

OZARKA COLLEGE

May 2025
Campus Connection
Summer Edition
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Ozarka Nation
Summer



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COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

2025 Graduates

We recently celebrated the 2025 graduates at our commencement ceremony and reception, held Thursday May 8 on the Melbourne Campus. During the ceremony, Dr. Ken Warden, Arkansas Division of Higher Education Commissioner, delivered the commencement address and informed the graduates of the bright future they all have and wished them luck in their careers.

The 2024-2025 academic year recognized 160 associate degrees, 119 technical certificates, and 173 certificates of proficiency. The class included 11 students honored as Summa Cum Laude with a 4.0 GPA, 28 students honored as Magna Cum Laude with a 3.75 – 3.99 GPA, and 32 students honored as Cum Laude with a 3.5 – 3.74 GPA.

Thank you to all of our dedicated faculty and staff that make each Academic year the success that it is today! Congratulations to the 2025 graduates!



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dr. Josh Wilson

Wishing everyone a bright and relaxing summer season! As we take this time to enjoy family, friends, and well-earned rest, I want to thank each of you for your continued dedication to Ozarka and your impact on student success. It's truly a privilege to serve alongside such a hardworking and passionate team.

When we return, I hope you feel recharged, inspired, and ready to continue the incredible work we do together. You are some of the most talented and driven faculty and staff I've had the pleasure to work with, and I am deeply grateful for all you do.

Wishing you a fun, safe, and refreshing summer break!



FACULTY OF THE YEAR

Lance Pinkston

Lance Pinkston, Flight Instructor at Ozarka College, has been named the 2025 Outstanding Faculty of the Year. A proud Ozarka Aviation alumnus from Batesville, Lance has shown exceptional dedication, growth, and excellence throughout his journey—from student to full-time instructor.

Lance joined the Ozarka instructional team after excelling in the Aviation program and quickly distinguished himself through his passion for teaching and his commitment to student success. Known for his calm demeanor, technical expertise, and ability to connect with students, he plays a vital role in preparing future pilots for success both in the classroom and in the skies.

“Lance has grown into an outstanding instructor and leader,” said Dr. Josh Wilson, Ozarka College President. “He is a product of our program, and his impact as a faculty member reflects everything we value at Ozarka—excellence, professionalism, and student-centered teaching.”

Lance's recognition as Faculty of the Year is a testament to his hard work and the transformative power of Ozarka's hands-on programs. Congratulations, Lance!

Congrats!



**FACULTY OF THE YEAR
LANCE PINKSTON**

MOVIN & SHAKIN

Employee Transitions and New Hires



Amber Rush – Vice President of Finance

We are thrilled to welcome Amber Rush back to Ozarka College as our new Vice President of Finance! Amber brings over 15 years of financial leadership experience and previously served as Ozarka’s Controller for more than a decade. Most recently, she served as Core Finance Lead at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. A proud graduate of Viola High School, Amber also holds an MBA from Arkansas Tech and a B.S. in Accounting from Arkansas State. We’re excited to have her expertise guiding our financial operations!

Marcus Orf – VP of Advancement and Workforce Development

We’re proud to announce Marcus Orf’s transition into the role of Vice President of Advancement and Workforce Development! Marcus has played a vital role as Director of Technical Centers, helping drive Ozarka’s Workforce initiatives forward. With a strong foundation in education and a heart for community, Marcus is the right person to lead this important work. Congrats, Marcus!



Dawsyn Cole – Director of Workforce Development

Please help us welcome Dawsyn Cole as the new Director of Workforce Development at Ozarka College! Dawsyn brings strong industry and higher education experience to this role, most recently serving as a Career Coach at our Mountain View location. With a Master’s in Supply Chain Management from the University of Arkansas and a background in agri business, marketing, and logistics, Dawsyn is well-equipped to help expand Ozarka’s workforce initiatives. Welcome aboard, Dawsyn!



INTERNATIONAL WORLD TOUR

Culinary Event

Our Culinary Department has been working hard behind the scenes to bring us all an experience like no other. Their final presentation was nothing short of a world tour, offering our community the opportunity to travel through taste. Each dish was carefully crafted, showcasing the flavors of diverse countries, and presented with the level of excellence that has become a trademark of our culinary program.

