

## ► In The News

# Royal to be honored by Zonta Club

HOLYOKE – Among the many “firsts” of Christina Royal’s career are these: first woman president of Holyoke Community College; first openly gay president of Holyoke Community College; and first bi-racial president of Holyoke Community College.

To that barrier-breaking resume, she can now add another, as the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley honors President Royal next month with its first-ever Woman of the Year award.

The Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley will celebrate Royal with a special dinner at the Ludlow Country Club on Monday, March 13, at 5:30 p.m.

“We are so delighted to honor President Royal,” said Mary Knight, secretary of the Zonta Club of Quaboag Valley. “One of the key things Zonta does is work to improve the lives of women and girls. That’s our mission all over the world, and we’ve been around for 103 years, so this is a really big deal.”

The event coincides with the Zonta Club’s celebration of International Women’s Day, which this year will be recognized on Wed., March 8.

“International Women’s Day is



Christina Royal

something that’s honored around the world, especially in Zonta because that’s our focus,” said Knight. “This year, we wanted to find someone who really epitomizes the ideals of Zonta. This is the very first time we’ve honored someone for International Women’s Day. When we learned that President Royal would be retiring in July 2023,

we knew we needed to celebrate her accomplishments and legacy as a pioneer.”

Tickets for the event are \$35 per person or \$25 for students. Space is limited, and an RSVP is requested by Thursday, March 2.

Please go to [zontaqv.org/hcc/](http://zontaqv.org/hcc/) to see registration and payment options.

In addition to commemorating President Royal’s accomplishments, the Zonta Club will present her with a cash award for a charity or project of her choice. Donations can be made to the Zonta Foundation for Women in honor of President Royal.

Royal, now a resident of South Hadley, started at HCC in January 2017 as the fourth president of the college. In selecting Royal for Woman of

the Year, the Zonta Club noted these milestones from her tenure at HCC: working collaboratively to develop the college’s first strategic plan; advancing equity across the institution; and investing in programs to support students’ basic needs, such as establishing the President’s Student Emergency Fund through the HCC Foundation (to provide grants to student facing immediate financial needs), opening Homestead Market (the first campus store in Massachusetts to accept SNAP benefits), partnering with the Holyoke Housing Authority (to help students find affordable housing), and launching the Itsy Bitsy Child Watch Program (to provide HCC student-parents access to free, short-term care for their children.)

Other highlights include her opening of the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute on Race Street; reopening the Campus Center after a two-year, \$43.5 million renovation; establishing El Centro, a bilingual center dedicated to the needs of Latinx students; weathering a global pandemic; celebrating HCC’s 75th anniversary as the oldest two-year college in Massachusetts; and for the first time raising flags on campus in recognition of Pride month and International Transgender Day of Visibility.