds expectations

This year's OTC Foundation employee giving campaign exceeded expectations, further demonstrating the Ozarks Tech family is stronger than ever. With over \$93,000 in committed donations for 2025, employees' commitment to students continues to inspire. Whether through a specific scholarship, the Student Support Fund or the area of greatest need, these contributions will make real difference in the lives of many Ozarks Tech students.



**Foundation** 

#### NOVEMBER 11 O Veterans Day Celebration

On Nov. 11 the college gathered to honor the courage and sacrifice of veterans at the annual Veterans Day ceremony. For more than 20 years Ozarks Tech has held the celebration as a thank you to each veteran who has worn the uniform with pride, integrity and resilience. This year's guest speaker was Vietnam veteran and Bronze Star recipient Bob Huff, who reminded eventgoers that not every veteran has experienced gratitude for their service. At Ozarks Tech, veteran students can find additional support through the Veterans Upward Bound program. During the ceremony, John Larson, Air Force veteran and VUB participant, received the Outstanding OTC Veteran Award. Larson is currently taking courses as part of the Ozarks Tech Behavioral Health Support Program and is scheduled to graduate in spring of 2025 with the goal of working as a case manager. In addition to the award, Larson was also presented with a \$500 OTC Foundation scholarship by Ozarks Tech board of trustees member Howard Fisk. To help round out the 2024 Veterans Day event, members of the Sons of the American Revolution presented the Colors and "Taps" was performed by Ozarks Tech music instructor Philip Forrester.





#### **NOVEMBER 12** O New Ozzy logo unveiled

A new eagle has landed at the college. On Nov. 12, Ozarks Tech revealed an update to the college's beloved Eagle logo. The new Eagle logo is an update to the college's former "Ozzy Eagle" image, which has been in place since 2018. This new version, which was created by the college's Marketing and Communications team, features a more rounded shape and subtle changes to the eagle's beak, eye shape and eyebrows. The logo will be phased in over time as new materials are created for merchandise, recruitment, campus signage and student engagement.



### **NOVEMBER 14** O Arts & Crafts Bash

Students got their crafts on at the Arts & Crafts Bash. This fun student event featured eight different DIY stations that included customized tote bags, friendship bracelets, slime, painted terra cotta pots, air dry clay magnets, bead picture frames with a selfie station and more. The event even included a wrapping station for projects being created as gifts.



# NOVEMBER 14 O Longtime Ozarks Tech business supporter Rick's Automotive

recognized at MCCA

Longtime Ozarks Tech supporter, Rick's Automotive, received the Missouri Community College Association Distinguished Business & Industry Award at this year's MCCA annual convention. The award recognizes those who engaged in partnerships to support students and programs.



In a significant step to broaden educational pathways and make higher education more accessible for transfer students, Ozarks Tech partnered with Drury University and Dr. Jeff Frederick through the Drury Springfield Promise. This innovative partnership enhances degree access, reduces financial barriers,

and provides a seamless transition for academically qualified Ozarks Tech students aiming to complete their degrees at Drury. Ozarks Tech students are assured a streamlined admissions process, high-quality academic advising, and a pathway to an affordable Drury education through this collaboration. The

partnership reflects the shared mission of both institutions to prioritize a relational, personalized educational experience and meet the needs of students throughout the Ozarks region. As part of this partnership, Drury University and Ozarks Technical Community College will create clear pathways for students pursuing high-demand fields like Cybersecurity and Mechanical & Electrical Engineering. These additional agreements allow Ozarks Tech students with associate degrees in related fields to easily transfer into Drury's Bachelor of Science programs. By streamlining the transfer process and saving students time and money, the collaboration aims to support careerready graduates in these critical, growing industries. This partnership demonstrates both institutions' commitment to prepare students for careers in technology and engineering. The Drury Springfield Promise program will be available to students beginning in Fall 2025.



### Ozarks Tech breaks ground on the Michael L. Parson Student Union

On Sept. 26, community members and legislators joined Ozarks Tech students, faculty and staff to celebrate the momentous final phase of the college's master plan for the Springfield campus - a new student union focused on workforce development and student success.

The groundbreaking event highlighted the ongoing transformation of student life at Ozarks Tech. Since its inception, the college has largely focused on classrooms, labs and other learning environments. The new 100,000-square-foot, three-story student union building is being constructed at Chestnut Expressway and

Sherman Avenue and is specifically

centered amenities and academic support services in mind.

> During the September event, Ozarks Tech Chancellor Dr. Hal Higdon announced the official name of the new building: the Michael L. Parson Student Union.

