

ROCKET NATION

WITH DIANE DUCEY



The weather may be extremely cold, but our Rocket Basketball team is on fire! With a record of 19 wins and 2 losses (both to Teutopolis, IL at the beginning of the season and Effingham's Holiday Classic) the Head Basketball Coach at Unity, Matt Franks, is pleased with the way the season has been going. With a quick pivot from the State Football Championship Game in late November into the basketball season, Franks, has 9 seniors (1, Krewe Eckstein recovering from knee surgery from a football injury) that have been playing under his

direction in his 3 seasons at Unity High School (started in '23-'24). With some big games on the horizon, Thursday January 29th is against the Monticello Sages. Unity Basketball Alumni are invited to be a part of the festivities in the Rocket Center on Saturday, January 31st at 2:30pm during the game against Maroa-Forsyth. Coach Franks commented on the great environment for Rocket Fans with the Pep Band taking up a whole section with musicians under the direction of Matt Cowser. Plus, the Rockette Dance Team that performs

at half time are gearing up for their State Competition in Bloomington on January 30th. February 6th at 7pm the St. Joseph Ogden Spartans will be visit the Rocket Center. The new cheer squad is hosting a clinic and on February 13th during the game against Pontiac, we'll see some young, talented, aspiring cheerleaders performing for fans! Before you know it, the Philo Mayor's son (Mayor Larry Franks), will be getting ready for post-season play after Senior Night against Oakwood on February 20th. Go Rockets!

Rocket Rundown

By Olivia Witheft
Student Writer

Boys wrestling went to Vandalia on Thursday to duel Vandalia and OSF. Unity went 51-26 against Oakwood Salt Fork and 22-50 against Vandalia. On Saturday, they competed in the OPRF tournament. Vincent Abon (106) placed 5th, AJ Daly (138) placed 5th, Hayden Smith (150) placed 5th, Ben Mullins (157) placed 4th, Abe Davidson (165) placed 1st, Josh Heath (175) placed 2nd, Bradley Smith (190) placed 2nd, and Christian Sellers (285) placed 4th. They will compete this Saturday in Colfax.

Girls wrestled on Monday in Normal with the normal re-

sults. Phoenix Molina placed first in her weight bracket and Ava Beldo placed second in hers. They were scheduled to compete on Saturday, but due to extreme weather conditions it was cancelled.

Boy's Basketball started their week on Monday competing in the MLK Shootout in Bloomington. They played Joliet Catholic in Unity's highest scoring game of the season. The Rockets beat Joliet Catholic 83-69. On Tuesday, they played Rantoul at home and won 68-49. On Friday, they traveled to Prairie Central and beat the Hawks 59-48. On Saturday, their game against Mt. Zion was not cancelled. The Rockets won their 10th

game in a row 74-49. They will play Bloomington Central Catholic on Tuesday, Monticello on Thursday, and Saturday they will play Maroa Forsyth.

Girls Basketball played only two games last week. Their first game was against Rantoul. The girls beat the Eagles 55-48. They played Prairie Central on Thursday and won 48-50. Next week they will play Bloomington Central Catholic on Tuesday and Monticello on Friday.

Dance had sectionals on Saturday and placed 3rd qualifying them for state. They will compete this Friday in Bloomington for the preliminary round.

Taking Care: Neighborly Love



Clearing the sidewalks on Walnut St in Tolono and East Side Park area, Jim Snodgrass puts a scoop on his mower to clear out snow on Monday, January 26. At almost 85, Jim is doing his part to make the town a better place! Photo by Diane Ducey.

Parkland College Trustees Meeting Minutes

The Parkland College Board of Trustees approved the naming of the Shapland Student Commons at their monthly meeting Wednesday.

The south end of the college's Student Union will be renamed thanks to a generous \$1 million gift to the Parkland College Foundation in honor of the late community member and business leader George T. Shapland. The gift was Parkland College exterior facilitated by his children—Charlie Shapland, Mark Shapland, and Laura Shapland—with funds designated to the Parkland College General Nursing Fund and unrestricted support to the Parkland College Foundation, to be used where the need is greatest. The name will stay in place for a minimum of twenty years.

The board heard legislative updates, a report from Parkland President Pam Lau, and more from other college leadership. The meeting was preceded by a budget work-

shop led by Chief Financial Officer Amie Lloyd and Senior Vice President Christopher Randles.

In other business, Trustees approved:

the purchase of:
a used 2024 Toyota Highlander Hybrid, Shields Auto Group, Rantoul, Ill., \$39,572
a used 2025 Ford Maverick from Shields Auto Group, Rantoul, Ill., \$31,577.

the bid for:
B wing window replacement from Barber and DeAtley Inc, Urbana, Ill., \$221,230
D-Wing roof replacement from Petry-Kuhne Company, Champaign, Ill., \$720,000

Weld coupon cutting and preparation tools, Weldstar, Urbana, Ill., \$83,989
the filing of grant applications:

Fabricators and Manufacturers Association (FMA) Foundation: 2026 SparkForce Summer Manufacturing Camp Grant
U.S. Department of Justice—Office of Justice Pro-

grams: Bulletproof Vest Partnership

Illinois Community College Board (ICCB): Advancing Developmental Education Reform

funds awarded to the College from external sources:

ICCB: FY26 Noncredit Strategies at Work (NSAW)

Caterpillar Foundation: Faculty Development and Accelerated Student Completion

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO): 2025 Apprenticeship Expansion

ICCB: FY26 Strengthening Mental Health Supports at Illinois Community Colleges

appointments and modifications:

Hannah Gudeman, Coordinator, Early College Services, Admissions and Records

Melinda Hoepker, Program Manager, Apprenticeship Support Services, Workforce Development

Aaron Wilson, Multimedia Support Specialist, Campus Technologies

while carrying a minimum of 12 credit hours of graded course work. Avery E Watson, of Philo, IL working on an Agronomy, B.S.

bestowed on students who demonstrate a high level of academic study and show dedication to personal achievement and standards of excellence.

