



Aroostook County Action Program

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NMCC students and faculty collaborate with ACAP for seventh annual children's book drive project; drop-off locations throughout The County

Aroostook County - Northern Maine Community College students and employees are partnering with the Aroostook County Action Program to brighten and enrich the lives of area children through what has become a signature service activity for the campus during the Holiday season.

During last year's sixth annual children's book drive, NMCC volunteers collected and distributed a record 6,000 books to youth lined along both sides of Main Street during the Holiday Light Parade in downtown Presque Isle. The campus is once again planning to accept book donations in advance of the parade and is hoping for help from the community for a third year in a row.

"Two years ago, we turned to the community for the first time to join in our efforts to collect books for us to distribute to children at the parade," said Colleen Harmon, a business technology instructor at NMCC who launched the book collection project seven years ago. "That year, we collected and distributed more than 2,000 books that we would otherwise not have obtained. Last year, we wanted to give people more of a notice than the year prior, to be able to sort through books their children had outgrown, or no longer read, so we began collecting in October. This year, we hope to have support from the college and community to at least match the record of 6,000 books, to give to children along the parade route."

This year's efforts have gotten a big boost in the form of a partnership with ACAP. The County-based non-profit that provides services and resources that help individuals and families achieve greater economic independence, will help in the collection of books in the coming weeks and assist with distribution at the parade on December 4.

The collaboration will make donating books more convenient for community members throughout the region by offering more drop-off locations. In addition to NMCC's Presque Isle campus, ACAP has identified a number of their facilities in Aroostook County where people can donate new or used books.

“We are proud at ACAP to be partnering with NMCC on this holiday project. Our work in early childhood education revolves around literacy development which is key to school readiness and success in life. This project is an opportunity to share the gift of literacy with children in the community at large.” said Sue Powers, senior manager, ACAP Child & Family Services.

The initiative, led by Harmon, 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.

NMCC Student Senate vice president Dustin Graham of Mapleton who participated in the NMCC parade book distribution last year, will again this year. Graham is working with Harmon and ACAP staff members and additionally will take the lead on preparing NMCC’s float for this year’s parade, working collaboratively with the NMCC Student Senate, volunteers, and staff in the development and college relations office.

“The experience of working with the project last year was very rewarding, especially during a time of giving,” said Graham. “I am looking forward to participating once again this year and very glad it is something the college participates in. The partnership with ACAP should help us collect and distribute even more books this year.”

Individuals or organizations with new or used children’s books to donate toward the project may drop off books to the information window in the main lobby of the Christie building at the College, 33 Edgemont Drive Presque Isle; ACAP Main Office, 771 Main Street Presque Isle; ACAP Park Street Center, 44 Park Street Presque Isle; ACAP Employment & Training, 91 Military Street Houlton; ACAP Fort Kent Child Care Center, 40 Alfalfa Avenue; or ACAP Caribou Child Care Center, Bowles Rd Caribou.

The book collection effort will continue through the month of November. For more information, or to arrange for a pick-up of a larger quantity of books, contact the NMCC development and college relations office at (207) 768-2809.

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Northern Maine Community College business technology instructor Colleen Harmon (left) distributes children's books to Holiday Light Parade-goers last year. The College encourages the community to donate books for this year as it begins collecting for the seventh annual project.