"I have always stressed that I believe in community college," Missouri Governor Mike Parson said during the event. "As legislators all we want to do is make things better for the next generation and that's why we are here today. It is about people changing their lives for the betterment of our state and it all starts at educational facilities like these."

This student union project originally began with the college's master plan development in 2019. The proposed center was imagined as a facility that would create stronger connections between the college, the community and students. The project was officially approved June 12 by the Ozarks Tech board of trustees.

Ongoing support from the state and private donors made the project a reality: this summer, Ozarks Tech was the recipient of \$46 million from the state – one of the largest appropriations for a Missouri higher education project this year.

"This project is about more than a building. It is about creating a vibrant campus environment with endless opportunities. We are profoundly grateful to Governor Parson for his tireless support for OTC and our students," Dr. Higdon said. "This space is another facility that will help make the Ozarks Tech

experience the best it can be."



#### The Michael L. Parson Student Union will include:

In addition to the new center being created to address the demand for comprehensive support, the project will also include a student plaza that will extend from the heart of campus to Chestnut Expressway, transforming parking lots into a pedestrian-friendly core. This will create a safe, walkable environment that connects the campus with Silver Springs Park and downtown Springfield. The student plaza will also offer covered outdoor seating for dining and studying, food trucks, recreational activities and areas for both academic and personal development.

- Dedicated space for academic support services, including writing, language and math tutoring, testing centers, computer labs and library services, as well as a variety of study areas.
- Space to host career fairs with local employers, mock interviews, apprenticeship outreach, resume writing and career development.
- Facilities to provide special training opportunities for local employers, the community and the college.
- A central gathering area accommodating up to 650 students for lectures, presentations, community events and special ceremonies.
- A new bookstore, food court, and multi-purpose room to allow for a variety of fitness and wellness activities.

In true southwest Missouri fashion, the community is already rallying to show their support for the new space at Ozarks Tech. Thanks to generous donations, the Parson Student Union will also boast several additional special features:

- The Judy and Mike Breeding Clock Tower will stand as a flagship landmark for the
  Ozarks Tech Springfield Campus, prominently located on the plaza and visible from
  Chestnut Expressway. In the evening, the tower will be illuminated, and the base will
  honor the college's rich history with a walkable path featuring engraved names of
  alumni and staff. Judy Breeding has served as a Foundation board member since
  2001, and has established the Judy Breeding Accounting Scholarship in addition to
  other capital gifts.
- The Bailey Family Welcome Center is set to become the most populated lobby on campus. This space will be synonymous with the college, serving as a central hub for tours, campus events and studying. By 2030, more than 7,500 students are expected to access this area daily. This center is named for Howard Bailey who has served as an OTC Foundation board member since 2023 and who established the Linda Mae Bailey Memorial Scholarship at the college.
- The Rick's Automotive Family Lounge will be a featured spot for both students and community members. As the entry point to the large Workforce Training Event Center meeting space that will be booked daily, this lobby will host breakout sessions for meetings as well as study spaces for students due to its proximity to the academic resource center. This versatile area has been designed to facilitate collaboration and learning and is named for Rick Hughlett who has served as a Foundation board member since 2006 and Rick's Automotive, which has donated to Ozarks Tech sponsorships, scholarships, student supports and capital projects.

The Michael L. Parson Student Union is anticipated to be complete in summer 2026.









This facility and its unique spaces will make the Ozarks Tech Springfield Campus more than just a place to learn, but also a place where our students can belong," Dr. Higdon said.



# **DECEMBER 4** O Brightspeed Ice Park features Art and Design student mural

Patrons of Brightspeed Ice Park in Springfield can now enjoy a new mural by Ozarks Tech Art and Design student Lola Koppang. Her original design was selected through a Springfield-Greene County Park Board contest.



## **DECEMBER 6 ○**Health Sciences Open House

Ozarks Tech hosted its annual Health Sciences Open House event on Dec. 6. More than 700 area high school juniors and seniors took advantage of this come-and-go event held in Lincoln Hall. Students learned about the multiple opportunities in health sciences and the 32 different pathways that Ozarks Tech offers in health care. During the event, students also participated in hands-on activities that provided insights into specific professions. Attendees further benefited from talking to faculty and current students to gain firsthand information about individual programs that fit their area of interest. The Health Sciences Open House is the one time each year that all of Ozarks Tech's health science programs come to one location and provide the community with an opportunity to learn more about the health care options offered at the college's six different campuses and centers.



# **DECEMBER 5** OPEN Therapy of the Ozarks dog visits campus

Students got some help with the pressures of final exams thanks to Pet Therapy of the Ozarks. Furry friends helped lighten spirits and provide a snuggle in the Hamra library. Based in Springfield, Pet Therapy of the Ozarks is a non-profit organization that offers emotional therapy and stress relief services for nursing homes, hospitals, schools, prisons and other facilities.



