



April 8, 2011  
NR11045

# News Release

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## NMCC to officially open Northern Maine Center for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education

**Aroostook County** - The advancement of educational opportunities in alternative energy in Maine will take a huge leap forward on April 21 when Northern Maine Community College officially opens the Northern Maine Center for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education.

The facility, located a short distance from the NMCC campus on the Skyway Industrial Park in Presque Isle, features both classroom and laboratory space for students in the building technology programs at the College. Newly purchased equipment in the center will provide for experiential learning opportunities in various alternative energy resources including wind, solar and biomass.

“By bringing the education and training needed for the use of renewable resources that are abundant in this region under one roof, we can respond to the demand, as well as make the best possible use of our resources to educate the public and the workforce of the future,” said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. “The Center for Excellence will have significant impact on our ability to help Aroostook County and the State of Maine build the infrastructure and workforce needed to ensure alternative energy is key to unlocking the future economic potential of the region.”

The College is inviting the public to join in the official opening and dedication ceremony for the Northern Maine Center for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education and tour the facility on Thursday, April 21, at 2:00 p.m. The building is located at 920 Skyway Street in Presque Isle.

A brief ceremony at the site will be followed by an official ribbon cutting for the Center for Excellence and the unveiling of a wall of honor dedicated to Rodney Smith, a very successful Silicon Valley businessman and philanthropist who passed away in 2007. At the beginning of the year NMCC and NMCC Foundation officials announced a \$1.2 million dollar gift was made to the College by Smith’s wife, California resident and Presque Isle native Mary Smith, in honor and memory of the life of her late husband.

Despite an impoverished youth in England and incredible odds, Rodney Smith achieved extraordinary success in the United States as a businessman and pioneer in the semi-conductor industry. After a successful 13 years at Fairchild Semiconductor, he was hired by the founders of the Altera Corporation to serve as the company's first CEO. Altera is the leading company in innovative custom logic solutions and invented the world's first reprogrammable logic device in 1984. Smith led the company to great success for two decades before retiring on January 1, 2001.

The Smith donation is one of the largest private contributions ever given to a community college in Maine and the largest to date to an Aroostook County higher education institution. Over the past few months, the College has established the Center for Excellence, renovating a 7,800 square foot building, and purchased some of the needed equipment for the facility.

In addition to equipment purchased through the Smith gift, the Alternative Energy Center for Excellence will also house technology purchased through a \$225,000 grant received by NMCC last summer from the Efficiency Maine Trust. Those funds were designated to assist the College in the introduction of new classes and significant revisions to existing courses offered on the campus that will stress energy efficiency in construction and renovation practices.

NMCC has also redirected some resources it receives from the state to expand alternative energy education in the region. The College is leasing the facility for the center from the City of Presque Isle.

Efforts to establish the Northern Maine Center for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education were identified as a key component to the Mobilize Maine initiative launched a few years ago by area economic development organizations to bolster the County economy. In addition to serving as a learning laboratory and teaching facility for NMCC students, College officials intend for the center to serve as a place where area school children and community members visit to learn more about alternative energy and its potential in the region.

The alternative energy building and the equipment purchased to date will be showcased to the community at the April 21 event. The afternoon ceremony will also pay tribute to the inspirational life story of the self-made man for whom the building will be dedicated.

For more information on the opening and dedication ceremony for the Northern Maine Center for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education, contact the NMCC college relations and development office at (207) 768-2809 or e-mail [jparent@nmcc.edu](mailto:jparent@nmcc.edu).

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