



News Release

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Children's books still needed to continue popular tradition during annual Holiday Light Parade

Aroostook County - More than 600 children's books have come in since students and employees at Northern Maine Community College turned to the community earlier this fall for assistance in collecting books to give away along the route at the annual Star City Holiday Light Parade on December 5. The College is hoping to collect at least another 400 as they prepare for what has become both a signature service activity for the campus and a popular addition to one of Presque Isle's most anticipated events of the Holiday season.

This is the second year in the five years NMCC has undertaken the initiative that the College has turned to the community for book donations to assist in their efforts. The call for books put out in October resulted in many individuals, both community members and NMCC students, bringing in new and used children's books to the College. In addition, several County organizations, including Box of Books, Bookmart, First Book of Aroostook, Catholic Charities Maine and the Mark and Emily Turner Memorial Library have contributed boxes of books.

"We really want to have at least 1,000 books on hand in time for the parade," said Colleen Harmon, a business technology instructor at NMCC who launched the book collection project six years ago and has coordinated it along with others every year since. "The more children we can provide with a book, the better."

The initiative evolved both as an idea to give-away something that had a connection to the nature of the College and what it offers the community, as well as providing area children with something from which they would benefit. Acting in the capacity of Santa's literary elves, the NMCC volunteers plan to hand out hundreds of books to kids of all ages enjoying the early December parade.

"Everyone should be able to read and everyone should be able to have books without worrying about it taking away from paying for fuel to heat the home or food for the table. With the current state of the economy, this is especially true," said Harmon. "Sharing a book is like sharing an adventure, and we want to make certain all children have the opportunity to enjoy an adventure."

Student Shannon Smart of New Sweden, who has participated in the NMCC parade book distribution in the past, will again this year. Smart and a number of NMCC students, faculty and staff are working with Harmon to prepare NMCC's float for this year's parade.

"I think everyone looks forward to it now," said Smart. "I really enjoyed taking part in the parade last year. Although it is usually a very cold night, all of us who participate are left with a very warm feeling inside as we see the joy on the children's faces along the parade route."

Individuals or organizations with children's books to donate to NMCC to be given out during the 2009 Holiday Light Parade should contact the development and college relations office at 768-2809 or drop off books at the information window in the main lobby of the Christie building at the College.

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Northern Maine Community College students (left to right) Brittany Hewitt, Dustin Graham and Shannon Smart sort through and insert bookmarks into the just over 600 books donated to date for the Holiday Light Parade giveaway. The College is turning to the community for book donations to reach 1,000.