# DECEMBER 5 ○ Fall was a banner semester for Scallions restaurant

Scallions, the student-operated training restaurant that is part of the curriculum for the Culinary & Hotel Restaurant Management Program, gives students practical experience in a real-world environment, including kitchen operation and dining room management. The restaurant is open to the public and served more than 1,000 people in the fall semester. The restaurant wrapped up operations with a Christmas meal Dec. 5.





#### **DECEMBER 9** O

### Ozarks Tech announces partnership to bring medical simulation lab to Lebanon

Thanks to a partnership with Ozarks Tech, the city of Lebanon and the Lebanon R-3 School District, a cutting-edge medical simulation lab is coming to the Robert W. Plaster Center for Student Success in Lebanon. This new medical simulation lab will help address the region's growing need for health care providers by creating local access to essential hands-on training opportunities for students and professionals.

As part of this partnership agreement, the city will construct the lab in 3,500 square feet of the Robert W. Plaster Center for Student Success, which is owned by Lebanon R-3 Schools. Once complete, the Center of Excellence for Medical Simulation at Ozarks Tech will oversee operations, including scheduling and performing the various styles of simulations needed by local health care providers. The new medical simulation lab will mirror the existing labs at the Ozarks Tech Table Rock Campus and in Lincoln Hall at the Springfield Campus. These labs conduct more than 8,000 simulations annually. The Lebanon facility will have four large simulation rooms, two control rooms and two conference rooms, as well as state-of-the-art equipment and high-fidelity simulators.

The simulation lab will also serve as a hub for emergency response training for area EMTs, paramedics, fire departments and law enforcement agencies to foster improved coordination among first responders. The medical simulation lab is expected to be complete in the fall of 2025 with a grand opening planned in September.



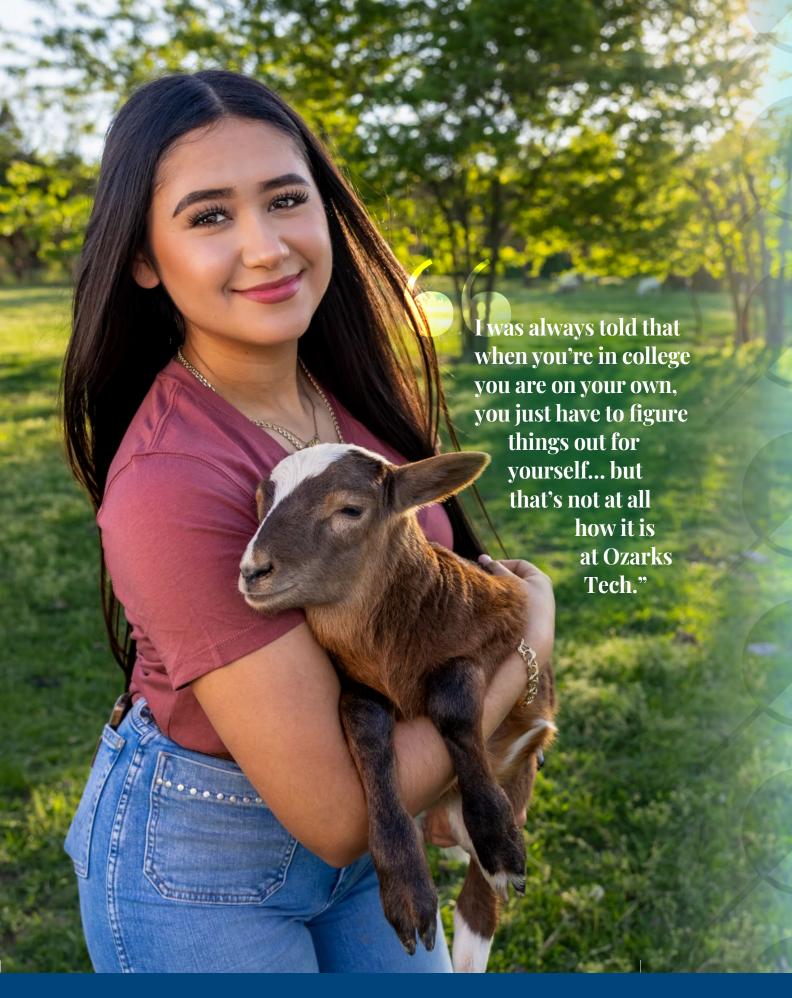
### **DECEMBER 10** OWINTER Choir Concert

The Ozarks Tech Choirs and Jazz Band helped the community get into the holiday spirit with a concert at Spangler Concert Hall on the Drury University campus.



