

## Opportunities are Endless...

### **Joliet Junior College Student:**

### **Katie Wiatrak**



When Katie Wiatrak was considering careers, she knew she wanted three things: the chance to help animals, a lot of variety, and a training program that would set her on the path to success. Katie found all three when she enrolled in the Veterinary Medical Technology Program (VMTP) Associate in Applied Science at Joliet Junior College (JJC), in Joliet, Illinois. The program was exactly what Katie needed to prepare her to take the Veterinary Technician National Exam (VTNE) and receive her license as a certified veterinary technician (CVT).

Katie is a Certified Veterinary Technician, after successfully completing her state board exam, and is currently working at the same animal hospital where she completed her JJC clinical rotations.

Her goal is to continue working and specializing in marine mammals (an interest sparked by one of her externships at the Marine Mammal Center in California) or equine.

The program at JJC helped Katie fulfill her career wish list of working with animals, lots of variety, and getting the training she needed to succeed, commenting, **“The program not only helped me to network with a variety of people, but it helped me build a foundation of knowledge for my future endeavors.”**

For more information on this program, visit [JJC’s Veterinary Technology website](#).



“I am grateful to have made so many connections throughout the program. It has given me exposure to many different types of jobs I can pursue with this degree.”

**Katie Wiatrak**



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# Nurses of the Animal World

## Joliet Junior College Student: Rachel O'Lone

The Veterinary Medical Technology Program (VMTP) at Joliet Junior College (JJC) in Joliet, Illinois was a perfect fit for animal lover, Rachel O'Lone. She knew she wanted to become a certified veterinary technician (CVT) and was looking for a school where she could have some flexibility in her schedule yet had a program that would prepare her to pass the required board exams.

JJC offers an Associate in Applied Science degree in their Veterinary Medical Technology program. Students can complete the program within two years by going full time, or within four years if they choose to attend part-time and can attend classes during the day or in the evening. Rachel credits her success in school to hard work and the knowledgeable and caring faculty.

During her time at JJC, Rachel put her leadership skills to work, serving as the president of the Veterinary Technician

Club. It wasn't long before she realized most "pet parents" aren't aware of the many ways CVTs help their pets when they visit the veterinarian. Rachel became an advocate for changing the name of Veterinary Technician to Veterinary Nurse to help the public better understand the multitude of responsibilities CVTs have. Rachel explained her reasoning for the name change when was featured in the March 2020 issue of JAVMAnews. **"In the veterinary field, we are respected as nurses, but I think the public just doesn't realize what we do and all that we do,"** O'Lone said. **"One of my (human health) nursing friends said: 'Oh, I just thought you were the one who weighed the dog.' And I'm like: 'No, oh, no, no. I am running the anesthesia during surgery.'"**

For more information on this program, visit [JJC's Veterinary Technology webpage](#).



"Every instructor in the program cares about their students' success. They were very patient when we had questions, and there were MANY! Also, the program has a tutor that was very knowledgeable and helped student so much with difficult topics."

**Rachel O'Lone**



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# Roadblock: Don't Let a Detour Keep You from Reaching Your Goals

**Danville Area Community College Student:  
Yvonne Parker**



For Yvonne Parker, the challenges she faced being a teen parent were only a bump in the road when it came to getting the education she needed to ensure a secure future for her young family. Her decision to enter the Health Information Technology Program at Danville Area Community College (DACC) in Danville, Illinois in 2012 would be the first step on a journey that would lead her to a Senior Coder position with Visual Connections, LLC and just months away from a master's degree.

The Health Information Technology Program at DACC was a perfect fit for Yvonne. She completed the program in 2014, earning her associate degree in Health Information Technology and was awarded certification through the American Health information management Association for

Registered Health Information Technician and Medical Coding.

