

IN THE CITY

HCC celebrates Pride Month with flag-raising

HOLYOKE - For the first time in its 75-year history, Holyoke Community College is celebrating Pride Month. HCC raised the rainbow flag over the campus on June 10, where it will fly for the remainder of June. HCC President Christina Royal, the first openly queer community college president in Massachusetts, presided over the flag-raising ceremony at the flag poles near the Visitor's Parking Lot by the bus loop at the main entrances to the Frost and Donahue buildings.

Members of the HCC Rainbow Club, LBGTQ+ Task Force, and other college staff were also in attendance. "When I first started as president of HCC, someone asked me if I planned to be a visible, out president," Royal said in a Pride Month message to faculty and staff last week. "My answer was yes, although the fact that this was a question to be pondered, and it was in 2017, reflects that there is still work to be done to fully actualize what so many LBGTQ+ activists fought for and continue to advocate for: the right to love who you want to love



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Holyoke Community College President Christina Royal, right, gathers with HCC faculty, staff and students to celebrate Pride Month with a flag raising on the HCC campus.

without consequence, and the right to express who you are without reprieve."

Royal noted that for the last two years, many Pride parades, festivals and concerts have been can-

celled because of COVID-19, making small celebrations like HCC's flag-raising even more important. "Since we live in an area where many individuals identify as LBGTQ+, it may

be easy to forget that there is progress to be made, not simply in our world but in our region," Royal said. "Pride Month is an opportunity to celebrate our history, our progress, and ultimately to show appreciation for our LBGTQ+ colleagues, friends, family, and community."

Other HCC Pride Month events include a reading and conversation with author Lesléa Newman on June 22 at 5:30 p.m. Newman will read her book *Sparkle Boy* and answer questions over Zoom. On June 24 at 11 a.m., Daniel Giraldo-Wonders, assistant professor of Language and Latin American Literature at Bard College at Simon's Rock, will lead a "queer conversation" on Zoom about Pedro Lemebel's poem "Manifiesto: Hablo por mi diferencia" (Manifesto: I Speak From My Difference). Lemebel was an openly gay Chilean essayist, chronicler, and novelist who died in 2015.

More information about HCC's Pride events, including registration links to the June 22 and June 24 events, can be found at: hcc.edu/pride