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# Business Monday

D | *The Republican*. | MONDAY, JULY 9, 2018



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# What's cookin'?

## HCC preps cooks for the MGM kitchens



Students in the Holyoke Community College MGM Culinary Arts Institute's free line cook training program marked their final day of training on June 29. In the front row, seated from left to right, are Annie Rosa, of Springfield, who has accepted an offer to work as a pantry chef at MGM Springfield, Axel Rojas, of Springfield, who also received a job to work at MGM's South End Market, and Heather Bergeron, of Holyoke. In the back row, left to right, are Tyler Carrier, a lab tech at the institute, Kermit Dunkelberg, assistant vice president for adult education and workforce development, students Paola Yara, of West Springfield, Russell Lariviere, or Springfield, Jennifer Bielecki, of Springfield, and Naquan Murray, of Springfield, who is another MGM hiree, and chef and faculty member Warren Leigh. (HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PHOTO)

**A**nnie Rosa signed up for the free line cook training program at Holyoke Community College with a clear objective in mind – get a job working in one of the new restaurants soon opening at MGM Springfield.

The 38-year-old Springfield resident had worked in other restaurant kitchens, including Cracker Barrel, Cafe Lebanon and Subway, but admits that most of her experience came from cooking for her family. She needed a professional boost.

"I'm an MGM hopeful," she'd said in early June, not long after starting daily

classes at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute.

Lo and behold, before the four-week training program had concluded on June 29, Rosa had accepted an offer to work as a pantry chef at the Chandler, MGM's fine dining steakhouse. She starts her new job on July 30.

"I'm no longer a hopeful. I'm part of the show," she said, putting her own spin on the MGM tag line. "Want to hear my roar?"

Indeed, Rosa was smiling – and roaring – during the last week of the training program at HCC, which she credits for helping her land the job with MGM.

"I came here with a plan," she said. "I passed my ServSafe training and my TIPS training. I made new friends. I learned new things. And, to work for MGM and have the possibility of grow-

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Axel Rojas, 26, of Springfield, will soon be working as a line cook at MGM's South End Market. (HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE)



# HCC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE D4

ing my career with them, that was my ultimate goal. Overall, it was an awesome experience.”

So far, half the students in the program – four of the eight who completed the training – have been offered restaurant jobs with MGM.

One of them, Axel Rojas, 26, also of Springfield, had been working most recently for Aramark dining services on the main campus at HCC. He’ll soon start a job as a line cook at MGM’s South End Market.

“Getting into MGM was one of my main goals,” he said.

The same goes for 25-year-old Naquan Murray, also of Springfield. Previously at the Lord Jeffery Inn in Amherst, Murray will be working in one of MGM’s production kitchens as a “garde manager” – a pantry chef – like Rosa, responsible for cold food preparation.

“I knew this program would give me more experience,” Murray said. “I feel pretty good. I’m happy to get in there.”

Applications are now being accepted for the next round of line cook training, which is free to experienced kitchen workers who want to take



Annie Rosa, 38, of Springfield, credits HCC’s free Line Cook Training program for helping her land her new job at MGM Springfield. (HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PHOTO)

their culinary skills to a higher level.

“This is designed for professionals who have been out there for a while,” said culinary arts instructor Warren Leigh. “Maybe they’re prep cooks, maybe they’re line cooks and they want to get better. They want to move up. That’s what we’re hoping to get in the next round also. That way we can push them to be better. We can make them better with their knife skills, really master sautéing, really master grilling – as best as we

can in four weeks.”

Classes will run weekdays from July 23 through Aug. 17, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. each day at the new HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute at 164 Race St.

Class topics include moist and dry cooking methods, soups, stocks, sauces, knife skills, culinary math, and ServSafe and TIPS certifications. Students will also participate in resume workshops and mock interviews.

The program is funded partly through a \$50,000

grant that the college recently received as winner of the Deval Patrick Prize from the Boston Foundation for expanding its culinary arts program to help address workforce needs.

Applicants must have at least two years of experience working in the culinary industry. For more information or to register, contact Ann Rocchi, job placement assistant, by calling 413-552-2753, or Milissa Daniels, career development counselor, by calling 413-552-2042.

**“I came here with a plan. I passed my ServSafe training and my TIPS training. I made new friends. I learned new things. And, to work for MGM and have the possibility of growing my career with them, that was my ultimate goal. Overall, it was an awesome experience.”**

ANNIE ROSA, STUDENT, HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE-MGM CULINARY ARTS INSTITUTE