



Center of Hope celebrates 65 years

SOUTHBIDGE — 2021 marks the Center of Hope Foundation's 65th anniversary. Since its inception in 1956, the Center of Hope (CoHF) has continued to support and advocate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The CoHF began as a small school for children with disabilities and has since grown to provide day services for adults, employment supports, in-home supports, youth services, recreational services and emergency relief services. Now serving more than 700 families from 64 towns in Massachusetts and Connecticut, the CoHF is one of the largest employers in the town of Southbridge and is a vital part of the community.

You have probably seen their vans all over, transporting individuals to one of the five-day habilitation or employment programs. You may have also seen many of their staff and program members out in the community, whether they are volunteering at local non-profits or cleaning up the local streets and parks.

The CoHF also has an employment supports department which allows individuals the opportunity for meaningful employment, whether it's in the community or in one of their nine small businesses. The small businesses include Just the Details, Hope's Treasures Thrift Store, Vivid Print, Noress Corporation, Cans of Hope, Shred of Hope, Janitorial, Fair and Square Construction and The Festive Home. All these businesses offer

employment opportunity while providing quality services to the community.

The CoHF continues to grow and has plans to open another day program along with residential housing soon. These plans will allow individuals to learn to live independently and be provided the help needed to grow, flourish and become contributing members of their community.

The CoHF would like to thank everyone who has been a part of this milestone in making a difference in the lives of so many and encourage you to share your stories on their Web site, www.thecenterofhope.org/stories.

Springfield Urban League CEO to deliver Nichols College Commencement address

DUDLEY, Mass. — Nichols College has announced that Henry M. Thomas III, JD, president and CEO of the Urban League of Springfield, Inc., will deliver the keynote address at the college's Commencement exercises for the Class of 2021 on Saturday, May 15 at 1 p.m., and for the Class of 2020 on Sunday, May 16 at 1 p.m. Both ceremonies will be held on Vendetti Field at the Nichols College campus.

Thomas, who will receive an honorary doctoral degree in social welfare from Nichols, has worked in the Urban League movement for 49 years, becoming the youngest person appointed president and CEO of a national Urban League affiliate at the age of 25. He has served at the helm in Springfield, Mass., since

1974, and is also CEO of Camp Atwater, the oldest African American overnight youth camp in the U.S.

In 2007, Thomas was appointed by Governor Deval Patrick to the University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees, which he chaired for three years, and currently serves as vice chair of the UMass Building Authority. He was on the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education for seven years and was vice chair of the state's Board of Education.

He is also a board member of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate, the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation, and the Hampden County Regional Employment Board Executive

Committee.

Thomas has been deeply involved in education equity and excellence from a grass roots and public policy perspective, and has served on local, state, and national boards advocating for youth development and ensuring that all students receive the benefit of a quality education.

"Through the Urban League, Henry Thomas has devoted his life to improving educational and economic prospects for the Black community," said Nichols College President Susan West Engelkemeyer, Ph.D. "His message of empowerment in the face of difficult times will enlighten and further prepare our graduates, the newest generation of business and civic leaders."

Thomas earned a BA

degree in psychology and an MA degree in human resource development from American International College; and a JD degree from Western New England University School of Law.

He has been recognized for his efforts with several awards and honors, including the President's Medallion Award from Western New England University; the Human Relations Award from the National Conference for Community and Justice; the Uborra Award for Excellence from the Springfield Museums; the Service Above Self Award from the Basketball Hall of Fame & Springfield Rotary; the Distinguished Service Award from the Massachusetts Legislative Black Caucus; and the Citizen

of the Year Award from the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. He has also received honorary doctorates from Bay Path and Westfield State universities.

A native of Springfield, Thomas is the former chair of the Springfield Fire Commission and the Springfield Police Commission, as well as the co-founder of New Leadership Charter School. He is an inductee of both the Springfield High School Sports Hall of Fame (football, track, and gymnastics), and the National Football Collegian Hall of Fame.

He and his wife, Devonia, a recently retired vice principal in Springfield Public Schools, have two children.

About Nichols College Nichols College is a col-

lege of choice for business and leadership education as a result of its distinctive career-focused and leadership-based approaches to learning, both in and out of the classroom, and through impactful research and professional education. Students thrive in a learning and living environment that is supported by an experiential business curriculum and a strong liberal arts foundation aimed at transforming them into tomorrow's leaders. Nichols also offers master's degrees in business, leadership, accounting, and counterterrorism, as well as a range of certificate programs, to promote career advancement for today's professionals.