# **DECEMBER 12** Ozarks Tech Student Art Exhibition

Each year in December the Jared Family Atrium becomes an art gallery for the annual Student Art Exhibition. Artworks created by Ozarks Tech art students throughout the fall semester are on public display starting in December and ending in March.





# **SILVIA MONCIVAIZ**

# A big heart for animals leads to animal science degree at Ozarks Tech

Whether she's working as a veterinary assistant, spending farm time around horses, cattle and sheep, or simply hanging out with Cookie, her beloved pug/chihuahua mix dog, Silvia Moncivaiz is always happiest around animals.

Her love for all things furry, hooved and feathered is a trait she says she picked up from her grandmother in Mexico.

"My grandma is the type of person who will go without just to provide food and care to a stray cat or dog, so I guess I am just like her," Moncivaiz said. "I can't recall a time in my life that I haven't had a soft spot for animals."

That's why it is no surprise the 21-year-old Monett, Missouri, resident made it her goal after high school to pursue an education that benefited animals. While she has multiple family members who attended Ozarks Tech, she admits she initially wasn't sure what her specific educational path should look like and if the college was an option. Luckily for Moncivaiz, finding those answers was easy when she explored Ozarks Tech.

"I was always told that when you're in college you are on your own, you just have to figure things out for yourself... but that's not at all how it is at Ozarks Tech," she said. "From the student navigators and admissions staff all the way to instructors, I found help and support for me and what I wanted to learn."

Moncivaiz found the Agriculture Program at the Ozarks Tech's Richwood Valley Campus to be

the perfect fit. The program trains students to responsibly manage livestock and wildlife. The flexible class schedule worked with her 33-houra-week job at the vet clinic, and she could apply hands-on learning to her current work, hobbies, and future plans.

Some of her favorite parts of the program have included the practical skills she's learned – such as drawing blood (a skill she's perfected) and trimming nails – areas that have even caught the attention of the veterinarians at her job, who frequently point out they didn't learn until their advanced education. She also says the program has provided her with a better understanding of food chain and environmental management, which she hopes to apply to her own farm someday.

Moncivaiz's natural love of animals and zest for learning was even showcased this fall in the college's My Dream brand awareness campaign. Those familiar with the television and print ads will recognize her bright smile as she happily holds a baby lamb.

Moncivaiz, who started at Ozarks Tech in 2022, graduated this December with her Associate of Arts degree in Animal Science. She fondly refers to her fellow students and instructors at the college as family, and she credits them for a stellar learning experience and preparing her for her next step: a transfer in the spring to Missouri State University where she's considering an undergraduate degree in veterinary medicine.

# VETER\*NS PROUND

#### ABOUT VETERANS UPWARD BOUND (VUB)

VUB is a TRIO Program designed to assist veterans in all aspects of the college admissions process and their academic success. All services provided by VUB are free for participants and funded by a federal TRIO grant through the Department of Education. VUB participants have access to full staff who can provide immediate assistance with admissions, financial aid, academics and connections to other needed services. VUB program services include:

- Refresher courses for college admissions to prepare for college. VUB can help veterans obtain their GED.
- Assistance with applications to the college or university of choice.
- Assistance with applying for financial aid, including VA education benefits, FAFSA, scholarships, and more.
- O Personalized advising.
- O Academic advice and assistance.
- O Career counseling.
- Assistance in securing community support, such as mental health, food assistance, and more.
- Exposure to cultural events, academic programs and other educational activities.





# **JOHN LARSON**

# Veterans Upward Bound program provides vital link for vets considering college

John Larson admits the path that led him to take classes at Ozarks Tech was not an easy or straightforward one. For the 36-year-old, it involved an injury that eventually ended a more than decade-long stint in the Air Force, the loss of a buddy to addiction and time traveling the country in a converted van before he found the college and the Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) program.

When Larson was a junior in high school, he came across information on military service. After that chance encounter he knew the Air Force would be his next step. It was a choice that brought endless challenges and opportunities. As an E6 Technical Sergeant, he grew and learned a lot, but the work eventually took a physical toll.

Years of physical therapy helped keep him in the role, but eventually a partially torn ACL made him decide it was time to get out. Although life beyond the Air Force would be new territory, he had a plan: use his GI Bill benefits to get auto technician training in Arizona. But then the pandemic hit. Classes were only offered virtually so he decided to withdraw from school and use his savings to travel the country in a van. This led Larson to Florida and time living with a former high school buddy.

He didn't know it then, but this experience was going to lead him to his education at Ozarks Tech.

Larson desperately wanted to help his friend who was battling addiction, but he soon realized the problem required professional help. When that same friend passed away, he returned to Missouri with a new focus to learn how to help people facing addiction. He found that Ozarks Tech offered related classes and housed the VUB program. VUB provided the missing link in his journey beyond the military.