From Italy's rich pasta dishes to Japan's delicate sushi, our community was treated to a mouthwatering array of international cuisines, each one prepared with meticulous attention to detail. The day was made even more fun with the chance for everyone to vote on their favorite dish.

The results are in, and we're thrilled to announce that Preston Rademacher's dish took the top spot as the favorite of the day! This achievement speaks to the hard work, creativity, and passion that went into every dish presented. We couldn't be prouder of all the chefs involved in this fantastic event!



LPN DONATION

Ash Flat Nursing

The Licensed Practical Nursing program of Ash Flat recently took advantage of the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of women and children in the community that are involved in abusive relationships. The students gathered nonperishable food items as well as toiletries and presented the donation to Safe Night Ministries. In addition to their donation, some students went the extra mile and volunteered at the Safe Night Ministries volleyball tournament held late in April.

Safe Night Ministries for Domestic Violence Victims is a faith-based ministry dedicated to offering support, finding safety, and offering resources to women and children in our community that are involved in abusive relationships. They began their mission in March 2021, helping victims in Sharp, Fulton, and Izard Counties. Safe Night Ministries currently offers resources and counseling for those in violent situations.



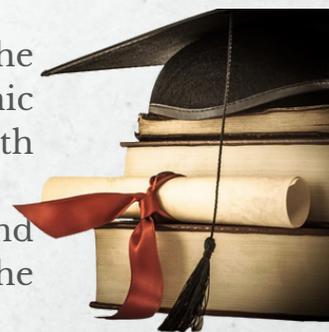
SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE

Foundation Scholarships

Wrapping up the spring semester means it is time to select Foundation Scholars!

In April, the Scholarship Committee met to select recipients of the Ozarka College Foundation scholarships for the 2025-2026 academic year. This year the Foundation will support up to 80 scholars with endowed and pass-through scholarships totaling nearly \$60,000.

This would not be possible without the significant support and generosity of our community partners, Ozarka employees, and the Foundation Board.



OZARKA'S TOUR D'ART IS BACK

Tour D' Art

The Friends of the Paul Weaver Library partnered with Ozarka College to host their 12th annual art extravaganza, Tour D' Art. The event themed "Wild About Art" was held on Ozarka's Melbourne campus. The event showcased over 500 pieces of art that were enjoyed by a steady flow of tour groups including Ozarka students, and community members.

The art exhibit included works from art students and instructors from area schools aged pre-school through high school, plus works from Ozarka College students, faculty, staff and friends. Original folk and fine arts including painting, sculpture, drawings and other art forms were showcased this year.

"We are proud to once again partner with our area schools and community members to provide the community the opportunity to showcase their artistic talents," said Dan Lindsey, The Friends of the Library sponsor, and Ozarka Librarian. "All the exhibits were a testament of the skill and hard work of the artists, and were enjoyed by all!"



MARDI GRAS CELEBRATION

Mountain View Cultural Event

We turned up the fun this spring with a Mardi Gras celebration that brought culture, color, and cake to our students at both the Technical Center and the Mountain View campus. Each student was surprised with their very own Mardi Gras cake.

Mardi Gras is about joy, community, and celebrating life, and that's exactly what we saw on our students' faces. From conversations about the holiday's history to the excitement of the colorful cakes, it was a moment of cultural appreciation and fun that everyone thoroughly enjoyed.

A huge shoutout goes to Brenda Holloway, who stayed up late baking every single cake by hand. Her hard work and heart made this event not just possible, but unforgettable. Brenda, thank you for going the extra mile—you truly made Mardi Gras come alive for our students!



GOOD FRIDAY HUNT

Library Easter Event

The Library brought a little extra spring cheer to campus this year by hosting a fun-filled Easter egg hunt on Good Friday! Open to staff, faculty, students, and their families, the event transformed the Library grounds into a colorful scene of discovery and delight.

This festive event was a wonderful way to wrap up the week, offering a moment of lighthearted fun amid busy schedules. Families joined in the excitement, students took a well-deserved break, and our entire campus community came together in the spirit of celebration. It was a reminder that some of the best college moments happen when we step outside the classroom and simply enjoy being together.

A huge thank you to our Library team for organizing such a thoughtful and engaging event. Their creativity and commitment to community brought smiles to faces of all ages.



