

AN ANNUAL PUBLICATION OF SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# SWiCC MAG

2023-24 EDITION

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Nationals Run**



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# { SWCC MAG }

2023-24 EDITION

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## From the desk of the president

**A**s we move into 2024, I am very excited for the opportunity to work shoulder-to-shoulder with our board of trustees, administrative leadership team, employees, students, and communities to propel Southwestern Community College forward. Throughout my 13 years at the college, I have observed an unwavering commitment to student success by our faculty and staff.



Recent data reports provide validation of our unwavering commitment to student success. According to data compiled by the Iowa Department of Education, Southwestern ranked second among Iowa's 15 community colleges in transfer rate, third in graduation rate, and third in success rate. Additional evidence of student success includes performance in state and national contests related to the students' fields of study. Southwestern students continue to compete well at SkillsUSA and Business Professionals of America (BPA) state and national contests, highlighted by the crowning of our fourth national SkillsUSA champion and a national runner-up finish in 2023. Our students are also finding success following graduation from Southwestern. In 2022, 86 percent of our graduates were employed in Iowa.

In addition to our unwavering commitment to student success, after months of diligent work, we are elated to roll out our new master facilities plan, which provides a blueprint and vision for future renovation and construction projects. We look forward to the opportunity to modernize our existing Creston campus and the Red Oak and Osceola Centers. Simultaneously, the opportunity to strategically grow our campus and centers to meet future academic, workforce training, and athletic needs is at the very heart of our master facilities plan.

With warmth and pride,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lindsay Stoaks".

Lindsay Stoaks, College President

*An early morning with the moon setting over the Instructional Center. Photo by Scott Vicker.*



# Marketing department introduces SWCC Mag

Welcome to the first edition of the SWCC Mag! The marketing department decided 2024 was the year to unveil a sleeker, more concise version of the college magazine. The content will still keep you up-to-date with the happenings at the college, but you will notice a more compact version with links to web content provided when necessary for additional reading. Please enjoy this new version of the magazine and take a few minutes to see how the publication has changed throughout the years.

**2024**



April  
**1981**



February  
**1990**



October  
**1980**



February  
**1984**



Summer  
**2008**



Fall  
**2002**



**2020**



View the  
covers online





# New Leadership at SWCC

By Terri Higgins

**T**he Southwestern Community College (SWCC) board of trustees, during its regular monthly meeting, held on Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2023, at 5:30 p.m., in the college's Administration Center, unanimously approved a motion offering a President's Chapter 279 Administrator Contract to Lindsay Stoaks of Lenox, making her the sixth president since SWCC's inception in 1966.

Stoaks had been serving as SWCC's interim president since May 2023. She was appointed to the role of interim president by Southwestern's board following the departure of Dr. Marjorie McGuire-Welch in May 2023. Prior to this appointment, Stoaks served as SWCC's vice president of instruction, directing all matters related to academic instruction, programs, services, and operations.

Stoaks has been employed at Southwestern since May 2010 when she was hired as the coordinator of secondary programs. She became the college's assistant vice president of instruction, under the direction of longtime Southwestern Vice President of Instruction Bill Taylor, in July 2013. Taylor and Stoaks worked hand-in-hand directing the daily functions of the instructional division of the college until Taylor's untimely passing on Nov. 7, 2019, following a sudden battle with pancreatic cancer, at which time Stoaks moved into the vice president role.

Since November 2014, Stoaks has served as a Higher Learning Commission (HLC) assurance co-coordinator for the college's accreditation process. In addition, she has assisted in guiding the college's Iowa Department of Education accreditation. She completed leadership training through the Community College Leadership Initiative Consortium (CLIC) at Iowa State during the 2011-12 academic year.

Stoaks holds a Master of Science degree in agricultural education and studies, as well as a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and mass communication from Iowa State University.

Stoaks and her husband, Shane, are active in the Lenox community and volunteer with many school and recreational activities for their three children.

After signing her presidential contract, Stoaks hit the ground running at the college. Stoaks, who had initiated conversations regarding the master facilities planning process during her time as interim president, rallied her administrative cabinet and quickly embarked on the update of the college's 10-year master facilities plan, last updated in 2012, with INVISION Architecture of Des Moines. The intent of a master facilities plan is to evaluate the near and mid-term opportunities and challenges of the college facilities and provide an incremental, flexible

framework that informs future campus facility and grounds development. The goal is to have the master facilities plan complete to unveil to employees in early-2024.

