



News Release

Contact:
Jason Parent
Development and
College Relations Office
33 Edgemont Drive
Presque Isle, ME 04769
Phone: (207) 768-2808
Fax: (207) 760-1101
jparent@nmcc.edu

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NMCC student creates 'Peace Tree' to help spread a message on nonviolence

Aroostook County - When Northern Maine Community College business instructor Pam Crawford tasked her senior leadership class with coordinating a project that would benefit their community, students began the arduous task of finding a project that was right for them, that would be beneficial to either the college or local community, and that could be reasonably completed in one semester's time frame.

One such project is a "Peace Tree" created by NMCC business administration senior Sandra Fournier of Mapleton. Her tree includes a base that was created with a twisting effect to emulate a weeping willow by instructor Dennis Albert and students in the College's welding and metal fabrication program. The top of the tree is decorated with flowers and greenery, with areas in which to fasten people's thoughts, ideas or visions for peace...or simply their name to pledge their support to peace.

According to Fournier, the weeping willow was chosen as the theme of her Peace Tree since it brings a sense of serenity and calmness. "Sometimes just a visual factor can change or alter a person's mood or way of thinking," said Fournier. Her tree is on display, along with other materials, in the Christie lobby at the college during the week of March 22-26.

"What I have learned is that we all have a responsibility to making this world a better place. Every little step adds up until eventually you are part of a whole movement focused on one thing—peace," said Fournier. "Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing to have peace? With peace comes acceptance, with acceptance comes belonging. When you feel that you belong, you start to build relationships of trust, honesty and a community of leaders and followers toward one common goal."

Fournier believes that a key way to begin getting out the message of peace is to engage the younger generation. With that in mind, she first presented her Peace Tree to the girls in Presque Isle's Girl Scout Troop 1137. She attended a troop meeting, during which time she introduced the children to some non-violent alternatives to solving problems, including some exercises they could do to help themselves calm down and get refocused on what is important. Each of the girls also created a drawing of their own peace tree and put their name on a card pledging that they would work toward peaceful solutions of any personal conflicts. These cards were then attached to the tree.

“It is our young generation that we all hope will make this world a better place, find the errors in our ways and learn from them to improve society views on violence,” she said. “We need to give guidance and pass down our knowledge, experience and visions for them to carry and, hopefully, improve upon.”

The timing of Fournier’s Peace Tree fits into the Season of Nonviolence, an international campaign from January 30 to April 4 to educate and teach the public that nonviolence can empower, enlighten and transform our lives for the better. The Season of Nonviolence was inspired by the anniversaries of the deaths of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi in order to carry forward their vision for a united and nonviolent world.

“I hope that the NMCC campus and the community can look at this project and see what just one student is capable of doing,” said Fournier. She encourages members of the campus and local community to stop in the lobby to see the display, pick up related material, and add their name to the Peace Tree in support of nonviolence.

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Sandra Fournier, a business senior at Northern Maine Community College, stands beside her “Peace Tree” display in the NMCC Christie lobby. The display is part of a peace campaign that Fournier has embarked on as part of her leadership class at the College. The Peace Tree and accompanying material will be on display from March 22-26.