

Grads to hear from professor, entrepreneur

SPECIAL TO THE WESTFIELD NEWS

HOLYOKE — Springfield entrepreneur Mychal Connolly will be honored with a distinguished service award today, as Holyoke Community College holds its 75th anniversary commencement exercises at the MassMutual Center. The ceremony begins at 10 a.m.

HCC will confer associate degrees and certificates to more than 600 graduates from the class of 2022. Alumni from the classes of 2020 and 2021, who were not able to celebrate their graduations in person because of the COVID-19 pandemic, will also be recognized as HCC marks its 75th year as the oldest community college in Massachusetts.

Sheila Gould, associate professor of education and recipient of the 2022 Elaine Marieb Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence, will lead the procession of faculty, staff and graduates into the arena and give the keynote address.

Biology major Yannelis Cruz of Springfield will give a speech to her classmates as student orator. Carolyn Sicbaldi of South Hadley will present the class gift.



Mychal "Myke" Connolly stands next to his Stand Out Truck at Holyoke Community College during HCC's 2021 fundraising campaign. Connolly, a 2004 alum, will receive the Distinguished Service Award at HCC's commencement today at the MassMutual Center. (SUBMITTED / HCC)

Liberal arts major Deanna Bach of Longmeadow and music major Elena Ciampa of Florence will both give musical performances of original songs.

Connolly is an HCC alum from the class of 2004 and owner of Stand Out Truck, a digital mobile billboard company. In addition, Connolly has served as an alumni

mentor for the HCC Alumni Champions Mentorship Network. In 2021, he established an annual scholarship through the HCC Foundation for business and marketing majors. He has also worked as a volunteer for HCC's annual "Together HCC — Drive to Change Lives" fundraising campaigns.

Gould, a Holyoke native and graduate of Holyoke High School who now lives in Chicopee, is coordinator of HCC's Early Childhood Education program, co-host of HCC's Itsy Bitsy Zoomcast, and one of the co-founders of HCC's new Itsy Bitsy Child Watch program.

This spring, she received the Marieb Award, which recognizes a full-time member of the faculty for outstanding classroom teaching.

Award recipients serve for one year, receive a small stipend for professional development, lead the procession at commencement, and also give the keynote graduation speech.

"Sheila is anything but Itsy Bitsy," said her close colleague, education professor Tricia Kiefer, during the year-end faculty and staff meeting on May 18 where Gould was named as this year's Marieb Award winner. "She certainly deserves this."

HCC will also stream today's commencement ceremony over the Internet. The live stream will be available both on Facebook and through a link on the main page of the college website, www.hcc.edu. The event will be American Sign Language interpreted.



Sheila Gould, associate professor of education and 2022 recipient of the Elaine Marieb Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence, will deliver the keynote address at HCC's graduation. (SUBMITTED / HCC)