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News Release

June 3, 2011

NR11065

NMCC and LEAD to mark golden and silver anniversaries at June 17 luncheon; County legislators past and present to be honored at event

Aroostook County – Five decades ago this month Maine Governor John H. Reed signed a bill into law that created the higher education institution that is now Northern Maine Community College. A quarter-century ago, a prominent group of Aroostook County business leaders turned to then Northern Maine Vocational Technical Institute, to ask the school to serve as the base of operations for a brand new organization they incorporated called LEADers Encouraging Aroostook Development.

On June 17, 2011, the exact date 50 years ago that a stroke of Reed's pen affirmed a bill passed by the 100th Maine State Legislature creating NMCC, the two prominent County organizations will jointly mark their respective gold and silver anniversary milestones, and celebrate their shared history and similar mission to improve the future of Aroostook County at a special luncheon event.

Much like a birthday party or anniversary gathering, the celebration scheduled for Friday, June 17 at 11:00 a.m. in the Edmunds Conference Center and Library at NMCC, will have honored guests. Former and current legislators who have served Aroostook County in the past half-century, themselves working to improve the future of the region, will be recognized by the County and College leaders gathered.

“Aroostook County is fortunate to have been served by some outstanding elected state officials,” said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. “As we mark the date 50 years ago that another outstanding County public servant, Fort Fairfield native and former Governor John Reed, signed the bill into law that created NMCC, we wanted to take a moment to say thank you to those individuals who have so capably represented our area in the legislature. As a public institution of higher learning, our development has been directly and positively impact by the efforts of these individuals over the years.”

The advocacy of area lawmakers over the years in supporting the mission and work of NMCC is visible across the college campus. Several buildings are named after prominent elected officials from the region, including the Reed Dining Commons (Former Governor John Reed), Snow Hall (Former State Senator Paris J. Snow), Christie Hall (Former State Representative Augusta K. Christie) Edmunds Building (Former State Senator E. Perrin Edmunds) and the Martin Building (Former House Speaker and long-serving Aroostook lawmaker John L. Martin).

Festivities on June 17 will get underway in the Edmunds Library with a reception hosted by LEAD to celebrate the organization's 25th anniversary. In addition to current and former state lawmakers and College officials, attendees will include current and former LEAD members and other invited guests.

“There have been many individuals, businesses and organizations that have played a key role in the development of LEAD and of Aroostook County over the past 25 years. Our joint anniversary celebration with NMCC is an opportunity for us to honor many of these contributions,” said LEAD President Virginia Joles. “It is especially fitting that we return to the NMCC campus for this momentous occasion as it is where LEAD had its first administrative headquarters.”

LEAD, Inc., a non-profit corporation of community volunteers, was established in 1986 for the purpose of fostering and encouraging the balanced development of Aroostook County, which includes focus on the economy, jobs, image, partnerships, promotion of new and existing businesses, natural resources, and legislation.

A 50th anniversary celebration luncheon for NMCC will immediately follow the LEAD reception at 12:00 noon. In addition to honoring all current and former County lawmakers, two will be afforded special recognition. Former State Senator Floyd L. Harding and Former State Representative Harold L. (Bud) Stewart, both of Presque Isle, will be recognized for their outstanding efforts 50 years ago in ensuring the creation of NMCC.

Stewart, who represented the Star City in the Legislature during the 1961-1962 session, was key supporter of the bill to create a vocational school in Aroostook County. He, along with Senator Edmunds, were key figures in building support in their respective chambers for the legislation and ensuring its passage.

Harding was one of the key members of a committee of local citizens working to develop a vocational school in Presque Isle on the site of the former Army Air Base. The vision of the group was to utilize existing vacated military facilities to serve as learning spaces for the various trades and barracks to house the residential students.

Although not a member of the legislature at the time, Harding's community activism toward this and other endeavors led him to run successfully for the State Senate in 1964. He represented central Aroostook County in that body in the 1965-66 legislative session, as well as in the 1967-68 and 1971-72 sessions.

Both Stewart and Harding are considered among the “founders” of NMCC and continued to support the institution throughout their time in elected office and after their legislative service as interested citizens and community leaders. The two former lawmakers will be honored with bronze plaques recognizing their contributions that will hang in the Edmunds Building near a similar plaque honoring the late Senator E. Perrin Edmunds.

For more information on the LEAD 25th Anniversary or NMCC 50th Anniversary event, community members are encouraged to contact event organizers at 207-768-2808.

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*Former State Representative
Harold L. (Bud) Stewart*



*Former State Senator
Floyd L. Harding*