



News Release

Contact:
Jason Parent
Development and
College Relations Office
33 Edgemont Drive
Presque Isle, ME 04769
Phone: (207) 768-2808
Fax: (207) 768-2813
jparent@nmcc.edu

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Expert in older adult healthcare issues speaks at NMCC Well-Elder Teas in Presque Isle and Madawaska

Aroostook County - Local senior citizens who allowed nursing students from Northern Maine Community College into their homes this fall as part of the College's Well Elder program were thanked for their generous assistance during a tea on December 1 held on the Presque Isle campus as well as the NMCC Off-Campus Center in Madawaska.

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.

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.

"Because of the willingness of these individuals to let our students into their homes and to share personal experiences with them, they have really created a positive experience for healthy aging," said Betty Kent-Conant, nursing and allied health department chair. "Written feedback from our students was rich in self-reflection, with the vast majority reporting that their experience was so much more positive than they had originally anticipated. Some went into this project with preconceived notions about the elderly, and they really had their eyes opened. Interacting with healthy, active older adults has heightened their awareness of the aging process. We can't begin to quantify what our students have gained from this learning process."

This was a sentiment shared by the students during the tea, as each had the opportunity to speak briefly, introduce their 'well elder' and share some of their personal thoughts regarding the experience. Several commented on the positive attitude and level of activity of their respective 'well elders', as well as the wonderful life stories they were privileged to hear.

“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.”

Valerie Sauda, an expert on the health care needs of older adults, was the featured speaker at the tea. Sauda, a geriatric services instructor at Rosscare in Bangor, delivered her remarks in Presque Isle, and they were broadcast live to Madawaska using the college videoconferencing system.

Sauda discussed 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.

A total of 34 students enrolled in the first year nursing class on the Presque Isle campus and an additional seven 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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Central Aroostook area residents participating in the Well-Elder program assisting Northern Maine Community College nursing students this fall recently gathered on the NMCC campus for a celebratory tea where they were thanked by the students. Gathered at the celebration were (seated, from left) Janis MacDonald of Ashland, Priscilla Gallagher of Presque Isle, Gloria Belanger of Portage, Roberta Kaiser of Mapleton, Amy Kneeland of Blaine, Frances Banks of Mars Hill, Carolyn Miller of Mars Hill, and Dorothy Sperry of Washburn. The elders are seated in front of the student they invited into their homes this semester. Central Aroostook students participating in the program include (standing, from left) Omega Daniel of Presque Isle, Tamara Packard of Presque Isle, Lindsey Rockwell of Castle Hill, Melissa Cray of Ashland, Charlotte Grass of Mars Hill, Jessica Gal of Bridgewater, Shelby Miller of Mars Hill, and Leann Klinger of Crouseville.



Southern Aroostook area residents participating in the Well-Elder program assisting Northern Maine Community College nursing students this fall recently gathered on the NMCC campus for a celebratory tea where they were thanked by the students. Gathered at the celebration were (seated, from left) Pat Lynds of Littleton, Donald Stewart of Houlton and Carol Polchies and her sister Mary Rockwell, both of Hartland, NB. The elders are seated in front of the student they invited into their homes this semester (standing, from left): Heather Bailey and Gweneth Jones, both of Houlton, and Cara Albright of St. Thomas, NB.



New Brunswick residents participating in the Well-Elder program assisting Northern Maine Community College nursing students this fall recently gathered on the NMCC campus for a celebratory tea where they were thanked by the students. Gathered at the celebration were (seated, from left) Margaret Wallace of Tobique Narrows and Carol Polchies and her sister Mary Rockwell, both of Hartland. The elders are seated in front of the student they invited into their homes this semester, standing, from left, Andrea Hubbard of Tobique Narrows and Cara Albright of St. Thomas.



St. John Valley residents participating in the Well-Elder program assisting Northern Maine Community College nursing students this fall recently gathered at the College's Off-Campus Center at Madawaska High School for a celebratory tea where they were thanked by the students. Gathered at the celebration were (seated, from left) Rella Bezanilla of Madawaska, Carlene Albert of Grand Isle, and Julie Cyr of St. Agatha. The elders are seated in front of the student they invited into their homes this semester (standing, row 1 from left): Vicki Lavertu of St. David, Janet Grivois of Grand Isle, and Janice LaBrie of St. Agatha. Students also participating in the program, along with their instructor, are (standing in back, from left) NMCC instructor Sandy Pelletier, Lyse Dionne of Madawaska, Steffanie Novak of Presque Isle, Stacey Theriault of Fort Kent, and Lyne Hebert of Madawaska.