



At left, Holyoke Community College Student Engagement Office assistant and alumna Lindsey Pare, of Ludlow, hands out winter care packages to guests at Kate's Kitchen last month as HCC student Robert Vigneault, of Belchertown, looks on. At right, from left, Holyoke Community College criminal justice professor Alex Sanchez; student John Serrano, of Chicopee; student Sierra Palazzi, of West Springfield; Pare; Vigneault; and student John Colleto, of Agawam, hold some of the winter care packages HCC student clubs delivered to area agencies that serve the homeless.

HOLYOKE

Giving the gift of winter necessities

HCC student clubs deliver homeless care packages

As the fall semester concluded, 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 hygiene kits for both men and women (84 for women; 86 for men) which that included basic toiletries such as razors, shaving cream, deodorant, chap stick, 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.

Last month, 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 on the HCC campus, stored and sorted in

"This is a tremendous gift. There are a lot of people who are cold out there. We take this stuff for granted but this is a necessity for life."

Kate's Kitchen chef Tonya Miller

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 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."