

The Republican. PLUS



INSIDE



MEALS ON WHEELS: Celebrating seniors with National March for Meals Month, **P8**

SUCCESS ON THE MAT: STCC wrestling teams wrap up season, **P3**

BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT: District attorney Anthony Gulluni hosts annual event, **P4**

JUST FOLKS: **P5**

'NEWSIES:' Opera House Players open musical on Friday, **P6**

RAIN BARRELS: Available at discounted price for Springfield residents, **P7**

SUDOKU: **P7**

DEEDS: **P20**

“I want to hold governments accountable for the terrifying and horrible things they do to their own people. That’s my main focus. I cannot stop war by myself, but at least I can contribute and work toward stopping it or preventing it before it happens.”

ADAM ABDELRAHMAN



HCC student Adam Abdelrahman, of Springfield, will be honored at the State House Friday as one of the “29 Who Shine.”

HOLYOKE

Setting a shining example at HCC

The first thing most people notice about Adam Abdelrahman is his smile — big, bright, ever present.

“It’s like a light that shines around him,” says Denise Roy, one of his advisers at Holyoke Community College, where the 23-year-old Springfield resident will graduate June 1 with high honors and his associate degree in criminal justice. “He has a pretty

big presence here and in the community, and he has affected so many people. His heart is so big and he wants to do so much.”

Abdelrahman will be honored Friday at the State House in Boston as one of the “29 Who Shine,” an annual event that recognizes one student from each of the 29 public colleges and universities in Massachusetts based on their academic achievements as well as their college and community service.

Roy, a learning specialist with HCC’s STRIVE student support

program and a Feeding Hills resident, will also receive an award that day in Boston as Abdelrahman’s staff mentor, whom he describes as a “second mom.”

“I’m so proud of him,” she says. “If you think about how large his family is and what they’ve gone through and the violence they’ve experienced and the path he’s chosen to get himself here, well, it’s heroic.”

Abdelrahman could easily be forgiven for NOT smiling.

He witnessed his first murder at the
SEE **SHINE**, PAGE P10

SPRINGFIELD

Honored for volunteer service

Pope Francis Preparatory School senior Maggie Farrell, of Conway, has been selected to receive the President's Volunteer Service Award for exemplary volunteer service to her community. Farrell was nominated for the award, which recognizes Americans of all ages who have volunteered significant amounts of their time to serve their communities and their country, in the fall.

Farrell's volunteer spirit was developed at a young age while serving as a girl scout for eight years. She continues today to volunteer for various organizations and programs throughout her community. Her volunteer service includes: six years as a general helper at the Festival

of the Hills in Conway; as an assistant teacher for two years at the religious education program at her parish, Our Lady of the Valley Parish in Easthampton; developing and organizing a school-wide fundraising effort to benefit her neighbors throughout Conway that suffered property damage from a tornado; and as an assistant at the Berkshire Hills Music Academy's Summer Camp where she supported special needs participants in ensuring a fulfilling camp experience.

In addition to serving her neighborhood community, Maggie shares her volunteer spirit at school where she became president of the Special Olympics Club, a club committed to building relationships

with the Special Olympics athletes and supporting them during local competitions. A SOS Club member for four years, Maggie has served the past two as its president.

"We are incredibly proud of Maggie's accomplishment in and outside of the classroom. She exemplifies what it means to be part of the Pope Francis Prep learning community as we seek to encourage students to put their Catholic Christian faith into action and be spiritually transformed through service to the poor, needy, and their own communities. This award certainly acknowledges what we are privileged to see in Maggie each day," said Paul Harrington, Pope Francis head of school.

► Pope Francis Preparatory School is proud to announce that senior Maggie Farrell, left, of Conway, has been selected to receive the President's Volunteer Service Award for exemplary volunteer service to her community. At right, she is shown with Special Olympics athlete Tom Coutherut.



Shine

CONTINUED FROM PAGE P1

age of six, two cousins shot by soldiers from the Sudanese army who attacked his village in Darfur. His family spent the next seven years living in a refugee camp where sickness and murder were all-too prevalent.

"I lost a lot of family members and tribe members," he says, including his grandfather, a local mayor. "I faced death many times too."

When he was 14, the family escaped, trudging for two weeks through the jungle to Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, before moving on to Cairo, Egypt, where they sought asylum through the United Nations. Three years later, the family — Adam, his mother, father and six younger siblings — were relocated to Springfield.

"We could have wound up anywhere," Abdelrahman recalls. "Sweden, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand, the U.K. Anywhere. But America chose my family."

"I love it here, HCC became my family. Everybody was so kind to me. Being a refugee and coming to a new country with a new culture and new language, I was very afraid in the beginning, but everyone was so supportive. It means so much to me."

Adam Abdelrahman

He spoke three languages when he arrived — Arabic, Fur (his father's), and Dinkah (his mother's) — but not a word of English. To get started in this new land, he joined the First Generation Theater youth group in Springfield, part of the Performance Project, where one of the artists recommended the academic ESL program at HCC.

In 2014, he started in level one and progressed on an accelerated pace through level four, and then moved on to the regular academic program, majoring in criminal justice and earning many honors and accolades along with the way, including dean's list (five times), three HCC Foundation scholarships (so far), a class achievement award for ESL, the Lorraine Hansberry Award for Ethnic Diversi-

ty, a scholarship from the Massachusetts Educational Opportunity Association, and induction into the Phi Theta Kappa honor society.

He embraced campus life like few other HCC students in recent memory.

During his four-plus years at HCC, he held a work-study job in the ESL program office and served on the HCC Student Senate. He was the president of the International Club, a New Student Orientation leader, a STRIVE peer mentor, an academic tutor, and a member of the Criminal Justice Club and eSports Club. He has also worn the college's Cougar mascot costume for HCC events and parades.

"I love it here," he says. "HCC became my family. Everybody was so kind to me. Being a refugee and coming to a new country with a new cul-

ture and new language, I was very afraid in the beginning, but everyone was so supportive. It means so much to me."

He also has an impressive history of community engagement as a volunteer ESL teacher at the Islamic Society of Western Massachusetts in West Springfield and as a mentor, advocate and translator for new Sudanese immigrants at Gray House and Jewish Community Services in Longmeadow. He has participated in letter-writing campaigns in support of immigrant rights and voter registration drives.

If that was not enough, he works full time with mental health clients as a residential counselor at ServiceNet in Chicopee.

He has applied for transfer to a long list of colleges and universities, including

UMass, Boston University and Georgetown. He intends to study international law for his bachelor's degree, then go to law school and work as a lawyer on issues relevant to refugees and immigrants, possibly returning to the classroom as a professor.

"I want to hold governments accountable for the terrifying and horrible things they do to their own people," he says. "That's my main focus. I cannot stop war by myself, but at least I can contribute and work toward stopping it or preventing it before it happens."

Words like that make those who know him best smile too. "This is why I do the work that I do and why I love my job," says Roy, his HCC adviser. "I get to watch people like him grow and possibly change the world."