



News Release

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November, 2009
NR09130

Expert in older adult healthcare issues to speak at NMCC Well-Elder Teas in Presque Isle and Madawaska December 1

Aroostook County - An expert on the health care needs of older adults will help celebrate the success of a program that connects first-year nursing students at Northern Maine Community College with seniors living in communities throughout the region.

Valerie Sauda, geriatric services instructor at Rosscare in Bangor, who has presented at state and national conferences on aging, will speak before first year NMCC nursing students and more than 40 senior citizens from throughout Aroostook County who have assisted the students in the College Well Elder program.

Sauda, of Bangor, will present during the Well Elder Tea on Tuesday, December 1, at 12:00 noon. The event will be held at two sites, at NMCC in the Edmunds Conference Center for students taking courses on the Presque Isle campus and their well elders, and at Madawaska High School for students taking courses in the St. John Valley and their well elders from that region. Sauda will deliver her remarks in Presque Isle, and they will be broadcast live to Madawaska using the college videoconferencing system.

The Well Elder program pairs members of the first year nursing class with healthy senior citizens who volunteer to allow students into their homes throughout the semester to practice their assessment techniques. The unique program has been a part of the nursing curriculum at NMCC for more than a decade.

“The focus of our first semester students is the adult and older adult,” said Betty Kent-Conant, nursing and allied health department chair. “The clinical experience for these students is scheduled in long-term care facilities and nursing homes. However, residents in these type of facilities represent only about five percent of the total elder population, so this is a wonderful chance for students to observe and experience ‘normal’ aging in the individual’s own environment.”

When visiting their “well elders” NMCC student nurses take vital signs and review medications, home safety and general health lifestyles. Students also gain valuable experience practicing their interview and listening skills.

“As faculty, we truly want to instill a sense of appreciation and respect for the well elders,” said Daryl Boucher, first year nursing student coordinator. “This project allows the students to not only understand the importance of assessment, communication or history gathering, it allows them to gain a new appreciation of all the accomplishments and contributions made by the older generation.”

As featured guest speaker at the Well Elder Tea, Sauda will discuss health topics in the area of gerontology. As geriatric services instructor, she provides educational support and nursing leadership in collaboration with Eastern Maine Community College nursing program faculty and Rosscare/First Atlantic staff to ensure that students and staff obtain and maintain geriatric competency and expertise.

Rosscare is a member of Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems. By collaborating with other agencies and organizations in the area, Rosscare is able to provide area seniors with unique opportunities that compliment a healthy and fulfilling life. In partnership with First Atlantic Corporation, Rosscare owns and operates assisted living facilities such as Ross Manor and Stillwater Health Care in Bangor, Colonial Health Care in Lincoln, and Dexter Health Care in Dexter. Rosscare also offers services to help seniors live independently, such as Telecare, a free service offering daily check-in calls, Lifeline Medical Alert service, and the Center for Healthy Aging.

Sauda has worked in the Bangor area for more than 15 years. Prior to Rosscare, she was employed by the Eastern Area Agency on Aging, where she served for almost five years as the director of Community Services. Her other experience includes consumer services manager at Elder Independence of Maine and instructor at the University of Maine’s School of Nursing. She holds both a bachelor of arts in biology and a master of science in nursing degree from the University of Southern Maine.

A total of 34 students enrolled in the first year nursing class on the Presque Isle campus and an additional eight students participating in the NMCC nursing program offered at a distance in the St. John Valley are currently engaged in the well elder program.

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Valerie Suda, R.N., M.S.