

HOLYOKE

Fighting food insecurity on 4 wheels

HCC rolls out new food truck, offers taste of culinary arts program

By STEVEN E. NANTON
Special to The Republican

A variety of food, showcasing the work of students and instructors, provided a taste of the culinary arts program at Holyoke Community College on Wednesday. The school also rolled out a new food truck to help fight food insecurity.

Visitors toured the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute on Race Street during an open house and free community tasting event. The 20,000-square-foot facility, which opened in downtown Holyoke in 2018, is equipped with four modern kitchens, a bakery, a hotel lab and a student-run dining room.

The event kicked off with a celebration of the launch of the college's new culinary arts truck with a ribbon-cutting ceremony with HCC President George Timmons, other HCC representatives and the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce in the institute's parking lot.

The main purpose of the truck is not for raising revenue, according to Amy Brandt, dean of the HCC Division of Health, Education, Culinary Arts and Human Services.

"We're looking for how to marry the culinary arts with health and wellness" in the community, Brandt said. "So the focus of the truck was to give students an applied-learning opportunity, but to have them working with community agencies that are targeting issues, like food insecurity or poor health."

A tour of the state-of-the-art kitchens at the college's culinary arts facility and meetings with the HCC culinary arts staff helped the public, current faculty, students and prospective students learn about the college's culinary arts certificate and associate degree programs, noncredit job training and personal enrichment classes.

Various HCC programs and community partners had informational tables in the dining room for the public to learn about their programs.

A "Food Bash Bingo" game offered visitors a chance to win prizes, with guests getting their cards stamped at every table they stopped at.



Student Allison Boucher takes some lime cream puffs off a tray at Holyoke Community College's open house at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute in Holyoke on Wednesday. (STEVEN E. NANTON PHOTO)



Simone Richard, 5, of Holyoke, samples some ice cream at the open house. (STEVEN E. NANTON PHOTO)



Gloria Penagos, left, job placement assistant workforce development, gives information to visitors at Holyoke Community College's open house. (STEVEN E. NANTON PHOTO)



Liege Waffles with Bourbon Chicken were among the many delicacies made by students at HCC's open house. (STEVEN E. NANTON PHOTO)



Student Cassidy Lamb picks up plates of pigeon peas rice balls in one of the kitchens at the open house. (STEVEN E. NANTON PHOTO)