

Gary Rome joins HCC for 'Drive to Change Lives' fundraising campaign

HOLYOKE – Gary Rome, owner of Gary Rome Hyundai in Holyoke, is partnering with the HCC Foundation on a one-day campaign to raise money for student support programs and scholarships at Holyoke Community College.

The "Drive to Change Lives" campaign is set for Tuesday, April 27, and will run a full 24 hours, from 12:01 a.m. to midnight at hcc.edu/drive

The goal of the campaign, which continues the "Together HCC" initiative started last year, is to raise money for student support programs and increase awareness about the issues that can impede student success.

Rome has pledged a donation challenge of \$10,000 once the campaign's goals are met: secure 150 new donors and 1,000 social media comments, likes, or shares using the hashtag #TogetherHCC.

"The 'Drive to Change Lives' campaign is about making a difference," said Rome. "I hope my \$10,000 challenge will shine a light on this important institution and all it does for our region, and that it will encourage others to make it a habit to give to HCC."

The one-day campaign has the potential to unlock more than \$100,000 in matching donations from HCC alumni and friends, which would put twice that much money into three areas that directly support HCC students: the President's Student Emergency Fund; the Thrive Student Resource Center and Food Pantry; and scholarships.

The biggest challenge donation comes from HCC alumna Peg Wendlandt '58 and her husband Gary Wendlandt, who have pledged to match every individual gift up to \$1,000, dollar for dollar, up to a total of \$100,000.

"On any given day, many of our

students struggle with non-academic challenges that can derail their educations if left unaddressed – hunger, housing insecurity, homelessness, affordable healthcare, lack of access to technology, transportation, and childcare," said Julie Phillips, HCC coordinator of Alumni Affairs and Annual Giving. "The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of those obstacles. We created 'Together HCC' to bring attention to these issues and help students through these tough times."

The HCC Foundation launched "Together HCC: A Campaign for Caring" in March 2020 to build moral support for the college community during a time of increasing uncertainty while also raising money for students experiencing financial distress due to the pandemic.

As part of the campaign, members of the HCC community – students, staff, faculty, alumni, relatives and college friends – were asked to use the hashtag #TogetherHCC to share stories and images on social media that demonstrated the resilience of the college community in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The campaign raised \$40,000 for the Student Emergency Fund and was selected as a finalist for a national Bellwether award.

"For 75 years, HCC has been changing lives, paving the way for generations of learners in western Massachusetts and beyond," Phillips said. "On April 27, 'Together HCC: Drive to Change Lives' will enable all of us to come together to celebrate and support the school where so many students and alumni have found their calling."

To donate, please visit: hcc.edu/drive.