

Training begins inside Holyoke container farms

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College students, staff and alumni along with community farmers and others have started training to grow produce inside two urban container farms set up in a lot off Race Street next to the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute.

The 40-foot-long Freight Farms shipping containers were delivered in April for a joint urban agriculture project that includes HCC, the city of Holyoke and the community nonprofit Nuestras Raices.

The funds for the project, \$208,000, were provided by the state through MassDevelopment as part of its Transformative Development Initiative, which is meant to accelerate economic growth in its Gateway Cities' communities.

The two Freight Farms shipping containers – each is called a “Leafy Green Machine” – uses hydroponic methods (without soil) to grow leafy greens and

herbs. Each of the container farms can grow as much produce in a year as an acre of farmland

Training began today, Monday, July 16, and will continue through tomorrow, Tuesday, July 17, and is being lead by representatives from the Freight Farms company that adapted the shipping containers into hydroponic farms.

Alina Davledzarova, of Westfield, HCC class of '17, of Westfield, has been hired as the container farm manager. She will be working with Dylan Donicz, of Holyoke, HCC class of '15, who was recently hired as the farm manager for Nuestras Raices. Among others taking part in the training this week are Kate Maiolatesi, head of the sustainable studies and sustainable agriculture programs at HCC, and some of her students.

The two container farms are expected to be up and running with the newly trained staff on Wednesday, July 18.



COURTESY PHOTO

Francesca Mazzillio, head farm manager for Freight Farms, explains some of the container farm equipment to Dylan Donicz, farm manager for Nuestras Raices and a 2015 graduate of HCC's sustainable agriculture program. Behind them is Kate Maiolatesi, HCC professor of sustainable studies and sustainable agriculture.