"I didn't expect to be in college in my 30s, so if VUB hadn't been there, I don't know if I would have followed through," Larson admits. "Their expertise in working with members of the military is extremely beneficial and they are prepared to help you from start to finish."

According to Victoria Ratcliff, VUB program director at Ozarks Tech, 71 percent of program participants have been out of school for five or more years. Even more important, 82 percent of the program participants end up enrolling in post-secondary education.

"So, for any veteran who is thinking about next steps but thinks it will be too much, I would remind them they have already done harder things so they can do this ... and we can help," Ratcliff said.

As for Larson, he thanks VUB and Ozarks Tech for the continued focus he has for his future. In November, during the college's annual Veterans Day Celebration, he received the Outstanding OTC Veteran Award and was presented a scholarship from the OTC Foundation. He is currently taking courses as part of the Behavioral Health Support Program and is scheduled to graduate in spring of 2025 with the goal of working as a case manager.





# **SARAH EMERT**

### Personal determination and college support make health care education possible

A self-proclaimed Type A personality, Sarah Emert is the first to admit that being driven, ambitious and a bit of a workaholic are all traits that have served her well as a single mom pursuing her education at Ozarks Tech.

Managing everyday obligations and classes is not always easy, but for a non-traditional student like Emert, balancing motherhood, work and studying while attending Ozarks Tech has only been possible with equal parts determination and the support she's found at the college.

When she initially made the decision to attend classes in 2018, it was the flexible schedules and online course options at Ozarks Tech that provided the right balance. She also discovered the straightforward and real-world instruction she received worked well with her personality and learning style.

But even with the best laid plans and highest motivations, sometimes life still happens.

With a daughter to care for, a car that needed four new tires, a faulty laptop and limited availability to generate income due to classes and studying, Emert's goal of becoming a licensed practical nurse started looking out of reach. She turned to donating plasma, cleaning houses and even substitute teaching to meet her obligations and pay her bills.

"I had the drive, but unfortunately drive and resources are not the same thing," she said.

For Emert, the OTC Foundation helped bridge the gap between the two. Thanks to the many generous donors who support the Foundation, Emert has benefited from the Joe and Pat Jenkins Memorial

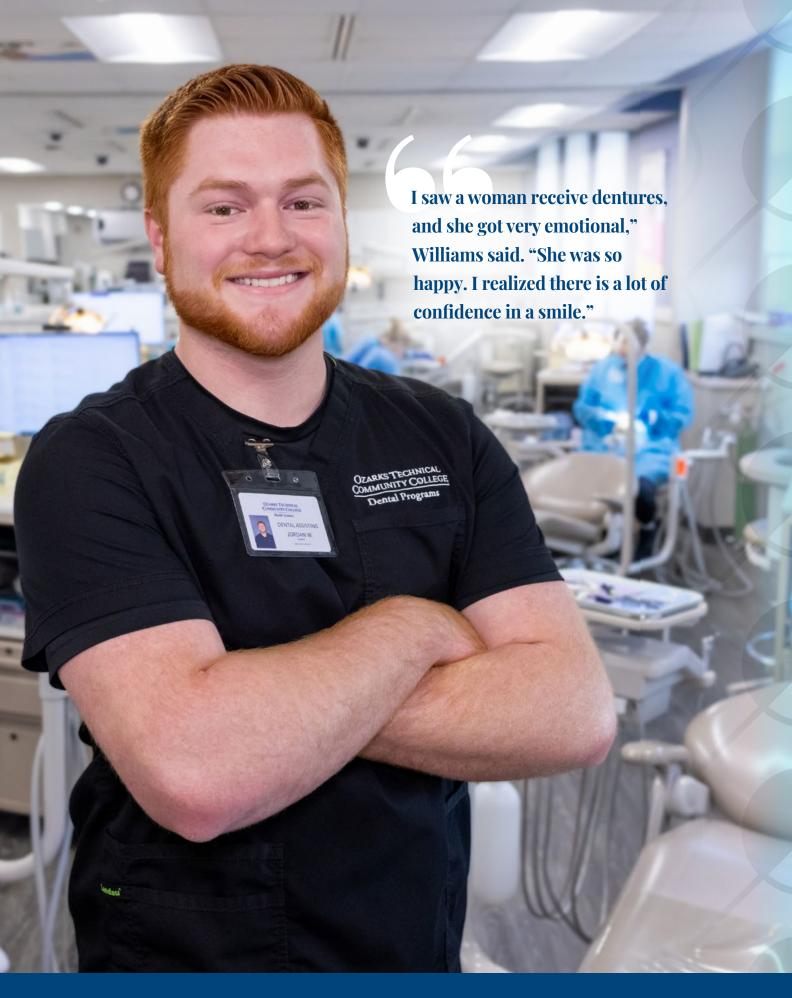
Scholarship and the Musgrave Foundation's Wingspan and Health Sciences Scholarships. She shared her story and gratitude as a guest speaker during this year's OTC Foundation Scholarship Reception.

