PROJECT PROVEN

Guiding Formerly Incarcerated People Toward Community and Opportunity

Western Technical College

OVERVIEW



LA CROSSE
Tribune
SERVING THE REGION SINCE 1904

13 iconic supper clubs in River Valley Region
HOMETOWN, A3





Brewers clinch Central Division title
SPORTS, C1

Thursday, September 17, 2026 • A Lee Enterprises, Incorporated Newspaper — Majority shareholder, David Hoffmann, Hoffmann Media Group • lacrossetribune.com

EDUCATING INMATES



OLIVIA MAPES, RIVER VALLEY MEDIA GROUP

People in Project Proven discuss how to organize their first fundraiser Sept. 1 at Festival Foods on Copeland Ave.

Western Technical College's Project Proven changes lives

OLIVIA MAPES
olivia.mapes@lee.net

A year and a half ago, Chad Nelson and Laurie Miller were homeless and struggling to get by.

Now, they are both 4.0 students at Western Technical College and involved in student government and other programs. Nelson is working toward an associate of arts and Miller toward a double associate of arts and associate of science so she can become a paralegal.

They credit their turnarounds to Project Proven, an initiative launched in 2013 that offers classes and resources to people who have been released from jail or are under justice system supervision.

"I wasn't trying to do anything good, so when I would get out, I would usually just either end up reoffending or messing up on probation," Nelson said. "But in 2025, I almost lost my hand due to an abscess from drug use."

The same day Nelson found out he needed surgery, he and Miller were evicted from their home.

At first, they went to Catholic Charities for help. Next, they got involved with Project Proven — at first as a way to get Nelson to his doctor appointments. Student IDs serve as free city bus passes.

Please see EDUCATION, Page A6

C

THE NUMBERS



- La Crosse County Jail: 30-40 students/week
- Monroe County Jail: 20-25 students/week
- Jackson County Jail: 5-7 students/week
- Trempealeau County Jail: 8-12 students/week
- Vernon County Jail: 20-25 students/week
- Job Club: 10-15 students/week
- Tech Club: 5-8 students/week
- Rec Club: 10+ students/week
- Wellness: 5-8 students/week
- Leadership Group: 10-15 students/every other week
- Current College Students: 60+

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THE TEAM!

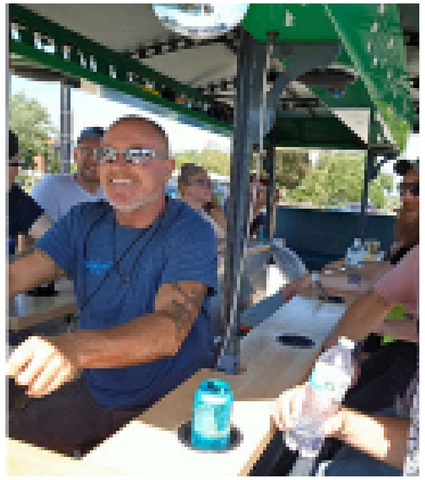




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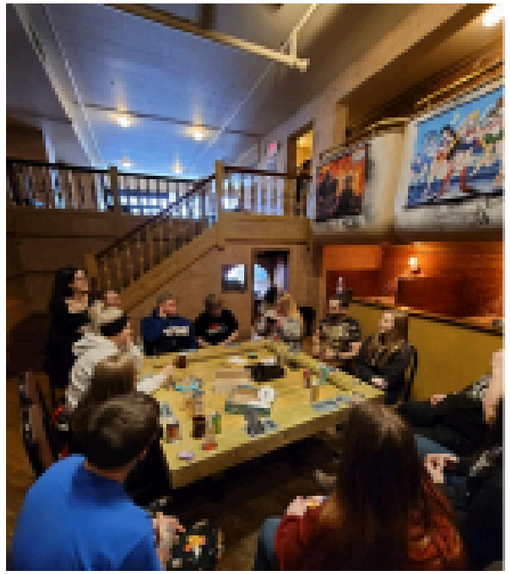
SENSE OF BELONGING