Stoaks is supported in her daily endeavors by the following individuals who make up the college's administrative cabinet:

- » Lana Bartmess of Clarinda, director of human resources and equity/Title IX coordinator—Bartmess, originally from Jewell, started at the college in March 2021. Bartmess worked as the director of human resources at Clarinda Academy for 25 years, prior to the school closing its doors in 2021.
- » Kim Bishop of Mount Ayr, dean of student services/ deputy Title IX coordinator/athletic director—Bishop became SWCC's dean, providing supervision to the student services division of the college, in July 2019. She is currently acting as the college's athletic director as well. Prior to SWCC, she had been in the athletics department at the University of Missouri in Columbia for 17 years.
- » Dr. John Franklin of Creston, interim vice president of instruction—Franklin came to SWCC as assistant vice president of instruction in July 2020 from Graceland University, where he had been employed for 19 years. In his role at Graceland he was a professor of history and advised students and participated in assessment projects. During the November 2023 board meeting, Franklin's appointment as interim vice president of instruction was extended through June 2024. In his current role, Franklin oversees the instructional division of the college.
- » Wayne Pantini of Creston, vice president of economic development—Pantini, originally from the Marion area, became the assistant vice president of economic development, overseeing Business & Community Development, as well as plant services and the centers at SWCC, in June 2022. In January 2023, he became the vice president of economic development. Prior to SWCC, Pantini was the director of the Union County Development Association (UCDA) in Creston for almost 18 years.
- » Brandi Shay of Tingley, chief financial officer—Shay, who oversees the business office, came to SWCC in June 2023. Most recently, Shay had been a business analyst for United Farmers Cooperative. She previously worked at SWCC, 2001-2011 and 2015-2018, as a business instructor and Small Business Development Center regional director respectively. ■



*Stoaks with members of her administrative cabinet: (pictured from left to right) Brandi Shay, Dr. John Franklin, Lana Bartmess, Kim Bishop, Wayne Pantini, and Stoaks.*

# Southwestern Community



Current board of trustees members (pictured above from left to right):

- » Sue Stearns of Woodburn, District 3, Community Colleges for Iowa board member
- » Kevin Britten of Red Oak, District 5, SWCC Education Foundation board member
- » Carol Saxton of Leon, District 4
- » Fred Shearer of Corning, vice president, District 2
- » Dr. Tony Cass of Creston, president, District 8
- » Lindsay Stoaks, SWCC president
- » Carmalee Woods, board secretary
- » Zach Gunsolley of Diagonal, District 6
- » Jane Ernst of Greenfield, District 1
- » Amy Mobley of Maloy, District 7 (pictured at right)
- » Brandi Shay, board treasurer (not pictured)



Amy Mobley

Thanks to these outgoing board members:

**Vicki Sickels**, Mount Ayr, SWCC board member, October 2007-July 2022

Vicki Sickels of Mount Ayr, stepped down from the board of trustees in July 2022. Sickels and her husband relocated to the Des Moines area. Sickels had been the District 7 representative on SWCC's board since October 2007. During the July 2022 meeting, Cass thanked Sickels for her "time, talent, and service" to the college.

Best of luck to you and your family, Vicki!

Sickels was replaced on the board in August 2022 by Amy Mobley (pictured above at right) of Maloy. Mobley was elected to the position in November 2023. She is the chief nursing officer at Ringgold County Hospital in Mount Ayr.



Vicki Sickels



# College Board of Trustees

By Terri Higgins



PHOTO BY JOEL WIRES



*Jerry Smith*

my life. I've met hundreds of people, made hundreds of friends ... I've learned a lot, have traveled the state and seen lots of community colleges. People don't realize Iowa is recognized as one of the best community college systems in the country."

Smith was replaced on the board by Sue Stearns of Woodburn, who was appointed as District 3 board member in July 2023 and elected to the position in November 2023.

Best of luck to you, Jerry! We thank you for your years of service and we will miss your strong leadership locally and at the state level! ■

**Jerry Smith**, Osceola, SWCC board member, May 1997-June 2023

*Smith also served as Southwestern's Community Colleges for Iowa board member and as a SWCC Education Foundation board member.*

Jerry Smith of Osceola, retired from the SWCC board of trustees in June 2023, following 26 years of service. In addition to serving as the SWCC representative to Community Colleges for Iowa, Smith was the member who served on the SWCC Education Foundation board. During the March 2023 board of trustees meeting, when Smith announced his retirement, Dr. Tony Cass, SWCC board president, told Smith, "You've been an extremely valuable board member for all these years."

