



**PLUS:** Continuing the Fight... see page 25

## Happy Mother's Day

### HONOR THY MOTHER

"One day is really not enough to give thanks and gratitude for what Mothers have endured on our behalf."  
*By Rev. E. Maxine Moore - 7*

### TRUST YOUR MOTHER INSTEAD OF GOOGLE

"A mother or elder who lives down the street or in the next town could be a sage guide far more meaningful than google."  
*By Kristin Brennan - 8*

### SPRINGFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE FIGHTS FOR THE PEOPLE

"We are facing a critical moment in local democracy when one individual, the Mayor, and a non-elected official, the Superintendent, have taken control of the Agenda of a public body. We are elected officials who represent the people."  
*Submitted by Vice Chair Joesiah Gonzalez - 8*

### OBAMA BROKE DEMOCRACY

"Many people could not believe that a Black man had been elected to be the president of the United States for two terms. ... The white supremacists started rising up and saying that people were taking their jobs because they believe that only white men could be the president in this country."  
*By Zaida Govan - 12*

### HEALING RACISM INSTITUTE APPOINTS INTERIM DIRECTOR

"(Rev) Dr. Curry Avery is recognized as a trailblazer at the intersection of pastoring and psychology. She currently serves as the pastor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Presbyterian Church in Springfield and will serve in the Interim Director position on a part-time basis while she continues to minister."  
*By The Healing Racism Institute - 15*

### PASS THE FAIRNESS FOR FARMWORKERS ACT...

Federal minimum wage law and other workplace protections. ... explicitly excluded the majority African American farm labor from its protections to appease Southern legislatures who universally opposed granting equal rights to the African American workforce."  
*By Attorney Claudia Quintera - 23*

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...

"The truth is, in Massachusetts, youth gambling is a growing public health concern. ... often targeting communities of color under the guise of our favorite comedians, professional athletes and entertainers."  
*By Doris Sexton Harris, Ph.D. - 29*

### HONORING MOTHER AFRICA...

"We all have things to be thankful for and/or mothers to acknowledge, and back in March, Art for the Soul had the opportunity to honor a woman commonly known as a "mother of Africa" — LuJuana Hood."  
*By Emily Munsell/Rosemary Tracy Woods - 36*

# 'TRULY MOMENTOUS'

HCC celebrates the inauguration of President George Timmons

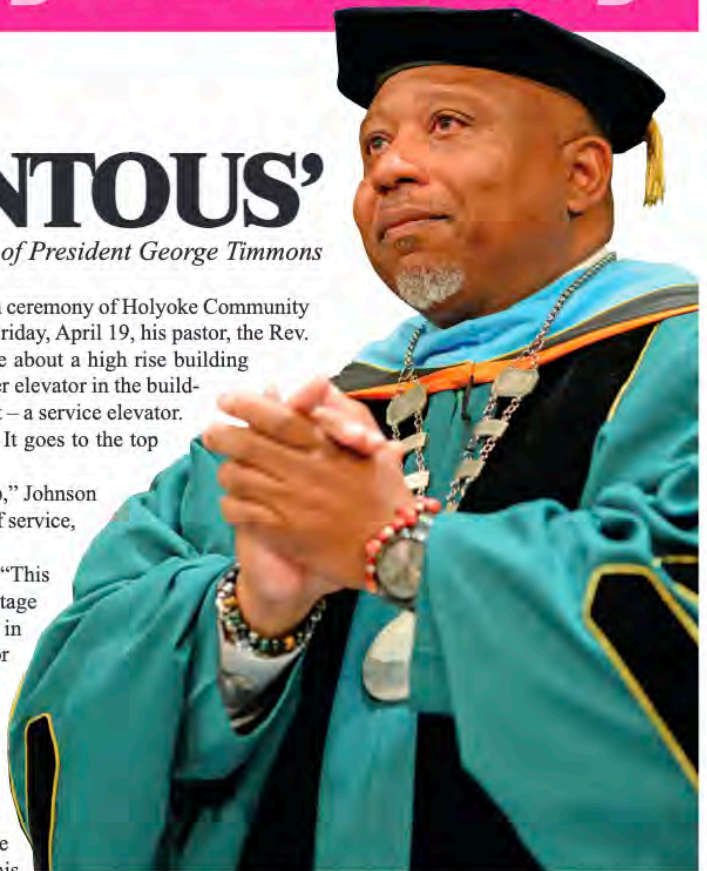
**HOLYOKE** – In opening the inauguration ceremony of Holyoke Community College President George Timmons on Friday, April 19, his pastor, the Rev. Damone Paul Johnson, offered a parable about a high rise building with a broken elevator. There was another elevator in the building, the attendant told a concerned tenant – a service elevator. That one is working, the attendant said. It goes to the top but stops on every floor.

"Dr. Timmons has made it to the top," Johnson said, "but he has stopped on every floor of service, dedication, and excellence."

Like an episode of the old TV show "This is your Life," people from nearly every stage of President Timmons' life and career in higher education stepped forward to honor him and attest to the qualities that make him "the right person for this job," in the words of Patrick Tutwiler, Massachusetts secretary of education.

Meanwhile, hundreds more – relatives, college friends, and former colleagues among them – filled the Leslie Phillips Theater to capacity to celebrate his official installation as the fifth president of Holyoke Community College and his ascen-

*continues to page 2*



George Timmons is installed as the fifth president of Holyoke Community College during an inauguration ceremony in Holyoke on Friday, April 19, 2024.  
*(Photo by Christopher Evans)*

## President Timmons' Tribute To His Grandmother

"...President Timmons talked a lot about how he once was and thanked all those people in his life who made it possible for him to be where he is today:  
...and last but not least, his grandmother, Ruby, now 91,  
who "raised me to be the man I am today."  
"Ruby taught me the value of education, which, she always said,  
will help you find your way, and, once earned, can never be taken away."