GRAD CAP COMPETITION

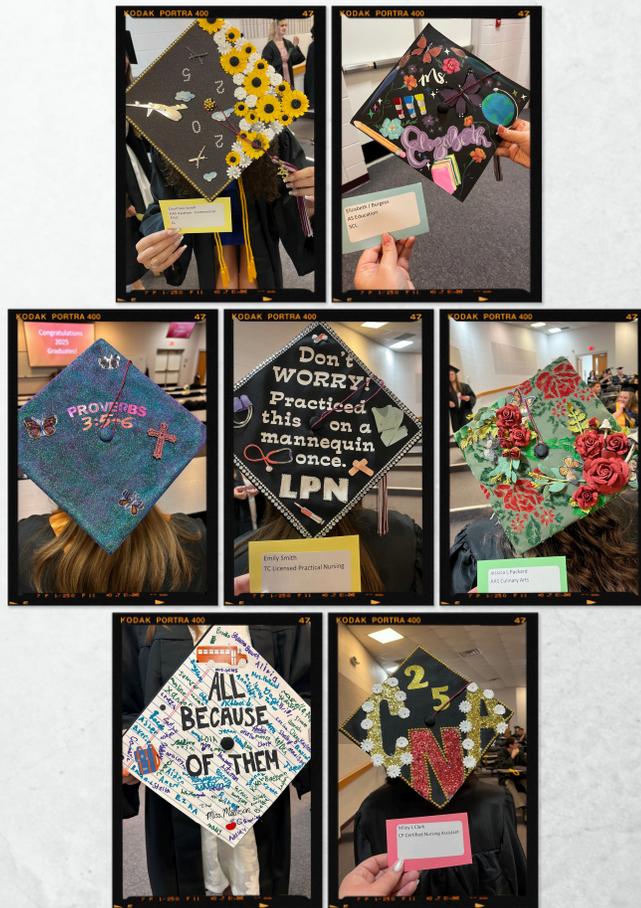
Cap Decorating

This year marked a milestone at Ozarka as we hosted our very first Cap Decorating Competition—and what a fantastic debut it was! Graduates embraced the opportunity with creativity, heart, and a whole lot of glitter, showcasing designs that were equal parts meaningful and eye-catching.

From inspirational quotes to personal tributes and artistic flair, the decorated caps were nothing short of stunning.

Not only was this our first competition of its kind, but it was also the first time in Ozarka's history that students were invited to personalize their caps—and it was a hit! The excitement and pride on display made it clear that this new tradition is here to stay.

We're so proud of our graduates and their bold, beautiful expressions of individuality. Here's to celebrating success, one cap at a time!



SOAK UP THE SUN

Upcoming Summer Camps

This summer is sure to be the best one yet and we have a lot of activities planned. Your kiddos can enjoy several different camps including: Culinary camp and Kids College. The application period for Kids College will close May 30. Culinary camp is already filled. Keep an eye out on our social media and papers for announcements to come! Until then mark your calendars for these dates!



**SAVE!
THE DATE!**

An advertisement for Kids College 2025. The background is red with white stars and a sun icon. At the top, it says '50 OZARKA COLLEGE' and 'KIDS COLLEGE 2025'. Below this are two photos of campuses: 'MELBOURNE' and 'MOUNTAIN VIEW'. At the bottom, it says '\$80 TUITION STUDENTS ENTERING GRADES 1 - 6 MELBOURNE CAMPUS: JUNE 2 - 5 MOUNTAIN VIEW CAMPUS: JULY 7 - 10'. There is also a QR code and a 'SCAN' button.

DISCOVER OZARKA

Campus Tours



This spring, we proudly welcomed several high school groups across all our campus locations. Students from area schools had the opportunity to explore college life firsthand, learning about academic programs, student support services, and the many opportunities available to them here.

Each campus did an outstanding job hosting these future students. From informative sessions to interactive demonstrations, our faculty and staff made sure every visit was engaging and meaningful. The energy and enthusiasm from both students and hosts made these tours a great success.

By walking through classrooms, meeting instructors, and experiencing campus culture, high schoolers were able to gain a clearer understanding of what college can offer—and how we can support them on that journey.

We're grateful to the area schools for partnering with us to give their students this important experience, and we look forward to continuing to serve as a resource for college and career exploration in our communities.

