

Air Force vet 'all in' at MGM thanks to scholarship

By Chris Yurko
thesun@turley.com

After three years in the U.S. Air Force followed by five in the Massachusetts Air National Guard, Kurt Bordas had 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, Bordas 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 won-



Thanks in large part to a scholarship he received that covered the costs of his training classes, U.S. Air Force veteran Kurt Bordas of Holyoke now works full time as a table games dealer at MGM Springfield.

Submitted photo

derful co-workers and get great benefits for myself and my family."

Although Bordas 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 Community College and MGM Springfield.

"MGM Springfield is a major supporter of military service men and women, with more than six percent of our workforce comprised of military veterans," said Marikate Murren, vice president of human resources for MGM Springfield. "This is about helping our residents and neighbors access greater opportunities for success. We encour-

age our servicemen and -women to learn more about the exciting jobs available at MGM Springfield."

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

Like Bordas, 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.

Bordas said he been to a casino maybe once in his life before he saw an advertisement about the dealer training school and decide to attend an information session and demonstration hosted by Robert Westerfield, now vice president of casino operations for MGM Springfield.

"I never was a gambler," said Bordas. "I never really understood the games, but I fell in love with the energy. I just needed the appropriate training."

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

Chris Yurko is the media relations manager at Holyoke Community College.