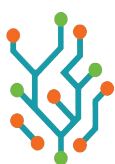
Yvonne continues her journey toward a bright future in the Health Information Management field. She is working on her Bachelor of Science at Indiana University – School of Informatics and Computing Accelerated Health Information Management and Master of Science in Health Informatics. She will graduate with a B.S. in Health Information Management – Registered Health Information Administration and an M.S. in Health Informatics by December 2020. She looks forward to pursuing a career as a privacy officer in the healthcare field.

For information on this program, visit [DACC's Health Information Technology website](#).



“Everyone faces obstacles. You will have two choices. 1) Stop and give up, or 2) Take a detour and make your own path to reach your goals!”

**Yvonne Parker**



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**Danville Area  
Community College**

## Changing Course - to Get on the Right Course

### **Danville Area Community College Student: Hannah Harvey**



After a year in the workforce following her graduation from Ball State University, Hannah Harvey realized that the profession she had planned for was not what she hoped it would be. Although going back to school and re-training for a new career seemed overwhelming, a meeting with the Health Information Technology Director at Danville Area Community College made Hannah realize that not only had she found a career that was a perfect fit, she'd also found the perfect place to prepare for it. Danville Area Community College's (DACC) Health Information Technology (HIT) associate degree program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management (CAHIIM).

Like most students, Hannah had to cope with the challenge of continuing her education online during the COVID pandemic. When DACC moved to virtual instruction, her instructors and the program director

regularly checked on her progress and asked if she needed help. Hannah progressed through and completed the rigorous program without missing a beat.

Hannah completed the program and earned an Associate Degree in Health Information Technology, as well as certificates in Health Data Analysis and Medical Coding. She is a member of the Illinois Health Information Management Association as well as the American Health Information Management Association. Hannah recently began a position as a medical records clerk at a community health center in Indiana.

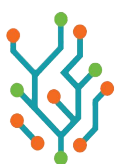
After she gets three years of experience under her belt, she intends to sit for the Certified Health Data Analyst exam.

For more information about this program, visit [DACC's Health Information Technology website](#).



"I have learned so much during this year in the program."

**Hannah Harvey**



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**Danville Area  
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# Graduate Easing Muscle Tension

## Lake Land College Student: Chloe Carson



Throughout her childhood, Chloe Carson of Brownstone, Illinois watched helplessly as her mother suffered with chronic pain. As difficult as that was for a young woman with a natural desire to help people, Chloe found a future career in her situation. **“The true inspiration came to me as I watched my mom struggle with pain throughout my childhood,”** Chloe recalled. **“The only thing that really helped was massage.”**

After she graduated from high school, Chloe searched for a career where she knew she could make a difference in people’s lives. Chloe selected the Massage Therapy program at Lake Land College in Mattoon, Illinois to earn the necessary certificates.

**“When I first entered the program, I wasn’t really sure what to expect,”** Chloe said, **“As a recent high school graduate, the whole concept of college was kind of overwhelming and I was afraid that I wouldn’t understand the subjects or fit in with the other students.”** Chloe’s apprehension quickly faded as she continued to receive encouragement and support from the faculty and staff at Lake Land. **“I learned very quickly though that**

**everyone involved in the program wanted all of us to learn and succeed.”**

When it comes to the quality of the program and people at Lake Land, Chloe is clearly a fan. She offers this advice to anyone considering pursuing a career in Massage Therapy. **“If you are even slightly considering a career in massage, the Massage Therapy program at Lake Land is a great place to start. In addition to developing the skills necessary for a career in massage, the program instills a sense of community between massage therapists and opens doors for the future. Just as there are many styles of massage available to learn and practice, there are also many types of massage therapists, and the program fosters an atmosphere that is welcoming to everyone.”**

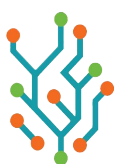
Chloe is now employed as a massage therapist at Serenity Therapeutic Massage in St. Elmo and Corrective Care Chiropractic in Vandalia, Illinois.

For more information about this program, visit Lake Land’s Massage Therapy [website](#).



“I almost always felt prepared for the next new challenge. That was largely due to all of the teachers being compassionate and willing to share their past experiences to help us understand the concepts.”