INDUSTRY CONNECTIONS

Bad Boy Visit

Bad Boy Mowers recently visited our MV technical center. The visit offered students valuable insight into the welding industry and what employers like Bad Boy are looking for.

Bad Boy's visit to our Mountain View campus was an exciting opportunity for our welding students to connect directly with industry professionals. Representatives from the company shared insights about career paths, expectations in the field, and the skills they're looking for in new hires. It was a valuable, real-world learning experience that helped bridge the gap between classroom instruction and future employment. We appreciate Bad Boy's investment in our students and look forward to continuing to build strong partnerships with industry leaders.



PATHWAYS ACADEMY

Workforce Readiness

We proudly introduced the Ozarka Pathways Academy, a new workforce readiness initiative designed for high school students across the region. In a special signing ceremony, superintendents from Melbourne, Highland, ICC, Mountain View, Salem, Mammoth Spring, and Calico Rock committed to providing their students with an enhanced dual credit experience through this innovative program.

The Ozarka Pathways Academy was developed in collaboration with local industry leaders and educators to prepare students for both immediate employment and long-term success. The program offers a blend of technical training, life skills development, and career readiness support in areas such as equipment operation, safety, resume writing, workplace etiquette, and financial literacy. Students also benefit from engaging guest speakers and simulated work environments that bring real-world relevance to their education.



Photo Caption: (L-R): Mark Taylor, Mammoth Spring Superintendent, Rick Green, Calico Rock Superintendent, Fred Walker, IZard County Consolidated Superintendent, Dr. Josh Wilson, Ozarka College president, Tim Massey, Melbourne Superintendent, Wayne Gultner, Salem Superintendent, Dusty Mitchell, Mountain View Assistant Superintendent.

Not pictured: Jeremy Lewis, Highland Superintendent.

WORK READY

Sharp County Designation

Sharp County has officially been certified as an ACT Work Ready Community, a milestone that highlights its dedication to building a strong, skilled workforce. This achievement was made possible through a collaborative effort between the Northeast Arkansas Regional Intermodal Authority, local leadership, and our team. Since early 2024, the initiative has brought together employers, educators, and policymakers to align workforce goals with community needs. Over 450 individuals earned the National Career Readiness Certificate® (NCRC®), with 24 area employers pledging to recognize the credential.

This certification positions Sharp County as a leader in workforce readiness and supports future economic growth. With the entire NEA Intermodal region now recognized as a certified Work Ready Region, we're proud to help strengthen the local talent pipeline and create new opportunities.



STAFF COUNCIL CARES

Upcoming Events

Staff Council is looking forward to another great Summer providing fun, engaging opportunities for staff to bond with one another and have unique experiences while at work. Staff Council is kicking off Summer with the annual silent auction, which helps raise funds for festivities and professional development opportunities. Staff council will be looking at professional development opportunities throughout the Summer. Jeans days have been approved over the next quarter. Each day is \$1 and can be paid to any Staff Council executive positions.

Secretary was also voted on this spring. The new secretary for Staff Council is Cindy Williams, Administrative Specialist housed on our Ash Flat campus. She is a wonderful fit to the staff council team!

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to submit ideas for Staff Council, please reach out to us!



*Photo Caption:
Chrisha Savell



*Photo Caption:
Valerie Long



*Photo Caption:
Cindy Williams

INDUSTRIAL DAY

Career Signing

We recently hosted our first Industrial Signing Day, a proud milestone celebrating the accomplishments of Welding Technology students as they signed with Bad Boy Mowers to begin their careers. Held at the John E. Miller Education Complex, the event brought together faculty, staff, families, and industry leaders to recognize student achievement and highlight the powerful connection between education and local workforce opportunities.

This signing day showcased the technical skills, work ethic, and career readiness of our students, while reinforcing our commitment to strong industry partnerships. With plans to expand the event in future years to include more programs and employers, we're excited to continue building a workforce pipeline that fuels both student success and regional growth.

Representatives from Bad Boy Mowers praised the students for their dedication and readiness to contribute to the industry. Their involvement in this event strengthened the collaboration between local employers and our technical programs—ensuring that our graduates are equipped with the real-world skills needed to thrive.



