



**Aroostook County Action Program**

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## *News Release*

### **NMCC and ACAP kick-off eighth annual children's book drive project; drop-off locations throughout The County**

*Aroostook County* - Northern Maine Community College students and employees are partnering with the Aroostook County Action Program to brighten and enrich the lives of area children through what has become a signature community service activity during the Holiday season.

During last year's seventh annual children's book drive, NMCC and ACAP volunteers collected and distributed more than 6,000 books to youth lined along both sides of Main Street during the Holiday Light Parade in downtown Presque Isle. The two County-wide organizations are once again turning to the community for book donations in the coming month to help put a smile on the faces of children attending the holiday tradition.

"We want to give people ample opportunity to sort through books their children have outgrown or no longer read, or to purchase books in the coming weeks to donate to this worthwhile cause," said Colleen Harmon, a business technology instructor at NMCC who launched the book collection project eight years ago. "This year, we hope to have support from the college and community to at least match what we gave to children along the parade route last year."

This is the second year NMCC partners with ACAP for the Holiday book drive. The County-based non-profit that provides services and resources that help individuals and families achieve greater economic independence, will help in the collection of books in the coming weeks and assist with distribution at the parade on December 3.

The collaboration will once again make donating books more convenient for community members throughout the region by offering more drop-off locations. In addition to NMCC's Presque Isle campus, ACAP has identified a number of their facilities in Aroostook County where people can donate new or used books.

“Last year’s event was such a success! I heard from parents for weeks after the parade how much their children loved getting a new book at the Holiday Parade. We are proud at ACAP to be partnering again with NMCC on this holiday project. Our work in early childhood education revolves around literacy development which is key to school readiness and success in life. This project is an opportunity to share the gift of literacy with children in the community at large.” said Sue Powers, senior manager, ACAP Child and Family Services.

The initiative, led by Harmon, evolved both as an idea to give-away something that had a connection to the nature of the College and what it offers the community, as well as providing area children with something from which they would benefit.

NMCC student Jessica Ouellette of Caribou, who participated in the NMCC parade book distribution last year, will lead the student effort this year. Ouellette is working with Harmon, NMCC events coordinator Natalie St. Pierre, and ACAP staff members. She will additionally take the lead on preparing NMCC’s float for this year’s parade, working collaboratively with the NMCC Student Senate and volunteers.

“I am pleased to be participating in this project for the second year. I really enjoy having the opportunity to share the joy of reading with the children and families of our community,” said Ouellette.

Individuals or organizations with new or used children’s books to donate toward the project may drop off books to the information window in the main lobby of the Christie building at the College, 33 Edgemont Drive Presque Isle; ACAP Main Office, 771 Main Street Presque Isle; ACAP Park Street Center, 44 Park Street Presque Isle; ACAP Employment & Training, 91 Military Street Houlton; ACAP Fort Kent Child Care Center, 40 Alfalfa Avenue; or ACAP Caribou Child Care Center, Bowles Rd Caribou, and at Box of Books, 678 Fort Fairfield Road in Caribou.

The book collection effort will continue through the month of November. For more information, or to arrange for a pick-up of a larger quantity of books, contact the NMCC development and college relations office at (207) 768-2809.

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*Northern Maine Community College business technology instructor Colleen Harmon (center) and Cindy Albert (right) of the NMCC counseling office distribute children's books to Holiday Light Parade-goers last year. The College and ACAP encourage the community to donate books for this year as the two organizations begin collecting for the eighth annual project.*