

## HCC, auto dealer partner again on fundraising effort

HOLYOKE — Auto dealer Gary Rome is again partnering with the HCC Foundation for a one-day campaign to raise money for student support programs and scholarships at Holyoke Community College.

The second annual “Together HCC: Drive to Change Lives” campaign is set for Tuesday, April 26, and will run a full 24 hours, from 12:01 a.m. to midnight.

Donations can be made through a secure portal at [hcc.edu/drive](http://hcc.edu/drive).

The goal of the campaign is to raise money for four areas that directly support HCC students: scholarships; the Thrive Student Resource Center and Food Pantry; the President’s Student Emergency Fund; and the HCC Foundation’s general, unrestricted fund.

Rome, owner of Gary Rome Hyundai in Holyoke, has pledged a challenge donation of \$5,000 once 300 donors make a gift to the campaign.

“My father always said, ‘Gary, your education is something no one can take away,’” said Rome, a member of the

HCC Foundation board of directors. “This is why I am so passionate about making sure a college education is accessible to everyone. I am honored to again be a part of ‘Together HCC: Drive to Change Lives.’ This one day, working together, we really can make a difference.”

Additionally, 1958 alumna Peg Wendlandt and her husband Gary Wendlandt will supplement each gift from new donors with a \$250 donation of their own. Altogether, the one-day campaign has the potential to unlock more than \$131,000 in matching donations.

“HCC alumni and friends have made challenge gifts that will enable donors to have an even greater impact,” said Julie Phillips, HCC’s coordinator of alumni relations and annual giving. “Gifts can be doubled, even tripled on this day. With 40,000 alumni nationwide, we can have a direct and massive impact on our students.”

The HCC Foundation launched “Together HCC: A Campaign for Caring” in March 2020 to build community sup-



*Auto dealer Gary Rome and his dog Daisy recently visited WCCH 103.5 FM, the radio station at Holyoke Community College, to record promotional messages for the college’s April 26 fundraising drive. (SUBMITTED / HCC)*

port and raise money for students experiencing financial distress during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of that campaign, members of the HCC community — students, staff, faculty, alumni, relatives and college friends — were asked to use the hashtag #TogetherHCC to share stories and images on social media that demonstrated the resilience of the college community in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

In its first year, the campaign raised \$40,000 for the President’s Student Emergency Fund and was selected as a finalist for a national Bellwether

Award. Last year, with Rome signed on, HCC added the “Drive to Change Lives” theme and raised more than \$122,000 for student support programs.

“On any given day, challenges faced by our students include hunger, homelessness and housing insecurity, affordable healthcare, lack of access to adequate technology, and childcare,” said Phillips. “For a lot of people, community college is their only affordable option. Gifts made on April 26 will have an immediate impact helping today’s students stay on track and remain focused on their academic success.”