

## HCC to celebrate Deaf culture at conference

HOLYOKE — Holyoke Community College will host a free afternoon conference celebrating Deaf culture today.

The conference, co-hosted by Baystate Deaf Senior Citizens, New England Deaf Senior Citizens, and HCC's Deaf Studies program and ASL Club, will run 1-6 p.m. in the college's Leslie Phillips Theater and the theater lobby on the second floor of the Fine & Performing Arts Building.

Admission is free and advance registration is not required.

Ivy Velez, a grassroots Latina Deaf community advocate from Marlborough, will lead off the presentations at 1 p.m. with a workshop titled "Why Is Social Advocacy Important in our Deaf Community?"

At 2 p.m., Ruth Moore, Deaf advocate and retired educator from Hadley, will moderate

a panel discussion about the Deaf community in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

From 3:15 to 4 p.m., conference attendees can enjoy refreshments and visit vendor booths in the lobby outside the theater.

At 4 p.m., actress and ASL interpreter and educator Janis Cole, Ph.D., will perform "Vision Through Deaf Eyes, Past, Present, Future."

"We are very happy to be able to finally host this conference, which had been postponed since 2020 due to the pandemic," said Carol-Ann Smalley, an ASL interpreter and learning specialist in HCC's Office for Students with Disabilities and Deaf Services. "In past years, this was an annual conference that was held on a much larger scale at Hampshire College. The Deaf senior citizens groups really pushed to bring it back. By

doing so we are honoring the historical legacy of the conference and also helping to preserve and share what it means to be part of the Massachusetts Deaf community for current and future generations."

Smalley said she expects well over 100 people to attend from all over New England.

Conference sponsors and vendors include: American School for the Deaf, T-Mobile, Sorenson Communications, Stavros Center for Independent Living, Kramer Wealth Managers, Viability, Willie Ross School for the Deaf, Center for Living and Working, Central Massachusetts Deaf Senior Citizens, Connecticut Deaf Senior Citizens, Maine Deaf Senior Citizens, Mass Relay/Hamilton Relay, Massachusetts Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, and Vermont Deaf Senior Citizens.



*Holyoke Community College professor Claire Sanders, chair of the college's Deaf studies program and conference co-organizer, leads an ASL class. (SUBMITTED / HCC)*