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MASS LIVE
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Holyoke Community College student Matt Medina holds a certificate recognizing him as a Jack Kent Cooke Transfer Scholarship recipient. With him are Pathways program coordinator Irma Medina and Transfer Affairs coordinator Mark Broadbent.

HOLYOKE

Cooke scholarship recipient sets shining example at HCC

Springfield resident also will be honored by state Friday as one of '29 Who Shine'

For the second time in two years, a Holyoke Community College student has been awarded a prestigious, national scholarship from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation.

Matthew Medina, a 24-year-old Springfield resident, was one of only 47 students selected for the 2018 Jack Kent Cooke Transfer Scholarship out of some 2,500 applicants and 534

semi-finalists nationwide. The scholarship provides up to \$40,000 a year to community college students so they can complete their bachelor's degrees.

"It's a huge financial burden off my shoulders," Medina said. "It's a big relief. I'm feeling pretty good."

Matt's adviser, Irma Medina (no relation), coordinator of HCC's Pathways Program, said getting a Jack Kent Cooke scholarship is tougher than getting into many of the competitive colleges and universities to which he has applied, including Amherst, Hampshire, Williams, Dartmouth, Cornell and Brown.

"You have to meet the financial need but the academic piece is also

important," she said. "There are multiple essays and they all have to be well written, and you have to apply to selective schools."

Last year, HCC student Kiana Estime of Great Barrington received a Jack Kent Cooke Transfer Scholarship. She is now a studying anthropology at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley. Since 2008, five HCC students have been awarded a Jack Kent Cooke Transfer Scholarship.

Medina will graduate in June with his associate degree in liberal arts, high honors and a GPA of 3.95.

This is the second honor Medina has received in as many weeks. He

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Dr. Lowell Kahn works with his surgical team in his surgery suite. (STAASI HEROPOULOS PHOTO)

WEST SPRINGFIELD

Interventional radiologist offers procedures in office

BY STAASI HEROPOULOS

Special to The Republican

Dr. Lowell Kahn makes a small incision in his patient and with a steady hand, runs a micro wire into the kidney with more precision than it takes to thread a needle. It's the beginning of an intricate process that would ultimately allow a urologist to remove a large kidney stone. Kahn watches his progress on two large monitors showing live, X-ray images of the procedure.

Until now in Western Massachusetts, minimally invasive procedures like this done by interventional radiologists – as alternatives to surgery – were available only in hospitals. Now in a medical first for the area, Kahn is operating the region's only endovascular center where patients can receive this care in his office – outside of a hospital setting.

"I've always dreamed of building my own practice because there are a lot of advantages for the patient," says Kahn, who had previously practiced IR in a hospital. "When you look at interventional radiology on a national scale, it's predominantly a hospital based practice, but that's migrating to the outpatient model."

The most visible and obvious convenience Kahn has created is a parking lot that runs right



Dr. Lowell Kahn scrubs prior to surgery. (STAASI HEROPOULOS PHOTO)

up to the front door of the New England Endovascular Center at 86 Ashley Ave. There are no massive parking garages or fast walks in foul weather here. From comforting décor to TV screens in the ceiling of the surgical suite, patients are put at ease by watching their favorite programs often during their procedure.

Having procedures done in major medical centers carries the inherent risk of infection. This is less of a concern in an offsite setting. "Infection rates are lower in an office because hospitals are more prone to super bugs that can result in complications. It's not in any way, shape, or form a reflection on the hospital. There are simply more patients there and the total in-patient population is sicker than what we see in our office," says Kahn.

Aside from keeping his costs low, which results in savings for patients and insurance companies, an offsite center can easily bring in modern technology. "One of the good things about being small is it equates to being nimble. Whenever there's a new technology or product on the market that might help my patients, it's not a lengthy or bureaucratic process to implement that. I can bring it into my lab immediately," he says. Kahn left his hospital practice last May to go it alone. He says his business is doing well now, after months of sleepless nights wondering whether it would.

"I've always had the entrepreneurial spirit. I believe in the American dream and taking risks," Kahn said. "It all strikes a chord with me."

Medina

CONTINUED FROM PAGE P1

was also selected to represent HCC at the Statehouse on Friday, where he will receive a "29 Who Shine" award from the state Department of Higher Education. The "29 Who Shine" ceremony is an annual event that recognizes a single student from each of the state's 29 community colleges and public universities.

Philosophy professor Donald Hanover will also receive an award that day as Medina's faculty mentor. "Professor Hanover is simultaneously the sweetest and most intimidating professor I know," Medina said. "In tough times, he was understanding, yet he pushed me to my limits as a writer and thinker."

Unlike most HCC students, Medina enrolled having already earned an associate degree in IT security from another school. He'd also worked in IT for several area employers, including MassMutual.

But he wanted to continue his education and said he decided to enroll at HCC to take advantage of the college's strong transfer support programs, challenging academic offerings, and connections to top four-year schools. Under the guidance of Pathways coordinator Irma Medina, he immersed himself in Learning Communities and Honors classes, among the most rigorous and highly regarded by transfer schools.

After HCC, he plans to study cognitive science, a new field that combines computer science, neuroscience, ethics and linguistics. Guiding him in this pursuit, he said, are an interest in artificial intelligence and a belief that the benefits of AI

technology should be ethically deployed and equitably distributed. After earning his bachelor's degree, he hopes to go to law school and ultimately work in cyber security policy with a focus on artificial intelligence.

Medina works as a peer tutor in HCC's Writing Center. He serves as vice president of leadership for HCC's chapter of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society and is spearheading an initiative that would allow students to use their EBT cards for SNAP benefits to purchase food on campus.

Outside of school, he still dabbles in computer science. He and some friends are now seeking venture capital funding for a smart phone app they have developed that will support farmers, retailers and distributors working in the state's burgeoning marijuana industry.

Medina was born in New Jersey and lived in a lot of places, including Puerto Rico, Yonkers, and Newburgh, New York, before winding up in Springfield, where, for a time, he lived in the back room of a jewelry store, with the owner's permission. Earlier he had aged out of public schools before he could graduate and eventually got his high school equivalency certificate through the National Farm Workers Council.

Like many of his classmates, he rides a bus to school most days. Sometimes, though, when the weather is good, and he has time, Medina hops on his long board, backpack on his shoulders, and skates up Route 5, all the way to HCC.

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