



Sofia Bilgrami, a Holyoke Community College pastry instructor, prepares cream puffs for the college's 75th anniversary reception. (FREDERICK GORE PHOTO)

# Celebrating 75 years

By DENNIS HOHENBERGER  
Special to The Republican

HCC marks major milestone making education accessible

**G**eorge Frost founded Holyoke Community College 75 years ago, a novel two-year institution that provided generations pathways to life and career successes.

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Holyoke Community College held a Day of Celebration to mark the 75th anniversary of the college. (DON TREEGER / THE REPUBLICAN)



Holyoke Community College alumni Joanna Brown, left, and Carl Eger attend the community celebration reception marking the 75th anniversary of the college. (FREDERICK GORE PHOTO)



Amoy Gordon, a student at Holyoke Community College MGM Culinary Arts Institute, prepares a plate for the 75th anniversary reception for the college. (FREDERICK GORE PHOTO)

Holyoke Community College president Christina Royal, center, receives a resolution from the Holyoke City Council to mark the college's 75th anniversary during Thursday's community celebration. Ward 3 Councilor David K. Bartley, left, and Ward 2 Councilor Will Puello, right, made the presentation. Bartley's father, David M. Bartley, is a former president of the college. (FREDERICK GORE PHOTO)



## HCC

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To mark the occasion, Christina Royal, today's president, hosted a community celebration Thursday at the HCC-MGM Culinary Arts Institute on Race Street.

The college began as Holyoke Graduate School in 1946, helmed by Frost, who was determined to offer an affordable education with a rigorous curriculum. Evening classes gave students the option to keep their day jobs.

"A lot has changed in 75 years, but what hasn't changed is our core and central purpose," Royal said. "HCC was created by a group of prestigious faculty who wanted to make education more accessible and bring it to the working class so that everybody who wanted an education could get one."

HCC has transformed lives through the power of education and is a route to social and economic mobility, Royal said.

"It's wonderful to see the threads of our institution through our faculty, who maintain our high-quality curriculum. Our staff continues to focus and prioritize the human touch and the experience of working directly with students," she said.

Before the program, City Councilors David K. Bartley and Will Puello presented Royal with a proclamation. Bartley's father, David M.

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Christina Royal, president, HCC

Bartley, led the college from 1975 to 2004 following his career in the state Legislature that included service as House speaker. The elder Bartley graduated from HCC in 1954 and transferred to the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

"He's influenced so many people. Quietly he helped hundreds, if not thousands. His legacy is going to be intact, and it's going to live on for generations," Bartley said of his father.

Several past and current students spoke about the role the community college played in their lives.

Carl Eger Jr., 86, said he was blessed knowing Frost as a neighbor and mentor. Fresh out of high school. Eger faced leaving the family business to attend college, a difficult economic choice with three younger siblings.

With afternoon and evening classes, Eger was able to attend college, lessening the financial hardship on his family. "It fit perfectly for me and started me being able to get a college education," he said.

Eger added, "Thank God, I had a George Frost in my life. He is the frosting on my cake."

For Brianna Couture, HCC equipped her with the tools to open Brinny's Hand Pies in Agawam. The instructors in the college's culinary program gave her the foundation and confidence to open a business, she said.

"All the instructors have influenced me greatly, but it was the unique experience of going to a culinary school with so many fantastic female chefs, instructors, mentors and friends," Couture said. "I will be forever grateful to this college. It is a community with an indomitable heart."

Barry Hill, a member of the Class of 2013, said HCC represents academic excellence, innovation and opportunity. "Without these foundational ideas, HCC would be another institution where performative measures outweigh impactful actions," he said.

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