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News Release

NMCC alternative energy center now houses one of four Weatherization Training Centers in Maine; College to host open house at center as part of statewide Weatherization Day

Aroostook County - The alternative energy center opened by Northern Maine Community College in Presque Isle's Skyway Industrial Park last spring is now home to the state's newest Weatherization Training Center. The facility, made possible through a \$220,000 grant from the Maine State Housing Authority, is one of only four in the state.

As a result of the funding provided to Maine by the U.S. Department of Energy, NMCC's Northern Maine Center for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education will serve as a regional resource to study how to make homes more energy efficient, safe and healthy. College officials plan to showcase the new addition to the facility during an upcoming community open house to coincide with Maine Weatherization Day on Thursday, October 27 between 4:00 and 6:00 p.m.

The Weatherization Training Center at the NMCC alternative energy center includes a pressure house that demonstrates a full range of pressure diagnostic measures under a wide variety of situations. The mini-home, located inside the lab area of the facility on Skyway Street is designed to help students learn techniques for insulating and air sealing.

To simulate real-world conditions the house is equipped with space allocated as a living room, bedroom, bathroom and a combustion air zone. It features a full-size heating system, a vented space heater, water heater, bath fan, kitchen range hood and a clothes dryer.

Controlled electronically and using a smoke machine, the unit is run by a touch screen panel and has a variety of built-in scenarios to help students visually understand the effects of pressure and the flow of energy in a home. Demonstrations of the pressure house will be conducted at various points throughout the October 27 open house.

In addition to the pressure house, other equipment provided through the grant, and now housed at the center, include a blower door, which serves as an important diagnostic tool to measure air leakage in a structure; infrared cameras, which are used to identify areas of heat loss; and a smart board so instructors can record key concepts for students to review at a later time. The lab was also equipped with a manometer, carbon monoxide detector and combustion gas leak detector.

The new equipment will greatly enhance NMCC's curriculum and allow for expansion of program offerings to the community. In addition to serving NMCC students, the facility will be made available for courses coordinated through the College's continuing education division for energy auditors and weatherization technicians, homebuilders and remodelers, and homeowners.

"Teaching weatherization at NMCC is critically important in a region of Maine and the northeast known to have some of the coldest temperatures and oldest housing stock," said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. "The Weatherization Training Center will be an integral part of the curriculum in all of our building trade programs."

According to Crowley, the latest technology in the Northern Maine Center for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education is a perfect addition to the facility. The center, which houses equipment to train students in both energy efficiency and various forms of alternative energy including biomass, solar and wind, was established through a public/private partnership involving college, municipal and regional resources, as well as grants and a large private donation from Presque Isle native and California resident Mary Smith.

Students in various programs including plumbing and heating, residential construction, computer-aided drafting, electrical construction and maintenance, and New England's first wind power technology program at NMCC all utilize the alternative energy center for classroom and lab activity.

NMCC instructors and students will be on hand for the October 27 open house to demonstrate the new equipment and greet members of the public interested in visiting the new Weatherization Training Center. The community is invited to tour the facility located inside the Northern Maine Center for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education at 920 Skyway Street on the Skyway Industrial Park in Presque Isle between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

Open houses at the three other weatherization centers across the state are also planned to coincide with Maine Weatherization Day. Those centers are located at Washington County Community College in Calais, United Technologies Center in Bangor and Southern Maine Community College in South Portland.

For more information on the Northern Maine Weatherization Training Center open house at NMCC's Northern Maine Center for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education, contact the NMCC development office at 768-2810.

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Northern Maine Community College plumbing and heating instructor Alan St. Peter (left) along with Robert Smith, NMCC information systems support specialist (center) and Todd Maynard, NMCC electrical construction and maintenance instructor work on the newly installed pressure house in Maine's newest Weatherization Training Center in NMCC's Northern Maine Center for Excellence in Alternative Energy Training and Education at 920 Skyway Street on the Skyway Industrial Park in Presque Isle. A community open house for the center is planned for this coming Thursday, October 27, which has been proclaimed Maine Weatherization Day.