CADET CALLING

Kids College Cadet program

We're excited to announce that applications are now open for our Teacher Cadet program, part of Kids College at our Melbourne and Mountain View campuses! This unique opportunity is for students entering 8th through 12th grade who want to develop leadership skills, mentor younger students, and explore a future in education—all while gaining hands-on classroom experience. Best of all, there's no fee to apply or attend.

The Melbourne session runs June 2–5, and the Mountain View session is July 7–10, both from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Each campus will select only five students, so early applications are encouraged. The deadline to apply is May 30, 2025. Find the application on our website, and reach out to Jill Sandlin at 870.612.2342 or jill.sandlin@ozarka.edu with questions. Don't miss this chance to jumpstart your journey into education!



The poster features the Ozarka College logo at the top left, a QR code with a 'SCAN' label at the top right, and the text 'Apply Today:'. The main title reads 'JOIN US AS A TEACHER CADET FOR KIDS COLLEGE'. Below this, it says 'Assist instructors at Kids College, support younger students, and gain hands-on experience in a fun and educational setting.' It specifies 'GRADES 8 - 12' and 'CADETS NEEDED FOR MELBOURNE & MOUNTAIN VIEW CAMPUS CAMP NO FEE'. The dates are listed as 'MELBOURNE CAMPUS: JUNE 2 - 5' and 'MOUNTAIN VIEW CAMPUS: JULY 7 - 10'. At the bottom, it provides contact information: 'MORE INFORMATION: JILL SANDLIN, JILL.SANDLIN@OZARKA.EDU, 870.612.2342'. The background is yellow with green trees at the bottom.

QUARTER CHAMP

Employee of the Quarter - Krystal Rush

We were proud to announce Krystal Rush of Oxford, Arkansas, as Ozarka's Employee of the Quarter. Krystal is an Allied Health Instructor who teaches certified nursing assistants (CNA) and has made significant contributions to our Allied Health programs.

Since joining us in 2019, Krystal has been instrumental in building partnerships with local high schools, helping to bring Certified Nursing Assistant and nursing pre-requisite courses directly to our campuses. This has provided valuable educational opportunities for many students in our service area.

Beyond her teaching duties, Krystal has served as Faculty Council Chair, where she has led the development of important policies and worked tirelessly to advocate for faculty needs. Her leadership has helped strengthen our academic community.

Her outstanding dedication was also recognized in 2023 when she was named Ozarka's Outstanding Faculty of the Year. We congratulate Krystal on these well-deserved honors and thank her for her continued commitment to excellence.



*Photo Caption:
(L-R): Dr. Josh Wilson,
Krystal Rush, Dr. Chris Lorch

Congratulations

FOUNDATION CORNER

We filled our cups, we placed our bids, and enjoyed gourmet food...

The Ozarka College Foundation spring events were a huge success!

Ladies Luncheon The Mountain View Campus was the site for the annual Ladies' Luncheon. Once again, area businesses strongly supported this important event with new vendor additions. The Student Commons area on the Mountain View campus was bustling with activity. Ladies from the Stone County area gathered to enjoy a delicious meal prepared by the Culinary Arts Department. The program included a silent auction and "Let's Make a Deal" and culminated with a live auction of cheesecakes prepared by the Ozarka College Culinary Arts Department. This event is always fun and this year was no exception. Put it on your calendar for next year and join us!

Spring Gala The Spring Gala was hosted on the Melbourne campus on Thursday, April 4. Corporate sponsored tables were full of folks from our entire service area. The support for this year's event was record-setting! Ozarka College Trustee, Mike Watson prepared guests for the live auction that would close out the evening's festivities. He announced that Sissy's Log Cabin donated a beautiful diamond bracelet that each highest bidder would be entered into a drawing for a chance to win at the end of the auction. Auctioneer, Tony Watson, then auctioned off several items that were generously donated by local community members and businesses. After a successful auction raising significant money for Ozarka scholarships and programs, the bracelet was donated back for one final round of fundraising. Mike Watson then shared a few closing remarks and thanked everyone in attendance of the 2025 Spring Gala. Proceeds benefit Ozarka College students and help fulfill our mission of providing life-changing experiences.