"For me, the OTC Foundation and these scholarships became a resounding 'yes' in a growing sea of 'no's," Emert said to the packed crowd in attendance for the reception. "I will never have the words to fully express what this generosity means, but thanks to your support, more students like me will become nurses, scientists and artists - all while still being moms, dads, sisters, brothers, daughters, sons and friends."

With the Foundation's financial support as a springboard and her continued resilience, Emert didn't give up on her education. In 2021 she graduated with a 3.9 GPA with an associate degree in behavioral sciences. And with the help of her village (as she calls it) at Ozarks Tech, several pep talks from Practical Nursing Program Director Michelle Crum, and close correspondence with her college navigator, she graduated with her LPN in December of 2023.

Her aspirations of a health care career to advocate for those who can't advocate for themselves became a reality. She currently works at Mercy Springfield as a float pool nurse in pediatrics, obstetrics and neurology.

And that Type A personality? Emert is continuing her education at Ozarks Tech and will complete RN training next spring - all while maintaining membership in Alpha Psi Tau, the college's Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society chapter.





# **JORDAN WILLIAMS**

# Ozarks Tech dental student hopes to build confidence with smiles

Growing up in Versailles, Missouri, Jordan Williams always planned to become a physician. But in high school, he began working at a dental office in his hometown, mostly cleaning and stocking shelves. Occasionally, Jordan would help out during a procedure.

"I saw a woman receive dentures, and she got very emotional," Williams said. "She was so happy. I realized there is a lot of confidence in a smile."

It was an inspirational moment that made his future clear - Williams knew he wanted to be a dentist.

Rather than attend a four-year college to study pre-dental, Williams enrolled at Ozarks Tech in the dental assisting program. He was the only male in his class. His outstanding performance in a female-dominated industry earned him a 2024 Breaking Traditions Award.

"I'm not going to lie; it was a little intimidating being the only guy," he said. "I talk a lot about my aspirations for dental school, and they really encouraged me."

Not only did Williams earn the prestige of the Breaking Traditions Award, but that award came with a scholarship. After graduating from Ozarks Tech in May 2024 with his associate in dental assisting degree, he is now using the scholarship at Missouri State University to complete his pre-dental requirements. Eventually, he hopes to attend dental school at the University of Missouri - Kansas City.

"Jordan created a positive and collaborative learning environment in class and you could tell that his aspiration of attending dental school was a driving force behind his outstanding performance in the program," said Dental Assisting Program Director Sarah Smith.

Williams is quick to credit Ozarks Tech for his continued academic success and for providing a path to his career goals. He specifically notes the manageable class sizes, as well as the attention and encouragement he received from instructors at the college as having a positive impact on his education.

"Ozarks Tech really made my transition from high school to college to university so much smoother," he said. "It has been a bridge for the things I want to accomplish, and it helped me do it all within my means."

Eventually, Jordan hopes to practice dentistry in his hometown of Versailles. His goal for his future dental office is to develop an atmosphere where his patients feel comfortable and trusting, allowing him to create confidence-building moments like the one that inspired him to pursue his path.

Featured DONOR

# MARY BETH HARTMAN

When asked what motivates her to give her time and financial support to Ozarks Tech, Mary Beth Hartman points to one of her favorite Bible verses: "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously."

"I really do believe that everything you do has a ripple effect and OTC has a tremendous ripple effect for your investment," she said. "Helping someone gain a skill and have a better life is so important and has so many great benefits in the long run – who wouldn't want to help support that?"

Hartman, who owns Hunter Chase & Associates Inc. and is the executive vice president of Hartman & Co. Inc., is a generous donor and supporter of the college and has served on the OTC Foundation Board Chair since 2021, serving as chair in 2023. While she has several motivators that drive her giving, including her personal faith, as the owner of a construction company she understands the need for qualified "boots on the ground" in the workforce and the value of skilled trades. She knows firsthand how jobs in her industry can provide individuals with a good living – something she is committed to fostering through her support of Ozarks Tech.

Hartman also has personal experience witnessing how one person's giving benefited her own family.

During the 2024 Scholarship Reception, Hartman recounted that her first experience with a "scholarship" was when an older family member provided financial help so her mom could get her education to become a registered nurse. Any college or training would not have been possible without this generosity. Today she recognizes the gift as legacy building. Because of this gift, her mother went on to bring the first hospice to southwest Missouri and work as a nursing home administrator. Years later her mother even served on an OTC task force.

