

College club kits help city's homeless

As the fall semester concluded last week, representatives from four Holyoke Community College student clubs delivered hundreds of winter care packages to agencies in Holyoke and Springfield that serve the homeless.

Members of the HCC Military Club, Criminal Justice Club, Radio Club and Sociology Club created dozens of hygiene kits (84 for women, 86 for men) that included basic toiletries such as razors, shaving cream, deodorant, lip balm, soap, lotion, toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs and sanitary products.

They also prepared 208 kits that included hats, mittens, scarves and blankets and gave away winter coats.

On Dec. 20, they dropped off the care packages to the Springfield Rescue Mission and handed out items to the lunchtime crowd at Kate's Kitchen in Holyoke, part of Providence Ministries.

"Hygiene products were the things the agencies told us were needed the most, especially by homeless people, who often don't have the opportunity to maintain their hygiene on a regular basis," said HCC student and Military Club member Robert Vigneault of Belchertown.

The items were collected in donation boxes placed at various locations



From left, HCC criminal justice professor Alex Sanchez, students John Serrano and Sierra Palazzi, alumna Lindsey Pare, and students Robert Vigneault and John Colleto hold some of the winter care packages HCC student clubs delivered to area agencies that serve the homeless.

Submitted photos

on the HCC campus, stored and sorted in the HCC Veterans Lounge. The kits were prepared by students in the days before the delivery using clear plastic bags so people could see what was in them.

"They appreciate wholeheartedly what you're all giving back," said Kate's Kitchen chef Tonya Miller, who

is also a housing administrator at Lerato House, a sober living home for men run by Providence Ministries. "This touches my heart."

"People here really appreciate it," said Kate's Kitchen volunteer Michael Porcello of Springfield. "This is a tremendous gift. There are a lot of people who are cold out there. We take this



HCC student engagement office assistant and alumna Lindsey Pare hands out winter care packages to guests at Kate's Kitchen in Holyoke on Dec. 20, as HCC student Robert Vigneault looks on.

stuff for granted but this is a necessity for life."

Jose Laboy of Holyoke collected several kits he said he intended to hand out to people living on the streets, as he once did, who could not make it to Kate's Kitchen.

"My mission is reaching out to people," said Laboy. "This is great. These people are doing the right thing. A lot of people need these things."