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News Release

Pine Tree Chapter of the American Red Cross Aroostook EMA and NMCC partner to bring Disaster Preparedness Institute to County September 24 and 25

Aroostook County -- The Aroostook County Branch of the Pine Tree Chapter of the American Red Cross, in partnership with the Aroostook County Emergency Management Agency and Northern Maine Community College, will bring a first-of-its-kind Disaster Preparedness Institute to northern Maine on September 24 and 25.

The two-day training, on the NMCC campus, will focus on numerous areas of disaster preparedness and is aimed at both training prospective new volunteers to respond in times of emergency and providing current volunteers and professionals in related fields with up to date, multi-disciplined training to ensure the community's immediate response to emergency situations.

“We hope to gain more volunteer service by providing this opportunity,” said Joyce Knorr, Aroostook County branch manager of the Pine Tree Chapter of the American Red Cross. “In recent years we have lost trained volunteers due to people leaving the area, and we are now at a critical point where we need to grow our ranks. We want to generate an interest in what Red Cross does so people can be prepared to help in the event of an emergency in the local community or elsewhere. Ultimately, this is about local people helping local people.”

The NMCC Student Senate is partnering with the Pine Tree Chapter of The American Red Cross to host the two day event. Students will be assisting the training instructors and helping in other ways to ensure the sessions run smoothly. Mariah Lemieux-Lupien, an NMCC student senate member, has been working with Knorr to help coordinate the activity.

“I have been doing volunteer work my whole life and I feel it is very important to give back. We are working collaboratively to provide this excellent free training opportunity to community members who also want to help make a difference. Our hope is to provide the Red Cross with a new army of volunteers who are ready, willing and able to help in the event of a disaster,” said Lemieux-Lupien.

Courses offered Friday include *Foundations of Disaster Mental Health and Health Services Response Workshop*. Both are designed for current licensed professionals to provide an overview of the disaster mental health function on disaster relief operations and prepare certified healthcare professionals to work with their local chapter or be deployed to a Red Cross relief operation.

This event marks the first time *Health Services Response Workshop* will be offered in Aroostook County. Also offered on Friday is *Services to the Armed Forces*, explaining organization of system and procedures necessary for relaying emergency communication for families of U.S. military personnel.

Saturday’s training consists of *Psychological First Aid, Shelter Operations and Mass Care*, during which participants will learn the basics of operating a shelter and caring for those in need. Other Saturday courses include *ICS/EOC Interface*, which provides understanding of the Incident Command System (ICO) and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and emphasizes the importance of teamwork between the two, and *Client Casework: Providing Emergency Assistance*, a course designed to provide the knowledge necessary to meet disaster caused needs of families, including the use of basic Red Cross forms needed to assist clients.

Fulfilling Our Mission will be offered both days as a required course for all participants to explain the role of the Red Cross in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies and disaster and to enable individual volunteers to translate their care and compassion for their communities into action.

The Pine Tree Chapter of the America Red Cross works with community partners to provide practical and helpful awareness and educational information to show the public how to save lives, reduce injuries, and protect and prepare for disasters. When a disaster threatens or strikes, the Red Cross provides safe shelter, food, clothing, health and mental health services to individuals and families.

Registration forms can be obtained at numerous Presque Isle and Caribou area businesses, at the Red Cross office on High Street in Caribou, at the information window in the Christie Lobby at NMCC, and online at www.nmcc.edu or www.pinetree.redcross.org. For more information, please contact Joyce Knorr at (207) 493-1624, ext. 108.

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