As Smith closed out his final board meeting in May 2023 (pictured below), he stated, "After a few hundred meetings, and lots of years, I would tell you all my participation in this has really enriched

*Smith received a commemorative plaque during his final meeting as a board of trustees member*



# Student awards and honors

## SWCC has two medal winners at SkillsUSA

Southwestern Community College (SWCC) came home with two national medal winners following the 2023 SkillsUSA Championships, held June 19-23, in Atlanta, Georgia. Brady Pearson of Knoxville received gold in electrical technology and Lucas Lynch of Creston placed silver in collision repair.

Pearson, a 2021 graduate of Knoxville High School, finished first in electrical construction wiring (secondary division). Pearson earned his diploma in



Brady Pearson



Lucas Lynch

electrical technology from SWCC in June 2022 and his Associate of Applied Science degree in electrical technology in June 2023.

Pearson became SWCC's third national electrical champion. Other gold medal winners in electrical technology have included Daniel Leonard of Mount Ayr in 2016 and Cory Marquardt of Creston in 2018. Both individuals are now electrical professionals in SWCC's region.

Lynch finished second nationally in collision repair technology (secondary division). Lynch, a 2023 Creston High School graduate, completed courses through SWCC's Career Academy auto collision repair/refinish program for high school students from 2021-23. ■



Continued online

## Students place at national leadership conference

A group of SWCC business and information technology students competed at the Business Professionals of America National Leadership Conference, from April 26-30, 2023, in Anaheim, California. The students had a great time in California and placed well in competition. ■



Continued online



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Pictured from left to right: Cody Anderson of Murray, Hallica Warren-Anderson of Alpha, IL, and Brianna Stewart of Kellerton



# SWCC students receive Downbeat Magazine Student Music Awards

A number of Southwestern Community College (SWCC) School for Music Vocations' students and vocal groups were honored as 2023 DownBeat Magazine Student Music Award winners. The awards were announced in the June 2023 issue of the magazine.



*Vocal Jazz Soloist, Community College Co-Winner, Kiersten Conway of Solon*



PHOTO BY JEREMIA GARDINER

*Small Vocal Jazz Group, Community College Winner, First Take*

*Vocal Jazz Soloist, Community College Outstanding Performance and Engineered Studio Recording, Community College Outstanding Recordings, Elijah Thiessen of Marshalltown*



PHOTOS BY JOEL WIRES



PHOTO BY JEREMIA GARDINER

*Vocal Jazz Soloist, High School Honors Co-Winner and Vocal Jazz Soloist, Community College Co-Winner, Jasione Veil, of Carpentersville, Illinois*



*Blues/Pop/Rock Group, Community College Outstanding Performances, SMV Multiplicity*



*Blues/Pop/Rock Soloist, Community College Winner, Katie Graham of Chicago, Illinois, Vocalist and Bass*

PHOTO BY JEREMIA GARDINER

# Athletic Highlights



PHOTOS BY SCOTT VICKER

➤ **Mark Evans**—Southwestern Assistant Track & Field Coach Mark Evans was named the NJCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Midwest Region Women's Assistant Coach of the Year by the USTFCCCA during the national championships in Hobbs, NM. Evans coached four national qualifiers, and was coach of the No. 4 ranked women's javelin event squad in the country. The Spartan women had never qualified more than one event in any previous season to the national championships.



➤ **Molly Venteicher**—Molly Venteicher punctuated her record-breaking Southwestern career by earning All-American honors at the 2023 NJCAA Indoor Track & Field Championships in the women's weight throw. Venteicher finished sixth in the event with her best throw of 15.80 meters (51 feet, 10 inches). Venteicher finished her Spartan career with four school records and was a five-time national qualifier. She was named the 2023 Ron "Fox" Clinton Outstanding Female Athlete of the Year.



PHOTOS BY SCOTT VICKER

➤ **Golf**—Sophomore Sebastian Camacho of Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, represented the Southwestern golf team at the NJCAA Division II Championships at Swan Lake Resort Black Course in Plymouth, Indiana, in May. Camacho finished tied for 106th place with his four-round score of 330, including a low round of 77 on the final day of competition. He was the first Spartan to earn ICCAC First Team All-Region since Oliver Pearson and Reinhardt Saunderson did so in 2018. Camacho finished fourth at the North Central District Championship.



SUBMITTED PHOTO



PHOTO BY SCOTT VICKER





“**Pip**”—Head Baseball Coach Chris Piperno won the ICCAC Coach of the Year award for the 2023 season. The first-year coach guided the Spartans to 19 wins, including 10 conference wins, marking a 13-game overall improvement from the 2022 season, and a seven-game improvement in conference play. The Spartans finished 19-34 overall and 10-23 in conference play in Piperno’s first year at the helm.