FROM OUR KITCHEN TO YOURS

PASTA SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound tri-colored spiral pasta
- 1 (16 ounce) bottle Italian-style salad dressing
- 6 tablespoons salad seasoning mix
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes, diced
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- ½ yellow bell pepper, chopped
- 1 (2.25 ounce) can black olives, chopped

MAKE

- GATHER ALL INGREDIENTS.
- BRING A LARGE POT OF LIGHTLY SALTED WATER TO A BOIL. COOK PASTA IN THE BOILING WATER, STIRRING OCCASIONALLY, UNTIL TENDER YET FIRM TO THE BITE, ABOUT 10 TO 12 MINUTES; RINSE UNDER COLD WATER AND DRAIN.
- WHISK ITALIAN DRESSING AND SALAD SPICE MIX TOGETHER UNTIL SMOOTH. COMBINE PASTA, TOMATOES, BELL PEPPERS, AND OLIVES IN A SALAD BOWL.
- POUR DRESSING OVER SALAD AND TOSS TO COAT.
- FOR THE BEST FLAVOR, REFRIGERATE THE PASTA SALAD FOR 8 HOURS TO OVERNIGHT.
- ENJOY!

*From the Kitchen of
Terra Smith*



POTATO SALAD

From the Kitchen of Chrisha Savell

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/4 lbs. medium shrimp, peeled, deveined and tails removed
- 1/3 cup fresh lime juice
- 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 medium roma tomatoes, diced (1 cup)
- Marinade
- 30 minutes
- 3/4 cup chopped red onion
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro
- 1 medium jalapeno pepper,* seeded if preferred for less heat, diced
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1/2 medium cucumber, peeled and diced (about 1 cup)
- 1 medium avocado, diced



MAKE

1. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Meanwhile, fill up a medium bowl with ice water, set aside.
2. Add shrimp to boiling water and let cook just until pink and opaque, about 1 minute.
3. Drain shrimp in a colander then transfer to ice water to cool for a few minutes. Drain well then chop shrimp into small pieces (about 1/2-inch).
4. In a medium non-reactive bowl (you can use the same bowl that was previously filled with ice water) combine shrimp, lime juice, lemon juice, tomatoes, onion, cilantro, jalapeno pepper and season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Transfer to refrigerator and let rest 30 minutes to 1 hour.
6. Toss in cucumber and avocado and serve (if desired you can strain off some of the juices). It's delicious with tortilla chips or over tostada shells.

JALAPENO POPPER POTATO SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- 3 lbs red potatoes, cut into small cubes
- 2tbsp Extra virgin olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp pepper

*From the Kitchen of
Brioney Edwards*



- Salad:
- ½ c ranch dressing
 - ¼ c mayo
 - ¼ sour cream
 - 3 tbsp apple cider vinegar
 - ¼ tsp black pepper
 - 1 small red onion, finely chopped
 - 10 pieces, bacon, cooked and diced
 - 2 med jalapenos, diced
 - 1 c sharp cheddar cheese
 - 2tbsp green onions, chopped

MAKE

- MIX THE FIRST 4 INGREDIENTS TOGETHER AND PLACE THEM IN AN AIR FRYER BASKET AT 380 DEGREES FOR 15-20 MINUTES. SHAKE THE BASKET WELL AT THE HALFWAY MARK.
- WHILE THE POTATOES ARE COOKING MIX THE REST OF YOUR INGREDIENTS.
- LET THE POTATOES COOL FOR ABOUT 15 MINUTES BEFORE ADDING THEM TO THE REST OF YOUR SALAD. MIX ALL TOGETHER AND YOU CAN TOP WITH EXTRA BACON AND GREEN ONIONS.
- STORE IN AN AIRTIGHT CONTAINER UP TO 3 DAYS IN THE FRIDGE.



If you would like to submit a recipe for the next newsletter please contact Katie Norris at katie.norris@ozarka.edu

LIFE HACKS...

Fan Requested



HACK #1

Freeze aloe vera in an ice cube tray for instant relief from both sunburns and summer stress.

HACK #2

Pack a mesh laundry bag for beach toys, sandals, or wet clothes—it's the summer version of classroom organization.



HACK #3



Store your travel documents in a shared cloud folder, because smart vacationers don't dig through carry-ons at TSA.





Providing Life Changing Experiences through Education



Class of 2024

