



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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Fort Fairfield couple with strong ties to NMCC create endowed scholarship fund

Aroostook County - A Fort Fairfield couple with deep County roots that can certainly attest to the value students receive from a Northern Maine Community College education is giving back to an institution that has had “a significant impact” on their lives.

Tom and Betty K. Conant have established an endowed scholarship fund in their names with the NMCC Foundation that will benefit future generations of students attending the College. The Tom and Betty K. Conant Scholarship fund will annually provide assistance to students attending NMCC and who are pursuing a degree in nursing or a related allied health field, or in electrical construction and maintenance.

The designation was especially important, as Betty Kent-Conant served on the faculty at the Presque Isle College for 30 years, half of that time as nursing and allied health department chair before retiring in June of this year; and Tom Conant graduated from the automotive program in 1968 and the electrical construction and maintenance program in 1996.

“Betty and Tom care deeply about Northern Maine Community College and its students, and we are honored with their generosity,” said Brian Hamel, NMCC Foundation Board chairperson. “They have contributed their talents and passion to the students of NMCC for decades and now as Betty and Tom enter retirement, their scholarship funds will continue to benefit NMCC’s future students for years to come.”

Betty Kent-Conant was named faculty emerita by the Maine Community College System at NMCC’s commencement in May. She is the first instructor at the state’s northernmost campus to earn that honor.

“As most of my professional career has been devoted to the education of health care professionals at NMCC, I feel very strongly that it is vital to support those who wish to pursue careers of higher learning. To that end, it is imperative to lend that support whenever and however we can,” said Betty Kent-Conant.

“I value the education I received at NMCC and the opportunities those degrees have allowed for me. The education has made it possible for me to have achieved my Master Electrician license and the career path that I have so enjoyed. I want to be able to help students from Aroostook County have those same opportunities at NMCC.” said Tom Conant.

The Tom and Betty K. Conant scholarship fund focuses on, but is not limited to, rewarding academic achievement and community involvement, assisting students who have a demonstrated financial need, and providing an educated and skilled workforce for the local region. It will be used to provide scholarships to NMCC students to fund tuition, books, tools and equipment.

Criteria for the scholarship award includes that recipients will be residents of Maine, with preference given to students from Aroostook County. Scholarships are to be awarded after completion of the first semester to students in good academic standing enrolled in a degree program.

In the first year, the scholarship will be awarded to a student enrolled in Nursing or in a related Allied Health program. In the second year, the scholarship will be awarded to a student enrolled in the Electrical Construction and Maintenance program. The scholarship award will alternate between the two programs in subsequent years. At the point when the fund balance has reached a level such that more than one scholarship can be awarded annually, awards will be distributed evenly to students in each of the aforementioned programs.

Tom Conant has recently retired after 24 years of service at The Aroostook Medical Center. He is a Master Electrician who worked in the maintenance department, and in those 24 years, has provided service at both the former Community General Hospital in Fort Fairfield and at the Gould campus of TAMC. He was responsible for electrical services, phone and computer line installation and maintenance, and the fire alarm systems.

Tom is a graduate of the community college’s automotive program (1968) and NMTC’s electrical construction program (1996). He was employed for a number of years as store manager for Agway Corporation and served in that capacity in stores in Maine, Massachusetts and Vermont.

He is a member of the Aroostook Valley Country Club and the St. John Valley Senior Mens’ Golf Association. He is also a member and past vice president of the Fort Fairfield Rifle and Pistol Club and is a member and past vice president of the Electrical Associates of Aroostook.

He was a member of and rescue foreman of the Fort Fairfield Volunteer Fire Department from 1987 through 1993. He also was an emergency medical technician with the former Fort Fairfield Ambulance Service. Tom is the father of three – two sons Malcolm of California and Joe of Maine, and the late April Conant.

A highly regarded educator and leader in the health care profession in Maine, Betty Kent-Conant, was hired in 1979 by then Northern Maine Vocational Technical Institute as a health occupations instructor in the school of practical nursing. She helped transition the institution from a practical nursing program to the present-day associate degree program and in 1994 took over as department chair.

At the state level, Kent-Conant was appointed by former Maine Governor Angus King to serve on the Maine State Board of Nursing in 1999 and reappointed to the board in 2003 by Governor John Baldacci. She also serves on the Associate Degree Nursing Council of Maine.

Locally, Kent-Conant is very involved in the community. She serves on The Aroostook Medical Center Board of Directors and was past chair of the former Horizons Inc. Board of Directors, the Eastern Maine Home Care Board of Directors and Professional Advisory Committee, the Northern Maine Regional Emergency Medical Services Council, and the Northern Maine Rural Health Research Coalition

She also belongs to a number of professional organizations including the National League for Nursing, the Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society Kappa Zeta Chapter, the American Nurses Association, Maine Nurses Association, National Education Association, and Maine Education Association.

Kent-Conant is a past recipient of the NMCC President's Award, was selected as an Outstanding Woman of Aroostook County in 2001-2002 and is a three time recipient of Beta Sigma Phi's Woman of the Year honor.

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Tom and Betty K. Conant (from left) present a contribution to establish the Tom and Betty K. Conant Scholarship with the Northern Maine Community College Foundation to Brian Hamel, NMCC Foundation Board chairperson and Jason Parent, executive director of the NMCC Foundation.