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# News Release

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## County “well elders” to be honored guests at events at NMCC and Houlton Higher Education Center

**Aroostook County** - Aroostook County senior citizens taking part in a program that connects them with first-year nursing students at Northern Maine Community College will be honored guests at celebrations planned for November 18 on both the NMCC campus and at the Houlton Higher Education Center.

The Well Elder program, coordinated annually by the NMCC nursing and allied health department, pairs members of the first year nursing class with healthy senior citizens who volunteer to allow students into their homes throughout the semester to practice their assessment techniques. The unique program has been a part of the nursing curriculum at NMCC for more than a decade. For as many years, the culmination of the project has involved bringing all of the students and well elders together for a celebratory appreciation tea.

The focus of study for first semester nursing students is the adult and older adult. The clinical experience for these students is scheduled in long-term care facilities and nursing homes. However, according to Kim Esquibel, director of the NMCC nursing and allied health department, residents in these types of facilities represent only a small percentage of the total elder population.

“The Well Elder program provides a wonderful opportunity for students to observe and experience ‘normal’ aging in the individual’s own environment,” said Esquibel. “It allows the students to reflect and gain a broad perspective of the aging process. The well elders play an important role in helping to mold the future generation of nurses and we are so appreciative of their allowing the students into their homes.”

When visiting their “well elders” NMCC student nurses take vital signs and review medications, and assess home safety and general health lifestyles. Students also gain valuable experience practicing their interview and listening skills.

“This is a very important component of the first year of our nursing program,” said Mary Cornelio, first year nursing student coordinator. “This project allows the students to not only understand the importance of assessment, communication or history gathering, it allows them to gain a new appreciation of all the accomplishments and contributions made by the older generation. It is very effective in terms of helping our students to understand the critical importance of listening to the patients they will care for in the future.”

A total of 43 students enrolled in the first year nursing class on the Presque Isle campus and an additional 8 students participating in the NMCC nursing program offered at a distance at the Houlton Higher Education Center are currently engaged in the well elder program.

The Well Elder Teas will take place concurrently on Friday, November 18, at 9:30 a.m. in the Edmunds Conference Center at NMCC for nursing students and their well elders in central and northern Aroostook County, and at the Houlton Higher Education Center for nursing students and their well elders in southern Aroostook.

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