**Chloe Carson**



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## Finding the Right Fit in a Healthcare Career

**Lewis & Clark Community College Student:  
Kimberlee Lowry**



Kimberlee Lowry started her healthcare career as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), but it never seemed like just the right fit. Helping people was important to Kimberlee, so she wanted to remain in the medical field but needed further coursework that would give her more career options. In the fall of 2019, she began the Medical Assisting certificate program at Lewis and Clark Community College in Godfrey, Illinois.

At first, the curriculum posed a challenge for Kimberlee, who struggles with reading comprehension and has a difficult time understanding words, meanings of sentences, and sometimes verbal instruction. Fortunately, the program had skilled instructors who

could communicate in ways that were accessible to Kimberlee.

Kimberlee has been able to overcome her challenges to be successful in the certificate program. She will graduate in July with her Certificate of Proficiency in Medical Assisting and plans to take her Registered Medical Assistant exam. In addition, she enrolled in classes to complete her Associate of Applied Science Degree in Medical Assisting at Lewis and Clark. She will be completing her externship at BJC healthcare in St. Louis, in an orthopedic office.

For more information on this program, visit [Lewis and Clark's Medical Assisting website](#).

“My teachers helped me in ways they will never know. They were able to teach the classes in a way that I was able to understand.”

**Kimberlee Lowry**



## Workforce Development Worked for Danelia Morales

**Lewis & Clark Community College Student:  
Danelia Morales**



Danelia Morales was working as a patient registration clerk at SIHF, a medical group located in Metro-East of the St. Louis Metropolitan area, when she was chosen by her employer to participate in the Workforce Development program. Danelia always wanted to further her education but wasn't sure how it would fit into her already busy schedule of being a full-time employee as well as a wife and mother. Fortunately, the Medical Assisting program at Lewis and Clark Community College in Godfrey, Illinois had the scheduling flexibility Danelia needed to attend classes while keeping her full-time job.

Danelia attended class two days a week and was able to continue working her full-time position as well. In the classroom, she learned the administrative duties related to health care (patient intake,

records maintenance, and managing practice finances – among other skills.) The program also includes a clinical phase that involves intense hands-on training in a healthcare facility to master a variety of clinical duties such as infection control, CPR, administering injections, and performing selected diagnostic tests.

Danelia loves her new career as a Registered Medical Assistant at SIHF, and especially enjoys using her bilingual, Spanish speaking skills as she works with patients and their families. Perhaps most important to Danelia is that she was able to be an example for her son, demonstrating how important it is to seek out educational opportunities for advancement in life.

For more information on this program, visit [Lewis and Clark's Medical Assisting website](#).



“What I am grateful for in this educational journey is my job because they saw my desire to be better and they chose me for the opportunity to go back to school and be a better person.”

**Danelia Morales**



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*Empowering People*

# Kaskaskia College Graduate is a Success Story

## Kaskaskia College Student: Brandy Wall



When choosing a Dental Assisting Program, Kaskaskia College (KC) in Centralia, Illinois was a perfect fit for Brandy Wall. As a mother of two, she was looking for the flexibility and support that would set her up for success. Brandy chose to start her education at KC because it was close to home and has a great small-town feel.

Brandy chose Dental Assisting because of the daily rewards that come from helping others. She says, **“My career is very rewarding because I enjoy caring for my patients and helping them smile again! Every day is different! I’m always learning something new while educating my patients on oral hygiene at the same time! I like knowing that patients who**

**fear the dentist trust in us to make them feel comfortable and at ease! Seeing them smile and happy when leaving the office is the most amazing reward! Kaskaskia College helped with my career by having the available program for Dental Assisting.”**

Brandy is currently a dental assistant with the Dynamic Dental Group in Vandalia where she makes her home with her husband, Jerry and their two children. **“I would recommend KC to others because of the flexibility of the staff and the instructors are very knowledgeable and helpful!”**

For information on this program, visit KC’s [Dental Assisting website](#).

