



SUBMITTED PHOTO

U.S. Air Force veteran Kurt Bodas, of Holyoke, works as a table games dealer at MGM Springfield. Scholarships are available for veterans through the Massachusetts Casino Career Training Institute for those interested in a career in the gaming industry.

Full scholarships available to veterans for casino dealer training

SPRINGFIELD - After three years in the U.S. Air Force followed by five in the Massachusetts Air National Guard, Kurt Bodas has hoped to pursue a career in law enforcement. A certificate in that field from Holyoke Community College got him started and led to an internship with the Holyoke Police Department.

But after seven months, Bodas realized police work was not for him, and he subsequently spent two years as a senior financial specialist in the Service to the Armed Forces department of the American Red Cross.

"Though the job was great," he said, "my financials were such that I needed either another job or a completely new one that was adequate to serve me and my family."

Today, the Holyoke resident works as a dealer at MGM Springfield, where he has been employed full-time since the casino opened in August 2018. He credits a scholarship he received from the Massachusetts Casino Career Training Institute for giving him the opportunity to enroll in its dealer training school at no cost.

"The scholarship covered all my courses - blackjack, roulette and carnival games," he said. "Now, with no education debt and excellent training, I have been a full-time table games dealer with MGM since day one. I enjoy my job, work with excellent managers, have wonderful co-workers and get great benefits for myself and my family."

Although Bodas had qualified for a general scholarship, MCCTI is now offering additional scholarships specifically earmarked for Massachusetts veterans. The scholarships are possible thanks to funding from the Massachusetts Community Mitigation Funds Grant administered by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission.

MCCTI is a collaboration between Holyoke Community College, Springfield Technical College and MGM Springfield.

The next round of MCCTI dealer training classes begin with blackjack Monday, Jan. 13, 2020, followed immediately by carnival games beginning March 16.

Like Bodas, students who successfully complete programs in two different table games are guaranteed an audition with MGM Springfield. The tuition for the two classes is \$598, a cost fully covered by the veterans scholarships.

Classes are taught by current MGM Springfield supervisors who are experienced educators as well.

The classroom is at 95 State St., Springfield, on the grounds of MGM Springfield. Tables, chips and cards are close replicas to those found on the casino floor.

For more information about trainings and to enroll, visit www.mccti.org, or contact Michele Cabral at 413-552-2257 or mcabral@hcc.edu.