

# State Farm Grants \$10,000 To Blackburn College

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CARLINVILLE - Area State Farm agents recently presented a \$10,000 donation to support Blackburn College's "Blackburn and Beyond" program. A federally-approved comprehensive transition program, Blackburn and Beyond is designed to provide highly supported opportunities for individuals with cognitive exceptionality to grow and learn in a college environment.

Dr. Cindy Rice is Blackburn's education department chair and coordinator of the Blackburn and Beyond program. Rice stated, "This generous gift from State Farm will

greatly benefit students participating in the program. It will help us provide the tools they will need to succeed including art supplies, technology hardware and software, food for independent living classes as well as admission fees to social activities on campus. The grant money will also be utilized for professional development for faculty as well as fund stipends for Blackburn students working as mentors within the program. We look forward to our collaboration with State Farm and are tremendously grateful for their support.”

When accepting the donation, Blackburn President Dr. Mark Biermann said, “I am very pleased to be partnering with State Farm, and we deeply appreciate their generous support. This grant will help us to significantly expand the diversity of people that we serve and who, in turn, further enrich our campus community. We look forward to continuing to partner with State Farm in the future.”

State Farm agent Richard Oswald said, “Our local State Farm Agent group was so excited that State Farm jumped at the opportunity to support the Blackburn and Beyond program. My wife Laura and I have personally supported the program in the past and couldn’t be more proud of the way State Farm shows its commitment to local causes and the people those programs support.”

The newly expanded Blackburn and Beyond will officially launch for enrolled students this fall. To learn more about the Blackburn and Beyond program, please visit <https://blackburn.edu/beyond> or contact Dr. Cindy Rice at [Cindy.Rice@Blackburn.edu](mailto:Cindy.Rice@Blackburn.edu).

College administrators, individuals representing the new program, and local State Farm agents attended the event. Pictured are, standing (left to right), Dr. Mark Biermann, president of Blackburn College; Dr. Lauren Dodge, vice president for institutional advancement at Blackburn; Michele Stephenson, program interim teacher; Dr. Cindy Rice, Blackburn education department chair and program coordinator; State Farm representatives Linda Worlow, Virden; Jessica Ely, Gillespie; Richard Oswald, Carlinville; Brian Limbaugh, Hillsboro; Mark Stieren, Litchfield; Dennis Ford, Jerseyville; Craig Hudson, Jerseyville; Dr. John McClusky, provost at Blackburn; and Kristina Treto, program paraprofessional. Front row (left to right) are Bridget Miller, program teacher; Becky Schuchman, superintendent of Carlinville Schools, and Maria Ruffatto, Blackburn and Beyond student representative.

### *About Blackburn College*

*Founded in 1837, Blackburn College is a four-year, Presbyterian-related, co-educational liberal arts college located in Carlinville, IL. One of only nine federally-recognized Work Colleges, Blackburn has the only program in the nation fully managed by students. Balancing academic rigor and experiential learning, each student at*

*Blackburn gains tangible experience and develops critical skills by contributing to their community, all while building a resume and earning their degree. In their 2020 Best Colleges Rankings, U.S. News & World Report recognized Blackburn College as one of the top 10 best Liberal Arts Colleges in the Nation for Social Mobility. The Center for Education & the Workforce at Georgetown University ranked Blackburn as a top performer for Earnings-Price Return - 209% (#1 in IL, #10 in the U.S.) and Net Price (#1 in IL; #11 in the U.S.). The Washington Monthly twice ranked Blackburn as the best baccalaureate college in Illinois.*