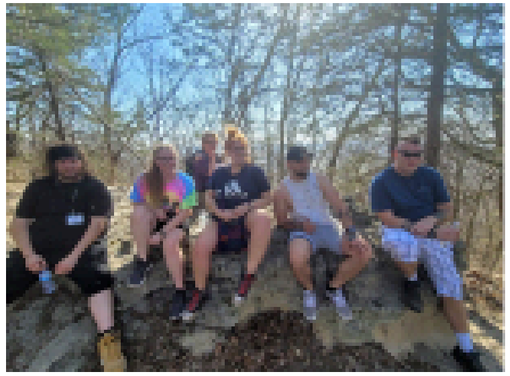












C


PROJECT PROVEN
WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE




WESTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE

C

DISCUSSION

How are you already incorporating a sense of belonging into your spaces? What are some specific examples?

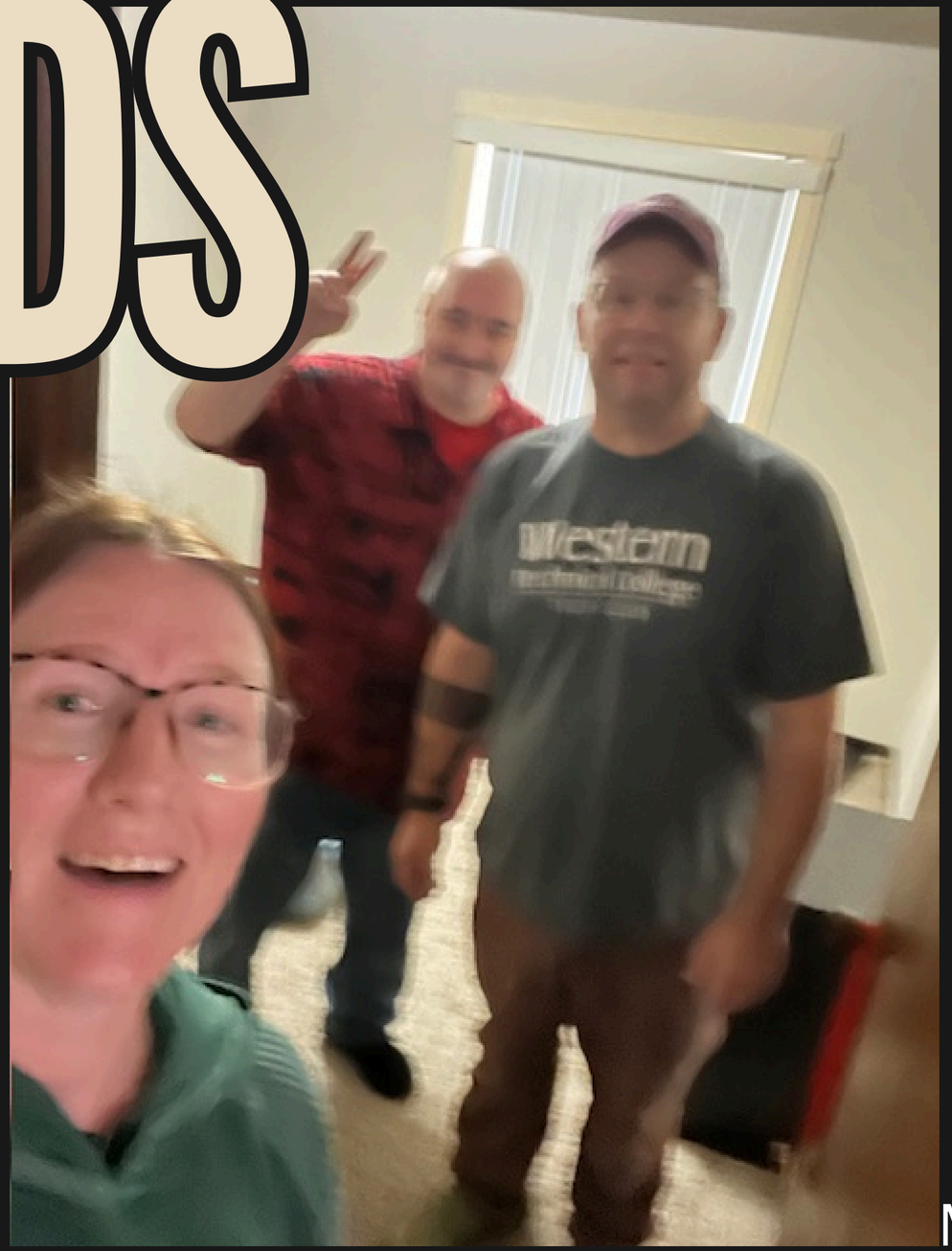


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BASIC NEEDS







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TIME

M

KEEP IT SIMPLE



Jai

PROBLEM SOLVE





Jai

PATIENCE


WESTERN
REC CLUB
Project
Proven
BLACK
HISTORY
Western
Technical college

J

COPING STRATEGIES



DISCUSSION

- Basic Needs
- Time
- Keep it Simple
- Problem Solve
- Patience
- Coping Strategies



How are you already incorporating the ideas we discussed into your work? What are some specific examples?

Did this spark any new ideas or inspire different ways you could apply these concepts in your space? If so, what might that look like?

J

STRUCTURE



C



CHOICE

C

BELIEF



CELEBRATE



J







COLLABORATING

M


The Exchange
Driftless Recovery Services
YWCA/YMCA
Consumer Credit Counseling Services
Independent Living Resources
Workforce Connections
The Parenting Place
New Horizons
St. Clare Health Mission
La Crosse County JSS
La Crosse Public Library
Catholic Charities
League of Women Voters
La Crosse County Jail
Next Steps for Change
La Crosse County P&P
Coulee Recovery Center
Oxford House
La Crosse County CCS
NEXT CHAPTER LA CROSSE
Marine Credit Union Foundation
Great Rivers 211
La Crosse County VSO
REACH
Everybody Bikes
Angel's House of Healing
Unity House