Four QCC Students named to Phi Theta Kappa All-Massachusetts Academic Team

WORCESTER — Four Quinsigamond Community College Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) students, Edmilse Diaz, Alexander Riopel, Vincent Carl Strzelecki and Bradley Sylvestre, have been recognized for their outstanding achievements as members of the 2021 Phi Theta Kappa All-Massachusetts Academic Team.

Each year, the highest academic achievers in the state's 15-member community college system are selected for the team. Students are chosen for their high academic achievement, as well as their exceptional student service and are honored by the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges (MACC). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ceremony is being held virtually, as opposed to its traditional venue of the Massachusetts State House. Each student is currently being spotlighted through MACC's social media, through a virtual "PTK Community College Excellence Week," during the last week of April.

"This is an honor not only for these outstanding students, but also for QCC. These students have worked hard to get to where they are. Their dedication and perseverance are an inspiration to everyone who dreams of a better life through higher education,"

said QCC President Luis G. Pedraja, Ph.D.

Edmilse Diaz is a member of the Class of 2022 Dental Hygiene program. Originally from the Dominican Republic, he moved to the U.S. as a child.

"I received a Bachelor's in Psychology from Saint Michael's College in 2015. Throughout my life, I have continued to pursue learning and challenged myself. I came to QCC when I decided to pursue a career in dental hygiene, because I wanted to help raise awareness on the importance of oral health and its affect on a person's overall health," Mr. Diaz said.

Alexander Riopel chose QCC because of its MassTransfer program with UMass Amherst.

"I am currently a business transfer major and plan on pursuing a finance degree at a four-year university in the fall. QCC has done a great job preparing me for a four-year university," Mr. Riopel said. "As the former president of QCC's PTK Honor Society, I was fortunate to be part of a group that affected real change within the community."

Vincent Carl Strzelecki came to QCC to pursue a degree in Computer

Science.

"My life's goal is to help as many people as I can, and I am working hard to build a career in video game development, so I can create games that are inexpensive, highly accessible, and very enjoyable," he said.

Bradley Sylvestre is in QCC's Nurse Education program and is a member of the Class of 2022.

"Despite classes being online with limited time in a physical classroom, I have been able to learn from the best and apply that knowledge in my clinical settings. I was able to go to a local nursing home in Westborough and make a difference with the elderly; see a birth at UMass Hospital in Leominster, and have been able to bond with patients in need of companionship. I was able to do all of this thanks to the hardworking educators at QCC, who were constantly advocating for me and my fellow nursing students, despite the grueling process of running a nursing school during a pandemic," Mr. Sylvestre said. "QCC is a community college, and for me, a new nursing student from Rhode Island, QCC has become my community."

According to Bonnie Coleman, QCC's manag-

er for Student Resources and PTK advisor, the Spring 2021 class of new inductees is the largest group in the College's history, with 240 new students becoming PTK members. There are 555 total active PTK mem-

bers at this time.

"The four students honored are a part of a large and impactful student organization. It is an honor to work with such amazing students," she said.

For more information about QCC, contact Josh Martin, Director of Institutional Communications at 508-854-7513 or jmartin@qcc.mass.edu

Friday's Child



Allen and Alvin Age 10 & 10

Hi! Our names are Allen and Alvin and we want to stay together!

Allen and Alvin are twin boys of African American and Native American descent. Allen has a very outgoing personality. Allen likes video games, outdoor sports, coloring, and being active in the community. He has a special gift when you engage in conversation with him. Allen has the ability to make you feel special and optimistic! He also has a contagious laugh! Allen reports that he loves school. He enjoys keeping busy and does well with listening and following directions.

Alvin is known to be very courageous and daring. He can be very curious at times and asks a lot of questions. He is very interested in how things work. He is also very affectionate and does well with lots of one-on-one attention, hugs, and kisses. Some of Alvin's interests are using his iPad and playing

sports. His favorite sport is soccer, and he's very good at it!

Legally freed for adoption, Allen and Alvin should be placed with a single-parent or two-parent family with or without other children in the home. Pets are okay as long as they are outgoing and friendly just like them. It is very important to Allen and Alvin that they are able to maintain their connection with their five siblings which requires six in-person visits per year and other communication between visits.

Who Can Adopt?

Can you provide the guidance, love and stability that a child needs? If you're at least 18 years old, have a stable source of income, and room in your heart, you may be a perfect match to adopt a waiting child. Adoptive parents can be single, married, or partnered; experienced or not; renters or homeowners; LGBTQ singles and couples.

The process to adopt a child from foster care requires training, interviews, and home visits to determine if adoption is right for you, and if so, to help connect you with a child or sibling group that your family will be a good match for.

To learn more about adoption from foster care, call the Massachusetts Adoption Resource Exchange (MARE) at 617-964-6273 or visit www.mare-inc.org. The sooner you call, the sooner a waiting child will have a permanent place to call home.

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