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HCC and city to celebrate Freight Farms apprentices

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke Community College and the city of Holyoke celebrated the first graduates of the Freight Farms Hydroponic Growing apprenticeship program with a brief ceremony Thursday, June 27 in the demonstration kitchen at the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute, 164 Race St.

Eleven apprentices, all Holyoke residents received certificates for completing the 90-hour, 12-week, four-module hydroponic growing program. The program was funded through a Community Development Block Grant from the city of Holyoke. HCC student-interns and alumni with the support of the college's Sustainability Studies program led the training.

The Freight Farms project is a collaboration between HCC and the city. The two refurbished shipping containers were delivered to Holyoke in April 2018 for the urban agriculture project. 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, located at 150 Race St., behind the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute, employ hydroponic methods to grow leafy greens and herbs without the use of soil. Each of the container farms can hold 256 grow towers with a capacity of 10-12 plants each and can grow as much produce in a year as an acre of farmland.

The Freight Farms "farmers" have been harvesting vegetables from the two containers continuously since fall 2018 for use by the HCC Culinary Arts program and the HCC Food Pantry.

Holyoke Community College is the Commonwealth's oldest community college, serving more than 11,500 students annually in credit and noncredit programs and courses. The college holds transfer agreements with more than 25 colleges and universities. Recognized for its Honors Program, online learning curriculum, learning communities, and service to students, HCC also offers business development opportunities through



This is one of two refurbished freight containers located behind the HCC MGM Culinary Arts Institute supply vegetables grown hydroponically for the HCC culinary arts program and the HCC Food Pantry.

the Kittredge Center for Business and Workforce Development. For more infor-

mation on the school, people may visit at www.hcc.edu.