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Salvation Army
La Crosse Area Family Collaborative
Couleecap


Russ Davis Wholesale
Badger Corrugating
Dynamic Recycling
Charmant Hotel & Restaurant
Bethany St. Joseph's
Western Technical College
Fun Fur Pets
Harter's
Hy-Vee
AmericInn
La Crosse/Moxie's
Xetex
First Supply
Ashley Furniture
UPS
Select Custom Solutions
La Crosse Seed
Aerotek
City Brewery
7 Rivers Recycling
Tom's Tent Rentals
Chileda
VARC
Amazon Warehouse
Great Lakes Cheese
Pizza Ranch
DaaBIN Store
YMCA

M





CENTERING STUDENT VOICE

Jai

DISCUSSION

- Structure
- Choice
- Belief
- Celebrate
- Collaborating
- Centering Student Voice



How are you already incorporating the ideas we discussed into your work? What are some specific examples?

Did this spark any new ideas or inspire different ways you could apply these concepts in your space? If so, what might that look like?

J

LET'S CONNECT!





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C


Rec Club Spring 2026


TRANE

County to eliminate revenue from jail calls, provide free phone time

Chloe Hilles Nov 27, 2022 0

City of La Crosse begins 'Landlord Mitigation Program' to help get homeless into housing

By Leah Rivard Oct 11, 2022 Updated Jan 24, 2023

Chloe Seelig: With a chance, people involved in justice system can advance

Nov 30, 2022



Laundry for All

View fundraiser

Total raised: $240 | **You've raised $0**




Google
DEWALT


Western
Technical College




LA CROSSE
QUEEN


NIKE


FUN ZONE
Pizza Ranch
BUFFET YOUR WAY
BUSCH Latte






WalzCraft
"Where Custom Made Quality Begins"
2600
WalzCraft
NOTICE
RESERVED PARKING







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