Another solidifying moment for Hartman came during an OTC Foundation meeting when member Judy Breeding spoke about the positive statistics for Ozarks Tech scholarship recipients, such as better grade point averages and

employment rates.

Hartman saw the opportunity to plant a seed that could literally grow for a lifetime.

"I was inspired. This was too good to sit on the sidelines and watch. I wanted in on this (scholarship giving)," Hartman recalls.

It was that day she decided to establish a health care and nursing scholarship in honor of her mother, Bobbie Ann Cobb. Hartman has also since established a construction scholarship in honor of her father. Dean Hartman.

"People may think they can't afford to give, but when it comes to supporting others in their education, you can't afford not to give," she said.

Hartman further explains she supports Ozarks Tech because of the dedicated people at the college. She says it's their commitment to the college's mission that makes it easy to support. She also credits the college staff with finding ways to multiply the benefits of any contribution.

"For me, every day is about sowing and reaping, and I know from experience that you simply gain more when you are giver," Hartman said. Featured DONOR

# LARRY AND DONNA SNYDER

While a simple desire to connect with the Springfield community is what first spurred Larry and Donna Snyder to become involved with Ozarks Tech, the couple says it's the positive individual outcomes made possible through the college that has kept them involved for nearly 20 years.

When the Snyders first moved to Springfield, may wanted opportunities to become active community members. They knew Ozarks
Tech's reputation and the college's contributions to the workforce, and as the owners of Snyder
Construction Group they knew the impact quality education and training had on their employees. This eventually led Larry to join the Ozarks Tech board of trustees. When he first joined in 2006, he was the youngest on the board. Today he boasts the title of being the longest serving member. Larry will tell you with a chuckle that he didn't know then what the decision to join the board would end up being for him.

"The truth is, the college does so much good for individuals and this area, once you become a part of that, you just want to keep the momentum going," he said.

For the Snyders, keeping that momentum going has equated to a legacy of donating their time, leadership, expertise and financial resources to Ozarks Tech. This generosity and dedication over the years has had a transformative impact on countless lives.

For example, when the Information Commons was renovated on the Springfield campus in 2014, the Snyders generously donated to create the Larry and Donna Snyder Atrium. The family also established the OTC Trustee Scholarship for students with financial need and in 2021 they became donors to the Plaster Manufacturing Center. Throughout the years they have donated vehicles to the Transportation Program and even funds to make possible the landmark Ozarks Technical Community College sign at National Avenue and Chestnut Expressway. This is all in addition to their ongoing support of various scholarships and funds, as well as the annual OTC Foundation Golf Tournament.

Now, as fixtures of the Springfield community, the Snyders continue to advocate for the college by helping garner



The Snyders also fondly point to a time when they attended a GED graduation at Ozarks Tech as another inspiration for their support of the college.

"I would encourage anyone to attend that event, because it will inspire you," Donna said. "These students are filled with promise and hope, and to think we could contribute to that for someone is just awesome."

Larry points to his own education he obtained while working 20-30 hours a week as a reason he supports Ozarks Tech. The opportunities his education has afforded his family is something he wants to pass on to others. In 2024, the family established the Larry and Donna Snyder Scholarship fund as a resource for generations of Ozarks Tech students to come.

When asked why he is passionate about Ozarks Tech, Larry sums it up this way: "It's simple really. When you get involved with OTC, it impacts others, improves opportunities and positively builds the community."





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### **Ozarks Tech Transportation Department chair drives learning** and lasting community engagement

As an automotive instructor at Ozarks Tech, Gabe McLaughlin is known for being exceptional in the classroom. But it's also what he does beyond classroom instruction that is making an exceptional difference for students and the college.

McLaughlin's own passion for cars dates back to his teenage years. At 16, he attended automotive classes at Ozarks

I wanted to

have an impact

beyond the cars

and really help

others."

Tech, and it was that education that led to opportunities working as an automotive technician at a local dealership and later as a fleet technician with the city of Springfield. While he loved the vehicles and work, McLaughlin admits there was something missing: people.

"I wanted to have an impact beyond the cars and really help others," he said. "And the more I thought about that, the more I recognized

some of the best direction and positive impact I received was from my teachers."

That realization led him to get his bachelor's in education from Missouri State University. In 2014 he joined Ozarks Tech teaching courses on engine repair and performance. Today, McLaughlin is the department chair of the Transportation Department, and he still shares his passion for automotive repair with students as an instructor teaching automotive electrical and air conditioning classes. Over the years, that passion has grown to include fostering community partnerships for the department and college.

