

HCC Military Club pays holiday visit to Soldiers' Home

Members of the Holyoke Community College Military Club made a special visit to the Holyoke Soldiers' Home Friday, Dec. 15, to deliver gifts purchased for the residents there as part of the college's 18th annual Giving Tree campaign.

This year, the HCC community fulfilled the holiday wishes of 343 individuals from four local nonprofit agencies: WestMass ElderCare, Homework House, the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the Holyoke Soldiers' Home.

"It's amazing how much people in the HCC community never forget about our veterans, and you have no idea how much that means to the guys and the gals," said Soldiers' Home superintendent Bennett Walsh. "They don't want anything, they're so proud, and they're so wonderful, but just remembering them with something like this, with a small gift, goes miles and miles and miles and miles."

During the annual campaign, which lasts from early November through the middle of December, Giving Trees are set up in designated areas around campus. Participants choose tags from one of the four agencies containing the age of the recipient and his or her wish for a



Submitted photos

Left, Holyoke Community College student Ysabel Robles Ramos hands a holiday gift bag to a Soldiers' Home resident on Right, HCC student Jonathan Jasmin of Westfield delivers a holiday gift bag to a Soldiers' Home resident.

gift. The wrapped gifts are then piled on tables for the closing celebration, when HCC faculty, staff, and students join with representatives from the agencies to distribute the gifts and share food and stories.

Rather than have representatives from the Soldiers' Home distribute the gifts to their residents this year, the HCC

Military Club decided to do it themselves.

"This event is so very meaningful to our community. It is a privilege to be able to support the wonderful work of our partners and friends," HCC president Christina Royal said during the closing celebration in a videotaped message. "The work you do throughout the

year makes a real difference in the lives of our most vulnerable neighbors. When I was a child, services like these helped my mother ensure that our family had a happy holiday, so thank you. I think the display of gifts reflects the enthusiasm our students, faculty and staff have for this event. I am extremely proud to be part of this community."