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MIDEAST TENSIONS EASE

Israel and Iran on Friday both played down an apparent Israeli air-strike near a major air base and nuclear site in central Iran. Page A6

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TODAY'S MUST-READS

HOLYOKE
Cannabis social consumption sites urged

Today on 4/20, a day when cannabis aficionados hail their favorite psychotropic flower, a Western Massachusetts business leader and a city mayor will be meeting with canna fans and stumping for legalizing social consumption sites for weed.

Holyoke Mayor Joshua A. Garcia and Canna Provisions CEO Meg Sanders will both be attending a Canna Provisions block party at 380 Dwight St. **Full story, Page A3**

GREENFIELD
Experts testify in hearings on murder case

Confusion and disorder for the defense marred two days of testimony for Dennis Bateman, who is attempting for the fifth time to undo his conviction in the 2005 slaying of a gas station attendant Brandy Waryasz and her unborn child.

The defense's second audio expert could not explain findings she had produced in her reports in preparation for the follow up evidentiary hearing that took place over Zoom on Friday. **Full story, Page A5**

HOLYOKE

Mindset and hard work

HCC inaugurates President George Timmons, first Black man to serve in that role

By **JIM KINNEY**
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Barney Garcia told an audience of hundreds gathered Friday for the inauguration of Holyoke Community College George Timmons of arriving at the college, feeling adrift and a little depressed after the death of his parents.

Garcia, now a student trustee in his final semester at HCC, described how Timmons, another new arrival, was there with a kind word, encouragement and nudge in the right direction.

After speaking, Garcia began to return to his seat. Timmons, dressed in the robes of academia, strode across the stage, chasing down Northampton resident Garcia for a hug.

"I believe that the students of HCC will see themselves in him," said Patrick Tutwiler, Massachusetts secretary of education. "Very much as he sees himself in all of them. He is the right person for the job."

Timmons, who lives in Amherst, started working at HCC in July. He is the fifth president in the 78-year history of the college and the first African American man to serve as president.

He succeeds Christina Royal,



Holyoke Community College President George Timmons responds to applause following his investiture as the fifth president of the college. (DON TREGGER / THE REPUBLICAN)

who retired last year and was one of the dignitaries at Friday's inauguration. There was a procession of faculty, staff and distinguished guests, including presidents or their delegates, representing 29 other colleges and universities.

Timmons was the last to speak. "How does a kid who grows up in an environment where no one went to college and a neighborhood where drug deals were the norm, who witnessed family members battle substance abuse, who was never the

strongest student or the best athlete and who was diagnosed with learning disabilities in his late 30s become a college president?" Timmons said.

The answer: mindset and hard work.

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Inauguration

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He described being raised in Hartford, Connecticut, by his grandmother, the eldest of two brothers. As a senior at Norfolk State University, a historically Black university in Virginia, his student aid ran out.

“I didn’t know if I would be able to finish what I’d started,” he said.

He did, going on to earn graduate degrees and work 25 years in higher education, most recently as provost and vice president at Columbia-Greene Community College in Hudson, New York.

State Sen. John Velis, D-Westfield, recalled an earlier meeting with Timmons and noticing that Timmons not only asked questions of the lawmaker whose district includes Holyoke, but that Timmons cared about the answers.

State Rep. Patricia Duffy, D-Holyoke, recalled going out to breakfast with Timmons a few months after his arrival. By then, Timmons not only knew his favorite breakfast spot but already knew all the servers by name.

Briana Beaver-Timmons, the college president’s eldest daughter, introduced him with younger siblings, Vivian Timmons and Georden Timmons, at her side.

George Timmons made a point of thanking his wife, Frankie Timmons.

He’s fond of colorful socks and bow ties — a mark of confidence and originality, Tutwiler said — so the college handed out free bow ties in the college’s color of green this week.

Throughout the week, college radio station WCCH-103.5 FM played Timmons’ favorite songs.

And he also made inauguration-week visits to HCC’s Itsy Bitsy Child Watch center, where he read a book to the children of students and the HCC culinary arts truck served free tacos, key lime cupcakes and non-alcoholic mojitos.

Begun in 1946 as the city-sponsored Holyoke Junior College, HCC today has 3,715 students enrolled in its spring semester.



Audience members applaud during the inauguration of Holyoke Community College President George Timmons. (DON TREEGER / THE REPUBLICAN)



Holyoke Community College President George Timmons hugs student marshal Alicia Beaton during his inaugural ceremony as the fifth president of the college. Student marshal and trustee Barney Garcia is on the left. (DON TREEGER / THE REPUBLICAN)