

# 'Together HCC' raises \$192K for scholarships, student aid

HOLYOKE — Alumni, faculty, staff, and friends of Holyoke Community College led a historic day of giving last month, raising more than \$192,000 for student support programs during its one-day "Together HCC: Drive to Change Lives" campaign.

Organizers had set a goal of 300 donors for the 24-hour fund drive on April 26. The final tally was 418, a 41% increase from 2021.

"The Together HCC campaign has proven to be one of the best examples of how much this community cares about the success of HCC students," said Patrick Carpenter, HCC's director of institutional advancement. "When we come together and give what we can, the results are nothing short of astounding."

Caleb Curd, a current HCC student from Westfield, said that receiving an HCC Foundation scholarship is what made college possible for him.

"Knowing that somebody had the heart to support students like myself really blew me away," Curd said. "And it inspired me to think about how I can use this time as a springboard to serve other people."

Auto dealer Gary Rome, an HCC Foundation board member, led the way with a \$5,000 challenge when the campaign met its goals of securing 300 donors.

"My father always said, 'Gary, your education is something no one can take away from you.' I think that everyone who wants a college education should have that opportunity, and I want to do everything I can to make it accessible for all," Rome said. "I got involved with the HCC Foundation and continue to support this campaign in part to help dispel the misconception that community colleges receive all their funding from the state, and highlight how important it is to raise funds to help support our community college."

Another alumni donor was Dylan



*Auto dealer Gary Rome, left, stops by the Holyoke Community College radio station, WCCH 103.5 FM, to record a segment promoting HCC's "Together HCC: Drive to Change Lives" campaign with student DJ Gabe Guzman of Chicopee. (SUBMITTED / HCC)*

Pilon of Springfield, a former scholarship recipient who graduated from HCC debt-free in 2012, which allowed him to start his own company, Cloud 9 Marketing in East Longmeadow.

"I've been fortunate to build relationships with fellow alumni and HCC faculty over the past decade," said Pilon, who matched \$10 for each of the first 100 alumni donors, for a gift of \$1,000. "HCC has positively impacted so many lives because of the continued support from alumni."

In addition to Rome and Pilon, Peg and Gary Wendlandt, Jim Izatt, trustee

Robert Gilbert, foundation board member Carl Eger and Shirley Eger, and HCC President Christina Royal all posed matching and challenge gifts for the campaign.

Much of the campaign's success can be attributed to the effort of volunteers, including 1981 alumnus Paul Rogers and Stevie Converse, faculty adviser for WCCH 103.5 FM, who worked with students to provide programming for the college's radio station in support of the campaign.

Additionally, 2004 alumnus Myke Connolly literally drove to change lives,

spreading the campaign's message throughout the region with his mobile billboard company, StandOutTruck.com.

Donors from 22 different states made gifts during the 24-hour campaign. Nearly half were alumni.

"The heart of Together HCC is our network of alumni, faculty, staff, and community friends," said Julie Phillips, coordinator of alumni relations and annual giving. "Because of this community, students can worry less about how they will afford next semester's tuition or groceries for their families, so they can focus more on their studies."