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News Release

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NMCC and LEAD mark golden and silver anniversaries; former County lawmakers honored

Aroostook County – It was a celebration decades in the making and it drew a crowd of more than 100 of The County’s most prominent leaders – past and present – to the Northern Maine Community College campus. The NMCC 50th Anniversary luncheon, and the social preceding it honoring 25 years of service to the region by Leaders Encouraging Aroostook Development (LEAD), was held on June 17th, the same day in 1961 that Governor John H. Reed signed the bill into law that created the higher education institution

The celebrations were held jointly to reflect the fact that 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 LEAD. From that point forward, LEAD and NMCC have worked collaboratively and with other partners to advance economic development throughout the region.

Much like a birthday party or anniversary gathering, the celebration in the Edmunds Conference Center and Library at NMCC featured honored guests. Former legislators, who have served Aroostook County in the past half-century – themselves working to improve the future of the region, were recognized by the County and College leaders gathered.

“Aroostook County is fortunate to have been served by some outstanding elected leaders,” said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. “We wanted to take a moment to say thank you to all of you who have so capably represented our area in the legislature and to help advocate for the College and for the development of Aroostook County over the years. The Aroostook County delegation has always been known for working across the aisle and for doing what is best for our region and state.”

In addition to honoring all current and former County lawmakers, two were afforded special recognition. Former State Senator Floyd L. Harding and Former State Representative Harold L. (Bud) Stewart, both of Presque Isle, were 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 of these gentlemen (Stewart and Harding) are considered among the 'founders' of NMCC," said Crowley. "They also continued to support us throughout their time in elected office and after their legislative service as interested citizens and community leaders. We are most grateful for their efforts."

The two former lawmakers were honored with bronze plaques recognizing their contributions that were unveiled during the ceremony following the luncheon. The plaques will hang in the Edmunds Building near a similar one honoring the late Senator E. Perrin Edmunds.

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).

During the LEAD 25th Anniversary social event held prior to the NMCC 50th Anniversary luncheon, Virginia Joles, LEAD immediate past president, spoke about the evolution of the organization over the past quarter century and called on former Northern Maine Vocational Technical Institute (a forerunner of NMCC) Director Dr. James Patterson to speak about the early days of LEAD and how the organization came to find its first home on the NMCC campus.

“When a group of business leaders in the mid 1980’s were looking to find a location for the administrative headquarters for this new organization called LEAD, it was a natural fit for this campus. The important role this institution plays in the economic and workforce development of this area – region-wide – made this location ideal as the spot to launch an organization that has, in the intervening years, made a significant difference in The County,” said Patterson.

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.

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Northern Maine Community College leaders past and present gathered to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the signing of the legislation that created NMCC in 1961 and the 25th Anniversary of LEAD. Taking part in the event on the NMCC campus were (left to right) Timothy Crowley, current NMCC president; Dr. Durward Huffman, NMTC president from 1986-2001; Dr. James Patterson, NMVTI director from 1984-1986; Deanne Greenlaw, representing the family of the late Harold Mailman, campus leader from 1969-1979; and Dr. Richard N. Cilley, the first assistant director at the college appointed in 1966.



A dozen former Aroostook County legislators were among the honored guests at the Northern Maine Community College 50th Anniversary luncheon and Leaders Encouraging Aroostook Development 25th Anniversary reception held recently on the NMCC campus. Joining in the celebration were: (seated, left to right) Mabel Desmond of Mapleton, Floyd Harding and Harold (Bud) Stewart of Presque Isle, and Carolyne Mahany of Easton. Also taking part were: (standing, left to right) Roland (Danny) Martin of Sinclair, Wilfred Bell of Caribou, James Dunleavy of Presque Isle, Donald Collins of Caribou, Dean Clukey of Houlton, Henry Joy of Crystal, Richard Kneeland of Easton, and Hayes Gahagan of Presque Isle.



Former Northern Maine Community College campus leader Dr. James Patterson, who is credited with providing Leaders Encouraging Aroostook Development with its first administrative headquarters on the College campus, shares a humorous story about the early days of LEAD during a 25th Anniversary celebratory reception in the NMCC Library. Patterson also spoke about his time as leader of Northern Maine Vocational Technical Institute, a forerunner of NMCC.