

Auto dealer Gary Rome joins fundraising campaign

HOLYOKE – For the fifth year in a row, auto dealer Gary Rome is partnering with the HCC Foundation for a one-day campaign to raise money for student support programs and academic resources at Holyoke Community College.

The annual “Together HCC: Drive to Change Lives” campaign is set for Tuesday, March 4, and will run for 24 hours, from 12:01 a.m. to midnight. With a goal of 500 donors and \$230,000, this year’s success would put the campaign’s six-year cumulative support total above \$1 million.

“Each year, our giving

day demonstrates the extraordinary power of community support,” said Julie Phillips, HCC director of development. “Reaching \$1 million in cumulative giving would be remarkable, but what’s more significant is how these gifts have removed barriers and created opportunities for countless students.”

Donations can be made through a secure portal on the HCC website: hcc.edu/drive

The goal of the campaign is to raise money for six areas that directly support HCC students: academic excellence and innova-

tion; scholarships; the Thrive Student Resource Center and Food Pantry; the President’s Student Emergency Fund; the President’s Fund for Opportunity and the HCC Foundation’s general, unrestricted fund.

One of the key partners in the HCC campaign is Rome, an HCC Foundation board member and owner of Gary Rome Hyundai in Holyoke. Rome has pledged to donate \$5,000 when 125 people donate to the campaign and add the comment “#TogetherHCC” to the dealership’s Facebook campaign

post on March 4.

“Education transforms lives,” said Rome. “I see it firsthand in our community through HCC graduates who become our employees, colleagues, and leaders.”

Additionally, longtime HCC supporters Peg Wendlandt ’58 and her husband Gary Wendlandt will provide \$100,000 in challenge gifts throughout the day. Altogether, the one-day campaign has the potential to unlock more than \$125,000 in matching donations.

The HCC Foundation launched “Together HCC:

A Campaign for Caring” in March 2020 to build community support and raise money for students experiencing financial distress during the 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. Since 2021, with Rome signed on, HCC has added the “Drive to Change Lives” theme and collectively raised more than \$700,000 for student support programs.

“Every gift to the ‘Together HCC’ campaign matters,” said Phillips. “When we remove barriers for one student, we’re not just changing their life, we’re transforming their family’s future and strengthening our entire region.”