"Having the skills and knowledge is a foundation and starting point," McLaughlin explained. "The end goal is to see students find their career paths in the automotive industry and that takes the best learning environments and the connections for once that training is complete."

The idea of breaking down the barriers to professional growth started when McLaughlin worked to develop an Internship Opportunity Day, where employers come to Ozarks Tech and rotate between classrooms with information about real-world opportunities in the field. That initial event proved so popular and beneficial that the department now has similar engagement with employers and students nearly every month. Not one to stop there, McLaughlin looked to build on that momentum and organized a department specific career fair that is now a yearly event. Each April, the Ozarks Tech Transportation Department Career Fair is a highly attended event that averages more than 60 employers.

Perhaps the ultimate testament to his engagement success is the growing number of industry leaders that are donors and ongoing supporters of the automotive program at Ozarks Tech. Industry leaders like Springfield Nissan and Springfield Kia, Rick's Automotive, Reliable Cars and Reliable Chevrolet, and Heritage Tractor are all proudly recognized on the walls of the Industry and Transportation Technology Center, thanks to McLaughlin and his work with the OTC Foundation.

"Our students are really keyed into brands, so it is important they use Snap-On tools in the classroom, have modern cars

to train with and that they see the best of the best as donors on the wall," McLaughlin said. "These are the places they want to work and when an employer supports our program, they know they are getting top-tier talent."

It is McLaughlin's ongoing efforts that spurred the OTC Foundation to recently nominate him for a college Trailblazer Award.

From the nomination: Gabe doesn't stop at raising awareness, he works to create tangible investment opportunities and a resounding statement about the significance of our programs. He forges meaningful partnerships with local companies, turning them into invaluable allies for our students. We are consistently inspired by his unwavering dedication to student dreams and to supplying our local workforce with top-tier talent.

McLaughlin sums up his efforts simply: "When you develop those deeper, more meaningful relationships, everybody wins."

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Kylie Frieze Dr. Steven Fritts and

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Deborah Virdon Lutes and Gary Lutes Haleigh Lyon Matthew Lyons Mallory Maggi

Marianita Maldonado Lisa Marks Shannon Matherly Cassie Mathes Danelle Maxwell

Ryan May Ruth Ann Maynard Amanda McCallister Darla McDowell Kyle Mcfarland Ashley McIntosh Kyle McKee Morgan McNew Dr. Jill Mease Ashley Meyer Angela Miller

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Friends of Ozarks Tech who remember the OTC Foundation through a bequest or other type of planned gift become members of the Legacy Society.

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Michael Pulley Jan Robbins

**Brett and Lori Sheets Neal Spencer** 

Emma Talbot\* Dr. Eloise Thomas

Randell and Carla Wallace

\*Deceased

# In Honor IN MEMORY

Gifts to honor or remember outstanding individuals are a special way to pay tribute to a friend or loved one. The following donors made contributions to the OTC Foundation in honor or in memory of someone special.

#### In honor of Philip Arnold

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#### In memory of Linda Mae Bailey

**Howard Bailey** 

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**Donald Lewis** 

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Tim and Keena Burnet

# OTC Foundation REPORT

The OTC Foundation and our supporters believe every student should have access to higher education and a brighter future. We invest in student success because we know an educated community is a thriving community.

With your help, we can continue this essential work.

#### **CALENDAR YEAR**

4,744
GIFTS
from 715
donors





**GIFTS** 

#### **ACADEMIC YEAR**









\$12.8 M

\$15.8 M

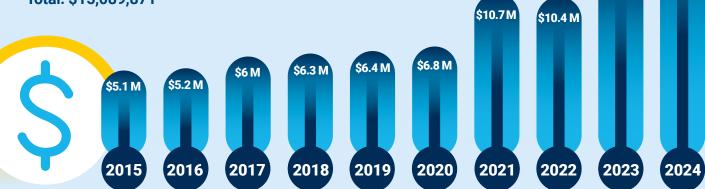
**FISCAL YEAR** 

(July 2023-June 2024)

#### **10 YEAR BALANCE SHEET**

Unrestricted \$3,244,371 • Restricted \$4,044,316 • Endowment \$7,801,183

Total: \$15,089,871



To learn more about how we can align your passion with OTC's mission, contact the OTC Foundation at 417-447-2651 or foundation@otc.edu.



I am deeply proud of the strides our college continues to make in supporting both students and the community. From expanding educational opportunities to strengthening partnerships with local industries, the commitment to creating pathways for success is unwavering. It's an honor to be part of an institution that makes such a lasting impact on the lives of our students and our region."

- Paula Adams, Ozarks Tech Board Chair



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