



News Release

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NMCC pediatric critical care transport course offering especially significant for Bridgewater mom

Aroostook County - It has been 14 months since Wendy Bradstreet's five-year-old daughter Megan died as a result of injuries she sustained after being hit by a car within sight of the family's home on U.S. Route 1 in Bridgewater. For nearly as long, Bradstreet has focused her energy on working to help ensure that other parents living in Aroostook County don't experience what she and her husband Ryan have endured.

Megan Bradstreet, who was critically injured as a result of the July 2005 accident, was first taken to The Aroostook Medical Center, where she was stabilized for transport to Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor. Transporting critically injured pediatric patients like Megan requires emergency medical technicians and registered nurses specially trained and certified in pediatric critical care, which Aroostook County does not currently have.

In the case of the Bradstreet family, a trained crew from Bangor was dispatched to meet the Crown Ambulance crew in Houlton, which caused delay in the transport. Once the Bangor crew arrived, Megan was transferred into their ambulance and rushed to Bangor. In spite of the efforts of the crew, the five-year-old began experiencing difficulties, and passed away in Lincoln three and a half hours after her transport began at TAMC.

Within weeks of her daughter's death, Wendy Bradstreet, with the encouragement of the Crown Ambulance paramedic crew that first took care of Megan the night of the accident, made it her mission to make sure other critically injured County children have more immediate access to an expert pediatric transport crew.

"One paramedic in particular, Walter Mosher, approached me about two months after Megan died and wanted to raise funds for training of EMS workers for pediatrics, and they wanted my permission to use Megan's name to kick off this fundraising," said Bradstreet. "This came after a span of two months where there were eight pediatric patients they had to work on, with some ending in fatalities. These paramedics were the ones who said 'we need to do more'."

That call to action, which is now also championed by Bradstreet and her family, friends, area emergency medical technicians, and Bradstreet's work family at Northern Maine Community College, takes a significant leap forward as NMCC offers an intense nine-day program, beginning September 12, which is designed to prepare County paramedics and nurses to become members of a pediatric and neonatal critical care transport team.

A first-of-its-kind educational opportunity in Northern Maine, the pediatric and neonatal care transport course is the result of the determination of Bradstreet and Daryl Boucher, lead instructor in NMCC's emergency medical services and emergency medical technician programs. The two, along with the NMCC continuing education division, were instrumental in bringing to Aroostook County the course developed by Johns Hopkins Hospital and UMBC (the University of Maryland, Baltimore County), both located in Baltimore, Maryland.

Leah Buck, assistant dean of continuing education, began the discussion with UMBC, as her division had previously established contact with the school to deliver a course in critical care emergency medical transport for adult patients. As a result of Buck's contact, and through the financial support of the continuing education division and Megan Bradstreet fund, Boucher and Perry Jackson, clinical coordinator for Crown Ambulance in Presque Isle, were able to travel to UMBC for education and training they will now share with participants in the NMCC course.

Response for the inaugural training session has been impressive, as 18 paramedics and nurses have signed up to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the unique anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology and special needs of critical infants and children during inter-facility transport.

"In addition to paramedics and nurses from County organizations including Crown Ambulance, TAMC, Cary Medical Center and Northern Maine Medical Center, we have flight crew members coming from St. Louis Children's Hospital and Southern Maine," said Buck. "We are so pleased that we have been able to help make this happen by arranging the necessary details to offer the course here on our campus."

The course will cover the most common and serious pediatric and neonatal conditions requiring transport from a community hospital to a tertiary care facility, including advanced airway management, trauma and shock, respiratory considerations and acquired heart disease.

"This program will allow County hospitals to not only have highly qualified personnel caring for children being transferred to tertiary care facilities, but will also teach the skills needed to stabilize the children prior to their transport. It used to be a common perception in the pre-hospital that it was enough to get the child to a specialty hospital 'alive'. With extensive research, we now know that the actions taken in the first hour are far more important than we realized," said Boucher. "In children, early action and appropriate stabilization can have a huge impact on the long-term recovery of a sick or injured child. This program will focus on both the transport and stabilization of Aroostook County children."

Sessions will be led by a team of eight faculty members who all have experience in the areas of pediatric and neonatal care and related transport issues. All have been approved to teach various sections by UMBC Department of Emergency Health Services.

“We are fortunate to have recruited the caliber of instructors that will lead this important course. We have physicians and specialists from Eastern Maine Medical Center, Northern Maine Medical Center and Maine Medical Center that have graciously agreed to lend their expertise. Dr. Elizabeth Berg, who was instrumental in creating the curriculum for the course, will travel from Johns Hopkins to lead sessions in some of the most critical areas of care,” said Buck.

The pediatric and neonatal critical care transport course is the first step toward developing an Aroostook County transport team. Boucher and others are currently working to identify major medical facilities with significant pediatric care units that are willing to allow students enrolled in the NMCC course to practice their skills.

“Although classroom education is great, the real key to this program will be the associated clinical experience. Providers will have the opportunity to practice and perfect the skills they learned at a major medical center. This will increase their comfort in providing care to children,” said Boucher.

Toward that end, the public awareness and fundraising initiative through the now established “Megan Bradstreet Fund” continues. Funding will support both the NMCC course, as well as some of the expenses related to the hands-on experience in which participating medical personnel will shortly be engaged.

“I know the EMS workers in the County are certainly willing and capable of having their own transport team, they just need the extra training and clinical experiences to make it a possibility. With tight budgets everywhere, whatever fundraising we can do to help this effort along is the least we can do,” said Bradstreet. “The crew that worked on Megan was exceptional and I would have felt comfortable with them taking her all the way to Bangor. Unfortunately, it wasn’t meant to be. So our number one goal is to have our own transport team here in the County as a backup when the Lifeflight crew cannot transport them by air.”

