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News Release

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Long-time and well-respected nursing educator Betty Lou Baulch remembered by NMCC campus community and County health professionals

Aroostook County - The Northern Maine Community College family and County health professionals are mourning the loss of an outstanding nurse, educator, administrator and friend.

Betty Lou Baulch, long-time NMCC nursing instructor and department chair, passed away on August 10, 2011 at the age of 77. She is being remembered by colleagues as a visionary, leader and pioneer in the field of nursing education and as a competent and compassionate caregiver who always stressed the importance of patient-centered care.

“Betty, a fiercely independent woman, was a true leader, fine clinician, intelligent and well-respected colleague, and an exemplary professional role model. Whether one was a student in her classroom or a faculty member, she encouraged critical and constructive thought processes and independent thinking and reasoning. She was always available to assist but desired and supported autonomous behavior,” said Betty Kent-Conant, NMCC faculty emerita, retired chair of the nursing and allied health department, and a professional colleague and friend of Baulch’s for over three decades. “It was not uncommon for her to say, ‘That is a great idea. Why don’t you try it and then re-evaluate for its success.’ Her type of leadership was valued by each faculty member with whom she worked. We were blessed to have known and worked with such a fine individual and appreciate all she taught us. The results of Betty’s contributions can be seen and felt by many people in our communities. The graduates who benefitted from her instruction can be found in many of our health care facilities caring for those who are in need of nursing care.”

Baulch was a 1952 graduate of Houlton High School. She earned her bachelor of science degree in nursing (BSN) from Bates College in 1957, in a five year program that included two years of clinical experience in Boston hospitals. She additionally earned a master of education degree in 1980 from the University of Maine.

She began her employment at the then Northern Maine Vocational Technical Institute in 1968, teaching and providing clinical supervision to practical nursing students in Houlton. When the Houlton program was temporarily suspended in 1973, she moved to the Presque Isle campus.

Baulch led the nursing department (now nursing and allied health department) at Northern Maine Community College for more than 12 years before her retirement in 1994. It was during her tenure as department chair that the associate degree nursing program was approved as a pilot program. Prior to that, the College had offered only a diploma-level program for practical nursing.

While at NMCC, Baulch served on the Maine State Board of Nursing for more than 10 years, taking on the role of president three times, and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing for eight years.

A well-respected member of the NMCC campus community, Baulch was presented the Director's Award (forerunner of the President's Award) partly as a result of her efforts in making the program a reality. In 2008, NMCC again honored Baulch when she was named one of the four inaugural inductees to the Health Care Professionals Wall of Distinction. The wall of honor, the concept for which was developed by faculty in the nursing and allied health department at Northern Maine Community, is located in the mezzanine area just above the lobby of the Christie Building, which serves as the entry to the nursing and allied health wing at the College.

“Betty set high standards for the college and students. She was a mentor to students, faculty and staff. Her contribution to the nursing profession has and will serve the people of the State of Maine for many years,” said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. “Those of us who had the opportunity to work with Betty learned quickly that she had high expectations and was willing to help everyone reach and set high standards. Betty was an outstanding leader, teacher, colleague and friend. We will miss her.”

Crowley, who has been at NMCC for 26 years, worked closely with Baulch during her tenure at the College, as did former NMCC President Durward Huffman who lead the campus between 1986 and 2001.

“Betty's service to NMVTI and NMTC clearly demonstrated her high professional skills and standards. She was well respect by her colleagues as illustrated by her professional service in working with the faculty, the local hospitals, the program advisory committee and serving on the State Board of Nursing as well as the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. She was instrumental in leading the nursing program in attaining professional accreditation through the accreditation committee of the National League of Nursing, and she was most interested in assuring that the program graduates were successful on their licensure exam and there subsequent success in the nursing profession,” said Huffman, who is now President Emeritus of the College. “She was a great individual who has been and will be remembered by her colleagues for her service in educating nursing students and by NMCC nursing graduates for many years.”

Baulch was born May 3, 1934 in Houlton, the daughter of Harry and Betty (Ebbett) Baulch. She is survived by her children Walter Clark and his wife Mary of Southbridge, Massachusetts; Michael Clark and his wife Leslie of Oolewah, Tennessee; Corris Pinette and her husband Ron of Patten; and seven grandchildren.

A celebration of Baulch's life will be held on Saturday, August 13, at 11:00 a.m. at the Edmunds Conference Center on the NMCC campus in Presque Isle.

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Betty Lou Baulch