“KC helped start me education process by having academic advisors available to help me set up my class structure to make it manageable.”

**Brandy Wall**





## Cassandra Schrage is a KC Success Story

### Kaskaskia College Student: Cassandra Schrage



Cassandra (Sandra) Schrage of St. Rose graduated from Breese Central Community High School in 2004. Soon after graduation, Sandra had her first child and was raising him by herself while working full-time in retail. She began taking some online classes to prepare for a career, but found it difficult to balance work, school, and two active kids. Thirteen years after making the difficult decision to put her hopes for a better career on hold to focus on her family, Sandra began looking for a program that would give her the flexibility she needed to continue working and have time for her children. Kaskaskia College (KC) in Centralia, Illinois fit the bill.

Sandra began at KC by earning an Associate in Arts degree and an Associate in General Studies degree. After graduating those programs, she entered the Radiologic Technology program where she earned an Associate degree in Applied Science in Radiologic Technology. Soon after

graduation, she was offered a position as a pro re nata (PRN) Radiologic Technologist Washington County Hospital in Nashville.

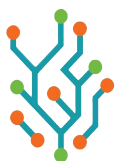
When asked why she would recommend KC to others, Sandra stated, **“The instructors I had in the Radiologic Technology Program were very dedicated to the students and making sure we succeeded!”** Sandra gives a great deal of credit to Radiologic Technology Program instructors Mimi Polczynski, Candace Slot and Sharon Elwood who went above and beyond to make sure everyone in their class succeeded. Sandra looks forward to continuing her education and considers KC a valuable partner to help her advance in her career. **“KC is my college and will continue to be as I will be continuing my education in the Diagnostic Medical Sonography program!”**

For more information on this program, visit KC's Radiologic Technology [website](#).



“I chose to start at Kaskaskia because with being a single mom I was looking for classes I could take while still being home for my kids as much as possible.”

**Cassandra Schrage**



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# KC Radiology Technology Alum Megan Diekemper is Making a Difference

## Kaskaskia College Student: Megan Diekemper



Nuclear Medicine Technologist Megan Diekemper admits being disappointed when she wasn't accepted into Kaskaskia College's (KC) Radiology Program in Centralia, Illinois right after graduation. It would be another year before Megan was accepted into the program. During that time, she took biology and math courses at KC to meet the pre-requisites to enter the Radiology Pro-gram. She even got her Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) credentials to ensure she would be a prime candidate for the program.

The KC Radiology Program prepared Megan for the 'real working world' and for passing the registration board exams. **"I can still recite some of the facts and definitions Professor Mimi Polczynski and Sharon Elwood hammered into our heads,"** she recalled. Megan especially appreciated that KC's program goes beyond teaching students how to be a quality Radiologic Technologist but exposes them to other specialty modalities in Medical Imaging. During her last modality rotation, Megan

fell in love with Nuclear Medicine. It wasn't long before she took action to achieve the next step in her career. **"I quickly applied to programs and was accepted to the program at Saint Louis University (SLU) which also included learning Positron Emission Tomography (PET)/ Computed Tomography (CT) and general CT,"** she said. **"Without those rotations, I would not be where I am today."**

Megan graduated from SLU with a bachelor's degree in Nuclear Medicine Technology. Her career has included working as a pro re nata (PRN) in X-Ray/CT/Nuclear Medicine/Bone Density, and as a full time travel Nuclear Medicine Technologist. Most recently, she has accepted a full-time position with Cancer Care Specialists of Illinois. This position includes doing PET/CT, CT and dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) exams.

For more information on this program, visit KC's Radiologic Technology [website](#).



"I actually did not get accepted into the radiology program when I first applied right out of high school. I mention this only to encourage interested students to not give up on their dreams."

