



ST. JOHN VALLEY
ADULT AND COMMUNITY
EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE

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Celebration marks new era in delivery of healthcare education in the St. John Valley

St. John Valley - St. John Valley community and business leaders and representatives from area medical facilities joined Northern Maine Community College students, faculty and staff today in ushering in a new era in healthcare education in the region.

Through a partnership between two public education organizations, NMCC and the St. John Valley Adult and Community Education Collaborative, and with the support of the private sector, in the form of a \$100,000 contribution from TD Bank, through the TD Charitable Foundation, the College was able to expand its associate degree nursing program into northernmost Maine. At a ceremony held at Madawaska High School, site of the off-campus center where NMCC nursing students are taking classes locally, officials celebrated the launch of the clinical course component of the program

“Access to high quality, affordable associate degree nursing education is now available here in the St. John Valley,” said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. “This would not be possible, and we would not be here today marking this occasion, were it not for the generous support of TD Bank and the willingness of the partners gathered here in this room to come to the table, roll up their sleeves and say ‘what can we do together to make this happen.’ Maine, the St. John Valley and the healthcare organizations in this region will benefit from this program. Most importantly, those who will benefit from this effort are the students taking courses in this facility who are with us today.”

Crowley’s sentiments were echoed by TD Bank Regional Vice President Michael J. Kelley, who is an alumnus of the College, serves as a director on the NMCC Foundation Board and was instrumental in securing the bank’s support to expand the nursing program offered by the College.

“By supporting this program we are able to meet a real need in northern Maine,” said Kelley. “TD Bank is committed to partnering with organizations like NMCC and the collaborative that help to improve the quality of life for those who live and work in the communities we serve.”

After offering core liberal arts courses to the eight nursing students in the first St. John Valley cohort over the past 18 months, NMCC began delivering its key nursing and clinical component courses to the students at the start of the fall semester via videoconferencing technology with courses originating on the Presque Isle campus. Locally, nursing instructor Sandra Pelletier of Fort Kent was hired this fall to work on-site in the Madawaska classroom and to supervise the nursing students at the local clinical sites.

One of those students, Janice Labrie of St. Agatha, spoke at the ceremony about the importance of having the NMCC associate degree nursing program offered close to home.

“Having the RN program in the St. John Valley has provided us an opportunity that we otherwise would not have had. Most of us have children and also work while attending school. Being able to attend a nursing program close to home has been such a blessing, by enabling us to spend quality time at home with our families,” said Labrie. “Although the two year program is challenging, it has been less of a financial burden. We will also be able to enter the workforce as registered nurses in 2011, allowing us to provide financial support for our families. If this program would not have been offered, some of my classmates would not have pursued their dreams of becoming a nurse. I would like to thank TD Banknorth for their generous contribution. Your generosity will forever have an impact on our lives!”

Introducing NMCC’s associate degree nursing program in the St. John Valley followed a concentrated effort by the College, St. John Valley Adult and Community Education Collaborative, and representatives of both the allied health and education communities in the Valley to meet a need expressed by the stakeholders.

“The initiative to bring a two-year associate degree program to the St. John Valley is a perfect example of the remarkable outcomes that can result when public, non-profit providers put their heads and energies together to address a local need and when the private, for profit sector employs its resources to address that same pressing need. In an era that is increasingly requiring us all to come out of our service silos and to combine our resources for the benefit of those we serve, this undertaking stands out as a model in Maine for both the present and the future,” said Peter Caron, director of adult and community education for SAD 27.

Results of a survey conducted two years ago by the St. John Valley Adult and Community Education Collaborative amongst healthcare organizations in the Valley showed a high need for associate degree level nursing and other allied health program offerings in the northern region. The survey responses were confirmed, on a larger scale, during a statewide listening tour of rural Maine conducted shortly thereafter by Maine Community College System President John Fitzsimmons.

“The availability of a local nursing degree has been a very positive addition to the educational opportunities available in the St. John Valley. Non-traditional learners, juggling the demands of families, and employment have been able to pursue their dreams of a nursing career,” said Christine Cowie, director of adult and community education for both the Madawaska School Department and SAD 33. “The addition of this cohort of nurses to the workforce in the St. John Valley will be welcomed by local health care facilities who advocated for bringing the Northern Maine Community College Associate Degree in Nursing program to the St. John Valley. The addition of eight registered nurses will help to satisfy their staffing demands.

TD Bank was among the first organizations to support the MCCS Rural Initiative, which has funded efforts to increase access to higher education in rural parts of the state. The expansion of allied health education program offerings in the St. John Valley by NMCC was the first project to be funded through the bank’s donation.

The delivery method of the NMCC associate degree nursing program in the St. John Valley is similar to how the College offers its program in southern Aroostook at the Houlton Higher Education Center. Videoconferencing technology is used to deliver courses to the region originating on the Presque Isle campus. Attendees at the celebration were invited to stay following the ceremony for a demonstration of the technology as a regularly scheduled first-year nursing course got underway immediately following the festivities.

About the TD Charitable Foundation

The TD Charitable Foundation is the charitable giving arm of TD Bank N.A., which operates under the trade name TD Bank and is one of the 15 largest commercial banking organizations in the United States. The Foundation's mission is to serve the individuals, families and businesses in all the communities where TD Bank operate, having made over \$53 million in charitable donations since its inception in 2002. The efforts of the Foundation are coordinated locally through TD Bank's community relations departments and are focused on the areas of affordable housing, education and financial literacy, and the environment. More information on the TD Charitable Foundation including an online grant application is available at www.TDBank.com

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Northern Maine Community College President Timothy Crowley (right) expresses his appreciation to TD Bank and the community partners who helped bring the College's Associate Degree Nursing Program to the St. John Valley. Photographed with Crowley are (left to right) Tom Kent, retired St. John Valley businessman and former NMCC Foundation board member; Michael J. Kelley, TD Bank Regional Vice President and NMCC Foundation board member; and Ken Theriault, Madawaska Area State Representative.