February 7.

The Giertz Gallery fosters critical thinking and community dialogue through contemporary art. The college's educational programming encourages deeper understanding and meaningful engagement, offering opportunities to interact with both artwork and artists.

The gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Thursday, and noon to 3 p.m. on Saturday.

To find the gallery when classes are in session, use the M6 parking lot on the north side of campus. Enter through

Parkland College Student Union Commons to Be Renamed Shapland Student Commons

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. — A key gathering place within the Student Union at Parkland College will be renamed thanks to a generous \$1 million family gift to the Parkland College Foundation.

The south end of the Student Union will now be the Shapland Student Commons, named for the late community member and George T. Shapland business leader George T. Shapland. His children, Charlie Shapland, Mark Shapland, and Laura Shapland, facilitated the gift.

"I'm glad we can do something that honors our father and what he championed in life," said Charlie. "Education was something he supported, especially in the trades, and believed strongly in the impacts it can have, both in his life and for others. I think he believed in people who were willing to take the leap, and we just want his legacy to be a part of what helps Parkland make that possible."

The gift will be designated to the Parkland College General Nursing Fund and

unrestricted support to the Parkland College Foundation, to be used where the need is greatest.

"Parkland College empowers students to build brighter futures for themselves, their families, and their communities by providing access to high-quality education, and the Foundation ensures the resources are in place for that mission to thrive," Parkland President Pam Lau said. "This generous gift from the Shapland family in George's honor opens new doors for learning, growth, and advancement—creating opportunities for more students to achieve their goals."

As co-chair of the Parkland Foundation Major Gift Campaign "Creating Brighter Futures," which ended in 2005, George led efforts in raising \$14 million for the college. He also collaborated with community organizations and individuals to support academic programs and provide scholarships for Parkland students. Over the years, he graciously gave his time,

energy, ideas, and financial support to the college.

Shapland established a scholarship in his name in 2003. He was also instrumental in the purchase of lab equipment used in the Health Professions department.

"The Shapland family's leadership has been instrumental to the growth and strength of the Parkland College Foundation," Parkland Foundation Executive Director Danielle Wilberg said. "Their service and generosity extend far beyond this gift and reflect a long-standing commitment to Parkland and the community."

A few of his career achievements include 2004 Champaign County Chamber of Commerce Most Valuable Citizen, 2006 Parkland College Honorary Degree Recipient, and 2015 Parkland College Foundation Lifetime of Entrepreneurship Award.

For more information on Parkland Foundation gifts and alumni, visit parkland.edu/foundation.

Giertz Gallery to Present Lecture by Artist Malcolm Mobutu Smith

The Giertz Gallery at Parkland College will present an artist lecture by Malcolm Mobutu Smith on Thursday, February 5, in the Staerkel Planetarium.

Mobutu Smith's artworks are guided by improvisations, fluctuating between volumetric forms and graphic flatness. His ceramics, inspired by graffiti, comic books, and organic abstraction, often merge Heyo Cloud Scoopwheel-thrown and hand-built elements to reinterpret cups, bottles, and vases. His background informs his practice, blending influences from hip hop, jazz, identity politics, CAD/CAM, printmaking, and drawing.

An Assistant Professor of Ceramic Art at Indiana University, his work has appeared in venues in New York City, Kansas City, Beijing, and Taiwan. He has also participated in residences including Haystack, Watershed, and the Robert McNamara Foundation.

Smith's lecture at 1:15 pm will be followed by a demonstration in the ceramics studio. His work is currently featured in the gallery's "Ceramics Biennial: Detour," curated by Tyler Lotz and Albion Stafford, until Saturday,



February 7.

The gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Thursday, and noon to 3 p.m. on Saturday.

To find the gallery when classes are in session, use the M6 parking lot on the north side of campus. Enter through

Door X-7, turn left, and follow the ramps uphill to the highest point of the first floor, where the gallery is located.

The Giertz Gallery acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council Agency. All events in the accessible gallery are free and open to the public. Parkland College is a Section 504/ADA-compliant institution. For accommodations, please call 217/353-2338 or email accessibilityservices@parkland.edu.

Learn more about the exhibition at parkland.edu/gallery.

Newman University announces 2025 fall Dean's List

WICHITA, Kansas (January 15, 2026) - Newman University has released its 2025 Fall Dean's List. A total of 468 undergraduate students achieved the qualifications required: completing at least 12 credit hours and achieving

a grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

Tyler Hensch of Philo, IL was among those honored with this achievement.

The Dean's List is an honor

bestowed on students who demonstrate a high level of academic study and show dedication to personal achievement and standards of excellence.

Iowa State University announces fall 2025 Dean's List

AMES, Iowa- More than 11,800 Iowa State University students have been recognized for outstanding academic achievement by being

named to the 2025 fall semester Dean's List. Students named to the Dean's List must earn a grade point average of at least 3.50 on a 4.00 scale

while carrying a minimum of 12 credit hours of graded course work. Avery E Watson, of Philo, IL working on an Agronomy, B.S.

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