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# News Release

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## NMCC Foundation marks banner year

**Aroostook County** - More and more students attending Northern Maine Community College each year are benefitting from the generosity of private gifts and contributions to the school's Foundation.

At the end of a year in which the NMCC Foundation received the largest private gift ever given to a community college in Maine, and the top donation ever made to a higher education institution in Aroostook County, volunteer community leaders with the non-profit organization are assessing the impact of philanthropy on the institution in recent years. The figures are impressive and show that private giving and support of students and learning initiatives at NMCC through the Foundation have reached an all-time high.

Specifically, distribution of scholarship funds managed by the organization to NMCC students grew by 12 percent this year over last, and by an impressive 73 percent in just the past five years. The increase can be attributed to the support of donors through funds raised as the result of a major gifts campaign initiated by the College five years ago and consistent increases in annual giving to the school in the time since.

Annual contributions to NMCC are up 25 percent over the past two years. This figure excludes the \$1.2 million gift made to the Foundation last January by Mary Smith, a California resident and Presque Isle native, who donated the record gift to support NMCC's work in developing curriculum and facilities and purchasing equipment in the area of alternative energy.

"This has been an historic year for both the Foundation and the College," said Brian Hamel, outgoing chair of the NMCC Foundation Board of Directors at the recent annual meeting of the organization attended by more than 100 supporters of the College. "Our work and the collective support of our donors have never been more crucial to ensure students have access to higher education. Together we have done much, and much remains to do. But, we can be certain that our efforts are making a significant and positive impact on The County's College."

Hamel's remarks were reinforced by a half dozen students, each NMCC Foundation scholarship recipients, who addressed those gathered at the annual dinner and explained the impact the assistance received by the organization is having on their efforts to obtain a college degree.

“If not for the generosity of those who give to the Foundation, people like me wouldn’t be able to afford the cost of living while going to school. There is no way my wife and I could have afforded for me to get my education,” said Jonathan Post, a senior in the nursing program. “Having the support of the Foundation also gives added encouragement to succeed. That support is a beacon of light showing prospective students that there is support in reaching their dreams.”

Particularly touching was Nicole Thompson’s story. A senior in the electrical construction and maintenance program, she has been a student off and on at the College since 2007, working toward her goal of earning her degree. Despite many struggles along the way, including changing her major, moving three times, getting married and giving birth to a baby with special needs, she has not given up on that goal, which is now in sight. She credited the support of faculty and staff at the College for helping her, particularly those in the Academic Success Center and counseling office. The scholarship money she received from the Foundation has been invaluable in providing childcare for her children. “If it wasn’t for the resources from the Foundation and from the College, I wouldn’t be here today; I wouldn’t be graduating in May,” she told those gathered.

Awards were also presented at the NMCC Foundation annual dinner to honor donors and volunteers. The 2011 Outstanding Benefactor Award was presented to Mrs. Mary Smith for her significant contributions to support alternative energy education efforts at NMCC. The award was accepted on Smith’s behalf by her sister Sarah Akeley and cousin Roger Akeley.

The Foundation’s Eagle Award was presented to the Foundation’s two staff members. Shannon Cook, NMCC Foundation and institutional advancement officer, and Jason Parent, executive director of the Foundation and NMCC director of development and college relations, were both presented with Eagle Awards.

Cook has been instrumental in helping the Foundation and NMCC Alumni and Friends Organization move forward since she assumed the position in 2009. She and Parent, along with fellow development office team member Karen Gonya, were credited with helping build strong donor relations in recent years. The prestigious service award is presented to an individual who consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty.

Donors of three newly endowed scholarship funds were also presented with awards in appreciation for their gifts: Tom and Betty Conant of Fort Fairfield; Bruce and Connie Sandstrom of Presque Isle; and Gregg Collins on behalf of the S.W. Collins Company in Caribou, Presque Isle and Houlton. The Sunshine Health Scholarship Fund, established anonymously, was also recognized as being newly endowed.

During the business meeting, Michael Young of MMG Insurance was elected as a new member to the board. Also introduced were newly appointed NMCC student representatives Jonathan Post and Gene Martin, as well as NMCC Alumni and Friends Organization representatives that are joining the Foundation board, Michael Thibodeau and Janet Kelle.

Re-elected to the board were: Scott Carlin, owner of Star City, Hillside, and Mars Hill IGAs; Lois Dickson, owner of Tempo Employment Services; Richard Engels, attorney with Bemis & Rossignol; Chris Fitzpatrick, senior regional vice president at Machias Savings Bank in Houlton; Raynold Gauvin, retired; Philip Grondin, Sr., retired; Brian Hamel, managing partner of Thompson-Hamel, LLC; and Emily Smith, partner at Smith's Farm, Inc.

The NMCC Foundation board also elected a new slate of officers. Outgoing chair Brian Hamel passed the gavel on to Vicki Smith, senior vice president of marketing at Katahdin Trust Company in Houlton. Bruce Sandstrom, senior vice president of finance at The Aroostook Medical Center, was elected vice chair; Larry LaPlante, finance director at NMCC, was re-elected treasurer; and Betty Kent-Conant, retired NMCC nursing instructor, was elected secretary. Others elected to serve on the executive committee include Hamel, who will serve as immediate past board chair, as well as Gregg Collins, vice president of S.W. Collins Company, and Michael Kelley, Sr., regional vice president of TD Bank in Presque Isle, who were named directors-at-large.

In addition to those already noted, the complete NMCC Foundation Board is comprised of: Pamela Buck, computer-aided drafting instructor at NMCC; Gary Cleaves, retired; NMCC President Timothy Crowley; Carl Flora, president and CEO at the Loring Development Authority; Sandra Gauvin, retired; Janet Grieco, English instructor at NMCC; Virginia Joles, director of communications and economic development at Maine Public Service; Melony Hunt-LeShane of Portland; Richard Nadeau, president and owner of A&L Construction; Connie Sandstrom, executive director of the Aroostook County Action Program; Jane Towle, co-owner/broker at REMAX Central; Terry Wade, plant manager at Smith and Wesson; and Robert White, retired.

The NMCC Foundation exists to support the College by raising and managing student scholarship funds and other special initiatives that assist students in reaching their goals of attaining a post-secondary degree at the County College.

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*The NMCC Foundation presented the 2011 Outstanding Benefactor Recognition Award to Mary Smith, who donated \$1.2 million this past year to support alternative energy efforts at NMCC, at their annual dinner. The award was accepted on her behalf by (from left) her cousin Roger Akeley and her sister Sarah Akeley. Presenting the award were NMCC Foundation Board members Brian Hamel, outgoing chair; Vicki Smith, incoming chair; Richard Engels, immediate past chair; and Timothy Crowley, NMCC president.*



*The Northern Maine Community College Foundation presented the 2011 Eagle Award to Foundation staff members Jason Parent and Shannon Cook, in recognition for all they have done over the past few years for the Foundation, particularly in the area of donor relations and the new alumni organization. Presenting the award are Brian Hamel (left), outgoing chair of the Foundation board, and NMCC President Timothy Crowley.*