**Megan Diekemper**



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# Woodlawn High School Graduate is Now Kaskaskia College Success Story

## Kaskaskia College Student: Kiara Lueking



When Kiara Lueking graduated from Woodlawn High School in 2017, she knew she wanted to continue her education in a place where she felt part of a close-knit community, could train as a Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA), and participate in her favorite pastime – softball. The PTA program at Kaskaskia College (KC) in Centralia, Illinois where she received an Associate in Applied Science Degree in Physical Therapy Assistant as well as an Associate of General Studies Degree.

While a student at KC, she was Vice President of the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Club and Captain of the Blue Angels Softball team. Kiara stated, **“After I was accepted into the Physical Therapy Program, I chose to join the PTA Club to become more involved and help out the community.”** Kiara adds that being involved with the softball team kept her busy and developed her as an individual. She said, **“I was chosen as a team captain which allowed me to become a better leader, grow as a person,**

**and ultimately become a better PTA.”**

Kiara took the licensure exam in July to get her PTA license. She stated, **“I decided not to transfer to a four-year university and instead begin my profession as a PTA. I started working in June at Mulvaney Rehab Services in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, and was hired full-time in October.”**

Kiara says she chose Kaskaskia College for her college education because she wanted to begin at a junior college. She said, **“KC is a phenomenal school filled with professors, staff, and a President ready to help you any step of the way. You truly can go to anyone at KC and find the help you are looking for. KC has a small town feel where you can get the one-on-one help and guidance, but also get a top-notch education that prepares you for whatever future you may have.”**

For more information on this program, visit [KC's Physical Therapy Assistant website](#).

“Starting at a junior college is a great way to get the feel of college, save money, make awesome friends, and develop yourself as an individual before transferring to a university or starting your profession.”

Kiara Lueking



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# Kaskaskia College Graduate Ashley West - Helping Others Breathe a Little Easier

## Kaskaskia College Student: Ashley West



It was a presentation at a career fair at Kaskaskia College (KC) that set Ashley West on the path to becoming a Respiratory Therapist. Impressed Kaskaskia's rigorous program and dedicated faculty support, Ashley enrolled and found that the program exceeded her expectations. **"The program is especially challenging, but the professors advocate for their students to be successful,"** Ashley recalled. **"Put that together with networking, and the acquisition of skills needed to exceed along with the expectations of professors within the program was a huge difference in me succeeding."**

KC's Associate Degree in Respiratory Therapy provides five semesters of instruction in respiratory theory, lab and clinical practice. It also provides instruction in biological and behavioral sciences and humanities. Beyond the classwork, KC also provides networking opportunities within

the program by offering membership in the Respiratory Care Club for majors, and outside the program with organizations such as Phi Theta Kappa. Ashley credits her membership in Phi Theta Kappa with helping her network and build relationships with students outside her major. She also views the quality of teaching she received while in the Respiratory Therapy Program as 'second to none.'

After graduating with an Associate in Applied Science from KC, Ashley transferred to Southern Illinois University Carbondale to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Health Care Management. She now works for Cardinal Glennon Hospital in St. Louis as a Transport Respiratory Therapist, which was one of her career goals.

For more information on this program, visit [KC's Respiratory Therapy website](#).

“I would highly recommend the program to others who desire a career in Respiratory Therapy, for it is one of the reasons for my accomplished career.”

**Ashley West**



# Recent Kaskaskia Graduate Adrienne Moorhead is a True Success Story

## Kaskaskia College Student: Adrienne Moorhead



Adrienne Moorhead of Sandoval, Illinois graduated from Centralia High School and enrolled in the Nurse Assistant program at Kaskaskia College. After she became a Certified Nursing Assistant in 2000, she began the next phase of her education to earn her Associate Degree in Nursing, but fate intervened. **“In 2001 I was married to a member of the military,”** Adrienne shared, **“and due to frequent changes in duty stations, I was unable to complete nursing school.”**

During this time Adrienne worked as a CNA in various positions, and even took a career detour working as a licensed cosmetologist for eight years. She never forgot her dream of becoming a Registered Nurse and in 2018 the time and circumstances were right for her to return to Centralia and enroll in the Nursing Program at Kaskaskia College. **“I finally got the courage to go back to school and I had a good support system, so I went for it,”** Adrienne said.

