
HOLYOKE

24-hour theater festival returns after pandemic pause

BY CHRIS YURKO

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After a three-year pandemic pause, the annual Leslie Phillips Festival, an evening of short plays written, directed, and staged in 24 hours, returns to Holyoke Community College.

HCC theater alumni and students will assemble on Friday to begin brainstorming ideas and writing plays they will perform on Saturday, beginning at 7:30 p.m. in the Leslie Phillips Theater.

The annual benefit, last held in 2019, honors the legacy of Leslie Phillips and raises money for the Leslie Phillips Theater Fund for Arts and Education.

The festival was first organized in 2016 by HCC

alumni working with theater professor Pat Sandoval as a tribute to Phillips, founder of the school's theater program, who died in 1988.

"This is an evening of creativity and collaboration for the HCC theater community and the community at large," said alumna and festival coordinator Lisa Poehler. "It's also a chance to invest in the future generation of HCC's theater program and students — all in the name of our beloved mentor, Leslie Phillips."

After the show, festival attendees are invited to help commemorate the 50th anniversary of the HCC Players, the theater group founded in 1972 and led by Phillips until her death.



Holyoke Community College alumni actors perform at the fourth annual Leslie Phillips 24-hour theater festival in September 2019. The festival returns to HCC Saturday after being canceled in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. (HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE)

Funds raised from the festival enable the theater department to hold mas-

ter classes, make capital improvements, and hire guest artists. "Anything to

enrich, enable, and expand the educational experience of HCC students," Poehler said.

The annual Leslie Phillips Festival was suspended in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To participate in the festival as an actor or director, register online at hcc.edu/24-register or send an email to Poehler at hcca-players@gmail.com

Festival tickets can be purchased in advance at brownpapertickets.com (search for "Phillips Festival"). Advance tickets are \$12.50 for general admission and \$10 for students and seniors. Tickets at the door are \$15 general admission, \$10 students and seniors.