**Bass Fishing**—Joey Oathoudt, left, and Wiley Ray show off their catches at a tournament last year. The 2022-23 academic year marked the first year for the Southwestern bass fishing program. Coached by Cory Dorsey, the team travels to tournaments throughout the Midwest. The inaugural roster also included Logan Eilts, Cooper Jipsen, and Cole Sorensen.



**Dance**—The Southwestern Spartan Dazzlers dance team made history by competing in the national championships for the first time in program history in April. The Spartans competed in the open pom, jazz, and hip hop categories against community colleges and universities from across the United States. The Spartans, under the direction of Head Coach Paige Russo, brought home trophies for fourth-place pom, fifth-place jazz, and fifth-place hip hop.

**Sports Shooting**—Southwestern’s sports shooting team won a national championship in sporting clays at the ACUI National Championships in San Antonio, Texas, in March. Sophomore Cole Sorensen (front row, on far right) also took first place Classic All-American in the individual men’s class.

PHOTO BY JOEL WIRES





# Always Remembered

By Scott Vicker

The SWCC community spent the latter part of July 2023 and beyond grieving the loss of three beloved students as the result of a July 21 car accident at the intersection of Highway 34 and 190th Street, just east of Afton.

In the end, freshmen Ella Leonard, Halsie Barnes and Madalynn Stewart all died as a result of their injuries from the crash, leaving a void in the lives of their friends and families. Campus rallied together to honor each of their lives in a pair of candlelight vigil services, first to honor Ella and Halsie, and then to honor Maddie.

All three girls were active on campus, with Leonard on the dance team, Barnes on the softball team, and Stewart on both the dance and women's basketball teams.

Their memories have been kept alive on campus by their respective teams. Head Softball Coach Danny Jensen had a large banner installed on SWCC's dugout that reads, "Play Like Halsie! #27." The dance team dedicated its jazz routine this year to Leonard

and Stewart, and held its inaugural Ella & Maddie Showcase.

On Monday, Dec. 11, the women's basketball team honored Stewart in a pregame ceremony that saw the team retire her No. 20 jersey. Head Coach Darien Wingate presented Stewart's parents, Kevin Stewart and Julie Shields, with her framed jerseys. Each member of the opposing team for the game, Grand View University's JV squad, placed a red carnation on the bench seat left empty in Stewart's honor. The date of the game was chosen because it was 20 days before Stewart's 20th birthday.

All three remain on their respective teams' roster pages on the Southwestern athletics website.

A memorial has been constructed at the accident site, including three wooden crosses painted in white, with each of the girls' names adorning a cross. Flowers and gifts surround each of the crosses, and a "happy birthday" crown rests atop Leonard's cross. It's a gentle reminder for passersby of the love their friends and families have for each of the girls. ■

*Women's basketball coach Darien Wingate presents Maddie's parents and sisters with her framed jerseys.*

PHOTOS BY SCOTT VICKER



Read more online.

*Spartan dance team performs its jazz routine tribute to Ella and Maddie.*

# New name, same great department

By Scott Vicker

There's a new face on campus. Or, a new department name, at least.

Back in May, SWCC's adult & continuing education department rebranded itself and now operates as SWCC Business & Community Development.

The new name better represents the department's goals, including the outreach of the division to businesses and communities served within the college's region.

Programs such as adult literacy, continuing education, corporate training, customized training, early childhood education/Parents as Teachers, EMS/health-related services, GAP/PACE tuition assistance, health occupation education, and the Small Business Development Center all operate within the department.

"SWCC Business & Community Development is committed to providing customized, affordable programs through innovative partnerships, in-turn creating pathways for success," SWCC Vice President of Economic Development Wayne Pantini said in a May 2023 press release. "We look forward to continuing to build our programs and services to benefit individuals, businesses, and communities throughout our region."

The department is currently working on two new major projects to better serve those communities.

First, in a partnership with Clarke County Development Corporation (CCDC), is the ORBIT (Osceola Regional Business and Industrial Technology) Center (pictured above), which will be located adjacent to SWCC's Osceola Center on the south side of Highway 34.

The ORBIT Center is being fully funded by CCDC and will offer various trainings for regional industries. Those trainings will be able to utilize classroom space at the Osceola Center. SWCC will provide all the programming and administration at the ORBIT Center. The center will allow SWCC to expand its program offerings through the Osceola Center.