In May of 2020 Adrienne achieved her goal and earned her Associate Degree in Nursing. Future plans include transferring to Indiana Wesleyan University to earn her Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Adrienne started her career on the Cardio Step-down unit at Saint Louis University Hospital.

No matter where she works, or where she continues her education, Adrienne will always be grateful to the faculty at KC. Adrienne stated, **“I chose to start a new career in the KC Nursing Program because I had continually heard great things about the nursing program and the quality of nurses that come from KC.”** She added, **“The nursing educators at KC are dedicated to making sure you receive the education you need to be a successful nurse.”**

For more information on this program, visit [KC's Associate Nursing website](#).

“KC has given me a solid foundation to not only be a good nurse, but the tools to succeed in my bachelor's program.”

Adrienne Moorhead



# Truck Driver Leaves the Road to Become a Registered Nurse

**John A. Logan College Student:  
Christopher Glazik**



Truck driver Christopher Glazik knew it was time for a career change. He wanted an opportunity to work with people from his community, provide for his family, and be present in the life of his son. Christopher decided to begin the training that would eventually lead to becoming a registered nurse. He selected the Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) and Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN)-Registered Nurse (RN) programs at John A. Logan College (JALC) in Carterville, Illinois. It looked as though Christopher had found the perfect program. However, as a single working parent, there was only one thing that stood between him and starting on the path to his future career, childcare.

Enter Career and Technical Education (CTE). The CTE system prepares individuals for high-skill, in-demand employment. CTE programs offer flexible scheduling,

work-based learning, and stackable credentials that provide a pathway from education to employment. CTE also offers other academic support services to help students succeed, such as childcare assistance. For Christopher, that childcare assistance removed the biggest obstacle he faced in being able to pursue his education to become a registered nurse.

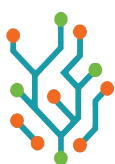
Christopher completed the ADN program at John A. Logan, earning his LPN certificate as well as an Associate Degree in Nursing. Since then, he's had the opportunity to work in critical care and assist veterans. Christopher continued his education by completing his bachelor's degree, and he was recently accepted into a master's program.

For more information on this program, visit JALC's [Allied Health website](#).



"Being a working single parent is hard enough, let alone adding school to the mix. One of my biggest concerns and obstacles was ensuring my son was taken care of when I was in class or clinics. CTE helped decrease the stress of that and allowed me to focus that attention on my studies."

**Christopher Glazik**



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# Making a Difference in Lives with a Career Change

## Southwestern Illinois College Student: Danielle Wuest



Danielle Wuest had been employed at McDonald's since she was 17. She knew she wanted a career where she could make a difference and help people. Danielle began taking the general education courses she would need to enter the Respiratory Care (RC) program at Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC) while still working full-time at McDonald's. Once she was accepted into the program, Southwestern's flexible scheduling allowed her to continue to work part-time at McDonald's to help pay for college.

Danielle graduated with an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Degree in Respiratory Care in May 2020. She successfully completed the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) Therapist Multiple Choice (TMC) examination and the Clinical Simulation (CSE) examination within two weeks of graduating to earn

both the Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT) and Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) national credentials.

Thanks to the relationships the RC faculty has developed with hospitals and healthcare facilities in the area, they are able to help students obtain employment within the profession. The Respiratory Care Program Coordinator reached out to one of the clinical sites that expressed interest in Danielle, and recommended her for a student respiratory technician position. Danielle began working as a student respiratory technician while in the final semester of the program. She accepted a full-time employment offer from the same hospital, once her state license was processed.

For more information on this program, visit SWIC's Respiratory Care [website](#).

“The program changed my life in many ways. It made me fall in love with a career that I am so happy doing, I constantly get to help people and see how my work helps them. The program is hard, but it's so worth it in the end!”

**Danielle Wuest**