# FEATURE

## HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

### 'Truly Momentous'

*continued from page 1*

dance as the first African American man in the position.

"In the past 78 years, we have come together as a college community only four times before to do what we are gathered to do today," said Vanessa Smith, interim chair of the HCC Board of Trustees. "On average, we have hosted a presidential inauguration just once every decade and a half. This is an extraordinary occasion for many reasons, and because it is so rare, it is truly momentous."

Smith said it was Timmons' commitment to student success that stood out to her during the interview process last spring (he was hired in April 2023 and started in July) and called him a "natural connector."

"All of the genuine interactions in the hallways, out in the community, or over a meal in our culinary arts institute clearly bring him joy," she said. "His ability to inspire, motivate, and engage our community is among the many gifts he brings to Holyoke Community College. We need only look around this room to see the evidence of Dr. Timmons' ability to connect and form strong and lasting relationships."

Indeed, many in attendance wore bright green bow ties and socks in recognition of President Timmons' preferred dress style.

"It is said that a bow tie represents confidence, individuality, and creativity," said Tutwiler, who prefers long ties but also chose a bow tie for the occasion. "In donning a bow tie as he does, President Timmons is sending a message. In my view, it is a small, but not insignificant window into the type of leader he is and some of the wonderful qualities he will bring to his role."

Student-trustee Barney Garcia talked about how he had started off at HCC "battered, lost," and "depressed," someone who "always wore a mask," "too afraid to be myself."

"It wasn't until I met Dr. Tim-



*Inauguration of George Timmons as the fifth president of Holyoke Community College on Friday, April 19, 2024. (Photo by Christopher Evans)*



*George Timmons, acknowledges the standing-room only crowd applause in the Leslie Phillips Theater as Vanessa Smith, Holyoke Community College interim chair of the board of trustees, left, along with students Barney Garcia, second from left, and Alicia Beaton, right, look on as Timmons is installed as the fifth president of Holyoke Community College during the inauguration ceremony. (Photo by Christopher Evans)*

mons, someone who is unapologetically himself, that I felt empowered to break that barrier and be unapologetically myself," Garcia said.

Garcia said he and the president bonded over the fact that both were raised by grandparents, and that he had found in President Timmons "an awesome bonus dad."

During their first meeting, Garcia said he recognized in the president, then one of four candidates for the job, the attributes that make a great leader.

"It is true that basic leadership is about commanding authority and being able to lead, but that's why it's basic," Garcia said. "Where true leaders go above and beyond is when they're able to tap into everyone's inner leader, helping them harness their inner potential to be their best selves."

"In every conversation I've had the privilege of being a part of with him, he strives to make that connection, to tap into that person's or group's potential, helping them see what they can't see, like how he once was."

In his own remarks, President Timmons talked a lot about how he once was and thanked all those people in his life who made it possible for him to be where he is today: academic leaders, coaches, and colleagues, his brothers from Kappa Alpha Psi, his fraternity at Norfolk State University, the historically Black college in Virginia where he earned his bachelor's degree; his parents, in-laws, and extended family; his brother, Tyrell; his wife, Frankie, and, last but not least, his grandmother, Ruby, now 91, who "raised me to be the man I am today."

"Ruby taught me the value of education, which, she always said, will help you find your way, and, once earned, can never be taken away."

Before coming to HCC, Timmons served as the provost and vice president of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs at Columbia-Greene Community College in Hudson, N.Y. He holds

*continues to page 4*



# FEATURE

## HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



President Timmons' wife Frankie, grandmother Ruby and President Timmons.



President Timmons gestures to members of his college fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi, who came to support him and help celebrate the occasion. (Photo by Christopher Evans)

### 'Truly Momentous'

continued from page 2

a Ph.D. in higher education administration from Bowling Green State University, a master's degree in higher education from Old Dominion University, and a bachelor's degree in financial management from Norfolk State University.

Sometimes, he said, he can't believe he finally achieved this long-sought dream to become a college president.

He asked: "How does a kid who grows up in an environment where no one went to college, in a neighborhood where drug deals were the norm, who witnessed family members battle substance abuse, who was never the strongest student or the best athlete, and who was diagnosed with a learning disability in his late thirties become a college president?"

His answer: "Mindset. Hard work. And people who believe in you almost more than you believe in yourself – the same qualities that have led

to the success of thousands of Holyoke Community College students over our 78-year history."

"I'll be honest," he said. "Sometimes I pinch myself. The tremendous responsibility of this role is not lost on me."

From the moment he was introduced to HCC, he said, he knew it was the right place for him.

"Among the things that inspire me about Holyoke Community College is our commitment to living our values of innovation, collaboration, kindness, in-

clusion, and trust," he said. "Do you know what these values have in common? Each word suggests the need for others, for unity and togetherness. None can be accomplished alone."

As an undergraduate himself, he said he learned firsthand the impact a college president can have on the life of a student. When he ran out of financial aid during his final year at Norfolk State, President Harrison B. Wilson tapped into a discretionary fund so he could complete his bachelor's degree.

"I was able to finish what I started," he said. "And that was just the beginning."

"In the end," he said in conclusion, "when a single student finds their calling, discovers a talent, turns their life around, hones a skill, or finds the courage to speak up, the world is a better place. Potential becomes reality. We all benefit. That is the work we are doing at Holyoke Community College, and I can't think of a better way to spend a life." ■



President Timmons with his three children before the inauguration, from left to right: Vivian, Georden, and Briana, far right, who introduced her father during the ceremony. (Photo by Christopher Evans)