"We are going to maximize our current Osceola Center and utilize the classrooms they have in there," Pantini said. "The center itself will be used as lab space. We are looking into

# SWCC

**BUSINESS & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

the feasibility of reestablishing a welding lab in the south side of the Osceola Center. We learned that was already a welding lab when the building was first built, then it was retrofitted for the building and trades program. So some of that infrastructure is already there."

SWCC is currently in the process of developing a lease agreement with CCDC for the building that will help dictate the roles of each party in terms of maintenance of the building.



*Architect's rendering of the future ORBIT Center in Osceola*

In addition, the college was recently awarded a CDL Infrastructure Grant through Iowa WorkForce Development in the amount of \$665,000. The grant funds may be used for building, purchasing, or remodeling CDL training infrastructure. The grant requires a 50 percent match from SWCC.

As part of the college's ongoing Master Facilities Planning process, options being explored for the CDL facility include either construction of a new facility at the college's ag site, or the expansion of the existing facility at the ag site.

"Right now, there is no other provider for this in southwest Iowa," Pantini said. "We feel we can serve, in the first couple of years, 60 new CDL drivers, with the anticipation we'll be able to build it up to 75 annually with the variety of endorsements in there." ■





# Coming in 2024!

The 2023-24 SWCC welding program has a giant surprise (literally) for the SWCC Creston campus coming in 2024 and here's your sneak peek!

When the students and instructors are finished building, a beautiful stainless steel SWCC logo structure, standing almost five feet tall, will grace the campus in the open area in front of the college's Instructional Center.

Luke Nelson, SWCC welding instructor, is spearheading the project.

Once the sculpture is complete, get ready to selfie! ■



PHOTOS BY SCOTT VICKER



Read more online.



## SWCC Early Retirements

Congrats, retirees:

- » Jeanine Adkins
- » Kyle Harvey
- » Terri Tussey
- » Steve Westphal



View photos online.

## Remembering the '62 Golden Bears run to nationals



Read more online.

Before SWCC became Southwestern, Head Coach Dale Howard and the 1962 Creston Community College Bears men's basketball team earned their way to the national tournament

PHOTO BY CRESTON NEWS ADVERTISER

Online Exclusive Content



# SWCC in the Community

Follow the QR code to the SWCC website to read more about how SWCC has assisted Creston and the surrounding communities.



Read more online.

*Southwestern donates land for childcare center parking lot*

PHOTO BY JOEL WIRES



PHOTO BY GREATER REGIONAL HEALTH



*Meals from the Heartland breaks packaging record*

*Registered nursing students adopt family*



SUBMITTED PHOTO

*Home reconstruction underway in Diagonal*

PHOTO BY TERRI HIGGINS

*Pen Pal program builds relationships between Creston fifth graders and SWCC student-athletes*



SUBMITTED PHOTO



SUBMITTED PHOTO



*Electrical program completes work at Clarke County Fairgrounds in Osceola*

SUBMITTED PHOTO

*SWCC hosts 600 high school students for CTE Day*



*SWCC admissions and ag departments participate in Southwest IA Women in Ag Career Day in Mount Ayr*



# Two SWCC employees honored by Community Colleges for Iowa

By Terri Higgins

**T**wo Southwestern Community College (SWCC) employees, Denise Kelley of Afton and Deb Roberts of Corning, were among the honorees at the Community Colleges for Iowa 2023 Awards, taking place during the inaugural Community Colleges Convention and Tradeshow, held on Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2023, at the Hilton Des Moines.

The Community Colleges for Iowa awards recognize faculty, staff, and leaders from across Iowa's 15 community colleges for their dedication to excellence and accessible education for all. Kelley, SWCC controller, was honored as an outstanding staff member. Roberts, SWCC mathematics instructor, was honored as an outstanding faculty member.

According to Kelley's nomination, "Denise is often stretched in many directions, however, no matter how much she has on her plate, she makes sure every one of her staff members' needs are met. Throughout her career, Denise has navigated several key leadership changes within her division and the college overall."

Roberts has served as a full-time math instructor for SWCC since August 2015. According to her nomination, "Deb's most incredible attribute is her commitment to student success."

Honorees at the event included one outstanding staff member and one outstanding faculty member from each of Iowa's 15 community colleges. These outstanding individuals were selected by their colleges for their service and leadership to the colleges and communities. ■

SUBMITTED PHOTO



Pictured (from L to R): Dr. John Franklin, Deb Roberts, Denise Kelley, and Lindsay Stoaks