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L&C College for Life Program expanding to N.O. Nelson Campus

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GODFREY – Lewis and Clark Community College's popular College for Life program for adults with intellectual disabilities is coming to the college's N.O. Nelson Campus in Edwardsville in Fall 2019.

A $272,000 grant from the Illinois Council on Disabilities, spread over the course of three years, is making it all possible through the Southern Illinois Transition Project.

With the Godfrey Campus' program currently at full capacity, the program's expansion will open 24 new spots for students from Madison, Jersey, Macoupin, Greene, Calhoun, St. Clair, Randolph, Clinton and Bond counties in Illinois. Persons on the program's current waiting list will get the first chances to enroll.

L&C's College for Life program's goal is to promote lifelong learning as well as personal enrichment and independence.

Through the college's ongoing partnerships with Challenge Unlimited and the Madison County Transition Council, students also have access to employment. Challenge Unlimited's Job Club meets in Fobes Hall on the college's Godfrey Campus every Friday.

"Many College for Life students transition to work after two to three years, but there is no end to the program," said Kathy Haberer, director of L&C Student Development and Counseling. "Students can continue as long as they would like."

Like the original program, the curriculum will be student interest-driven. Classes mix academics with hands-on activities, ranging from reading, math and foreign language to pop culture, healthy snacking, sewing and scrapbooking.

Lead Instructor Kay Werner is already working to get the program off the ground.

“CFL gives students an opportunity to become more independent, to continue learning and to advocate for themselves and others,” Werner said. “It gives them an outlet for their creativity. They get to shine in their strengths and be recognized for it. I am so excited to be part of opening a door of opportunity for more students and drawing from Edwardsville community resources to make this a unique program.”

The new program will partner with Edwardsville High School to start offering services for those students with intellectual disabilities who may choose to begin taking classes at N.O. Nelson.

“For these students in the Edwardsville community, there will be a place for you after high school,” Haberer said.

The program will launch with two instructors, two aides, and an additional aide, who will float between the Edwardsville and Godfrey programs. There also will be a dedicated classroom or two at N.O. Nelson, just for College for Life.

Lewis and Clark started serving students with intellectual disabilities in 1991. College for Life in its current form, separate from college-track students in L&C’s Supported College Transition program, began in 2007.

Since then, L&C’s program has become a trailblazer in the field, most recently helping John Wood Community College in Quincy, Illinois, launch their version, which is currently in its third year.

College for Life costs a minimum of $475 per semester, for three courses. Students are not limited, however, to just three courses. Most students and their families pay out of pocket for the program, though there is a small scholarship fund available through the college for new students.

An informational meeting will be held next Spring.

For more information, visit www.lc.edu/disability.