



News Release

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Mars Hill Rotary Club donates to NMCC Wind Power Technology Program

Aroostook County - Students in New England's first wind power technology program at Northern Maine Community College will benefit from a donation made to the school by the Mars Hill Rotary Club.

The \$800 contribution provided for the purchase of a newer generation fall arrest harness assembly, safety equipment used to protect technicians climbing and working in a wind turbine. NMCC students also use the harnesses in lab and climbing exercises.

Instructor Wayne Kilcollins had visited with the Mars Hill Rotary Club twice in the winter and spring of this year to speak about the wind power technology program at NMCC. In the first presentation, he provided a general overview of the program. He was invited back in May to speak specifically about the safety measures observed and equipment used by students and faculty in the program.

"We have established our program among the top in the nation when it comes to safety, including pioneering the first industry-specific physical assessment as a requirement for full acceptance into the program," said Kilcollins. "When I returned for my second presentation to the club, I brought along one of my students, Scott Niemi, who helped demonstrate the fall arrest equipment used both in the industry and in our program."

Kilcollins and Niemi shared with the club that the harnesses were expensive – \$800 each – and noted that several students needed to use them at the same time, which proved challenging given the limited number available. The need for additional fall arrest equipment to train future wind technicians in Aroostook County hit a chord with Mars Hill Rotarians, who live in the host community to Maine's first commercial wind farm.

"Seeing and hearing about the success of and demand for the wind power technology program at NMCC and the obvious benefit of the wind industry here in Mars Hill and across northern Maine, it seemed donating to the program was a very appropriate way of giving back to the community," said Edward Wright, president of the Mars Hill Rotary Club. "Rotary's motto is 'Service Above Self', and we saw this as an opportunity to benefit local students and the communities we serve at the same time."

Not only has the newly purchased fall arrest harness funded by the Rotary Club enhanced the inventory of safety equipment for the NMCC wind power technology program, the new harness is actually the next generation safety device, which according to student Scott Niemi is an improvement over the previous model.

“They are lighter and the straps can be adjusted a lot easier. Carrying the extra weight makes a big difference when you are climbing hundreds of feet,” said Niemi, a second-year student from Lewiston, who will be among New England’s first “home-grown” wind power technicians when he graduates next May.

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Edward Wright (left), president of the Mars Hill Rotary Club checks out the new fall arrest harness assembly worn by Northern Maine Community College Wind Power Technology student Scott Niemi of Lewiston. The newer generation safety equipment used in the wind industry was purchased by NMCC through a donation from the Mars Hill Rotarians. Niemi and NMCC Wind Power Technology Instructor Wayne Kilcollins (right) visited with the Rotarians this spring to speak about safety measures and equipment students and instructors in the program utilize.