

# 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 (MAACC). 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 MAACC'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 prepar-

ing 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 manager 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 members 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](mailto:jmartin@qcc.mass.edu)

## Family Services of Central Massachusetts awarded grant to implement child care development specialist apprenticeship program

WORCESTER — Family Services of Central Massachusetts (FSCM), an affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation, was recently awarded funding through a grant program administered by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. The \$200,000 funding is for FSCM to implement a Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship Program in Central Massachusetts. This initiative is designed to run until the end of June 2022, with an option to continue the program for an additional year.

The goals of the Child

Care Development Specialist Program are to 1) Build competency in child development and classroom management and curriculum in entry level workers working in the private sector (not public schools), including workers with English as a Second Language; 2) Provide meaningful credentials including the Apprenticeship certificate, the Child Development Associate credential (national) and Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Teacher Certification; 3) Provide a career pathway including a track into higher education at the community college level;

and 4) Improve retention of entry level, new workers including building a path on a compensation scale that leads to a self-sufficiency wage.

"The Apprenticeship program is a strategy to build child development knowledge and competency in unskilled, entry level workers and also provide a career pathway in the field to enhance retention and quality of care," said Jim Regan, Vice President of Family Services of Central Massachusetts.

The field of early education and care is new to using the apprenticeship model. In addition, child care providers are currently consid-

ered "Essential Workers" during the COVID-19 pandemic. Working families with young children who cannot work remotely must depend on child care services. Child care programs have remained open during most of the pandemic to support other essential workers in health care, government, the supermarket industry, etc. The existing workforce has been stressed by departures of workers due to health concerns or family responsibilities.

For 130 years, Family Services of Central Massachusetts has been serving the greater Worcester community as a valuable resource

providing high quality support, guidance and counseling. FSCM offers a diversity of programs and services that include individual, child and family counseling; employee assistance; home care; community mediation, senior volunteer and companion opportunities, and professional development for the early child care industry. On Jan. 1, Family Services of Central Massachusetts (FSCM), headquartered in Worcester, became an Affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation.

## Cornerstone Bank welcomes new Assistant Vice President, Commercial Lender

WORCESTER — Cornerstone Bank, a community bank with 12 locations throughout Central Massachusetts, recently welcomed Klara Carter as its new Assistant Vice President, Commercial Lender. Carter has worked in the banking industry for more than 20 years specializing in helping small businesses with financing.

"Klara will be a great fit in our organization," said Cornerstone Bank CEO Todd Tallman. "She already has an incredible track record assisting business owners in acquiring the financing they need, which we hope to apply to many of the great small businesses we serve across our community."

A resident of Danielson, Carter graduated from Nichols College with

a degree in business administration and management, focusing on general administration and finance.

"I am eager to begin my role with Cornerstone Bank as the next chapter of my career," said Carter. "This past year has been so difficult for our area businesses and I look forward to helping them get back on their feet and supporting their future growth."

About Cornerstone Bank  
Cornerstone Bank is an independent, mutual savings bank serving residents, businesses and communities throughout Central Massachusetts. Our customer promise, Built on Trust, is not just a brand, but also a corporate focus. Whether a business or personal partnership, Cornerstone Bank rests on the foundation that relationships are built on trust. Deposits are insured in full by a combination of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the Depositors Insurance Fund. The Bank is an Equal Opportunity Employer, Equal Housing Lender and SBA Preferred Lender. To learn about Cornerstone Bank's personal and business banking offerings, please visit [cornerstonebank.com](http://cornerstonebank.com) or call 800-939-9103.

## Summit Agency announces expansion supporting autism community

WORCESTER — Building on its successful day school for students with autism, Summit Agency, Inc., is expanding its programs to provide more comprehensive services to Worcester County.

Summit Agency is a non-profit organization that provides educational and community supports to individuals with autism and related diagnoses. Summit has been a leader in the community for 14 years, operating Summit Academy school, a licensed therapeutic school alternative for students ages six to 22.

"April is Autism Awareness Month, so I'm thrilled to share the news about our new programs," said Daniel DiMezza, Summit Agency's CEO and the executive director of Summit Academy. "We are expanding our services and supports to include Summit Campus, the Summit Health and Wellness Center and Summit Behavioral Services. This new programming, along with our day school, allows Summit to meet individuals and their families where they are on their journey. We want our students to reach their full potential for independent living."

Summit Campus (at 37 Fruit St.) is a dormitory experience for college students with autism attending any of the consortium colleges and universities

in Worcester. The program is designed to foster personal growth, academic success and independent living. These supports will empower students with the transition skills necessary to live a productive, rewarding and successful life.

"Summit has had some of the most creative ideas of any of the programs I've worked with," says attorney Henry Clark, first executive director of MAAPS and an advocate for special needs schools. "This project in Worcester has been a long time coming and presents a wonderful opportunity for individuals on the autism spectrum to receive the array of much-needed services to be successful in school and beyond."

The Summit Health and Wellness Center, opening on July 1 at 59 William St. will offer nseling, speech therapy and social skills groups. Psychiatrist Oliver Joseph, M.D., will be the chief medical officer of Summit Agency.

Summit Behavioral Services will operate out of the Health and Wellness Center. SBS will provide in-home one-on-one services utilizing Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA).

Summit Agency has committed to a longterm occupancy for the buildings, which have been beautifully restored by Russ Haims of Hampton Properties.

For more information about Summit Agency, contact Nikki Koppel at [nkoppel@summitacademiesma.com](mailto:nkoppel@summitacademiesma.com) or visit [summitagencyma.com](http://summitagencyma.com).



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