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# News Release

Contact:  
**Jason Parent**  
Development and  
College Relations Office  
33 Edgemont Drive  
Presque Isle, ME 04769  
Phone: (207) 768-2808  
Fax: (207) 760-1101  
jparent@nmcc.edu

## NMCC focuses on campus community wellness and fitness with new initiatives

**Aroostook County** - Concern for the overall health and wellbeing of its student body, and in turn the future workforce of the region, Northern Maine Community College has launched a number of new initiatives focusing on wellness and fitness.

Two years ago, out of a concern for the safety of students enrolling in the College's wind power technology program, NMCC, in partnership with County Physical Therapy, developed a new assessment to make certain students are physically able to fully participate in the hands-on work involved in the curriculum of the program and of their future profession. In a somewhat related effort, school officials are taking steps to promote healthy living and a healthier workforce for County employers as well as those employed by the College itself.

"We take great pride in our efforts to prepare a well-trained and well-educated workforce for employers throughout our region and state. Additionally, as a campus community, we are known for our efforts to work with our students to ensure their overall wellbeing and success," said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. "Our efforts to provide information and programs for our students and employees to take advantage of to improve their health are consistent with these goals."

Among the new initiatives is a program led by students and faculty in the medical assisting program, whereby students and employees can have a free, comprehensive health risk assessment conducted. Every other Monday, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., medical assisting students open their lab on the second floor of the Edmunds Building to meet one-on-one with members of the campus community.

Each assessment begins with participants taking an electronic risk assessment questionnaire that can be done by the person confidentially or with a medical assisting student reading the questions and completing the survey. Once complete, a score is generated and printed and the medical assisting students, based on the results, educate the participant on the "at risk" areas and further provide them with possible resources that can be helpful to addressing such issues as blood pressure, body mass index, nutrition, smoking, physical activity, preventative health measures, ways to manage stress, drugs and alcohol and others. Plans are to expand the free health risk assessment program in the coming spring semester to make it open to local community members as well.

“We are trying to both build the skills of our medical assisting students and benefit the campus community at the same time,” said Penny Mints, medical assisting instructor. “Depending on how an individual ranks in certain risk areas, our students will be provided the opportunity to educate them on how to begin to address those particular concerns and what resources might be available to further guide them.”

One of those resources may very well be a new NMCC website created by Lori Googins, ergonomics and occupational wellness instructor, along with Robert Smith in the information technology office. The site on the College portal provides information on various areas of wellbeing campus community members can access including physical, emotional, spiritual, social, psychological, intellectual, occupational, and environmental.

The goal of the site is to bring together in one place health resources that individuals can access that they would otherwise have to search for individually. It includes national and state resources, as well as offerings on campus that students and employees can take advantage of to help with their wellness efforts.

“We are trying to foster a climate on campus for wellness and needed a place where we could pull everything together. Our goal is to add anything relating to health and wellness to this site,” said Googins.

One of the most popular features on the new site is “Campus Dish,” which provides a listing of foods served in the dining commons with comprehensive nutritional and caloric information on each menu item. The site is among the many new initiatives undertaken in recent months by NMCC’s campus dining and catering firm, Aramark, to encourage healthier eating.

Aside from having the nutritional information available on-line, students and others eating at the Reed Dining Commons can see the same information on a large bulletin board just as they enter the main dining area. Information is also visible in the serving areas where students get their food. Signs detailing the nutritional difference between red versus cream pasta sauce, ice cream versus fruit, and soda versus water are prominently placed where students make the decision of which food items to select.

To make those decisions easier, Aramark has added several new features at each mealtime, including a vegetarian or vegan entrée and zero calorie hydration station.

“It’s about providing options so that people can make healthier choices,” said Rob Ottaviano, Aramark dining services manager at NMCC. “We have made significant changes both in the dining commons and in the campus bookstore where students and employees can now select from a wider array of healthy quick meals and snacks.”

Shelf space in the bookstore once dominated by potato chips and candy bars, which can still be found - just in smaller quantity, now includes healthier options and cooler space now includes cheese, yogurt, fruit cups, vegetables, healthy sandwiches and other such options. Gluten free snack options are also available.

Campus dining has not only gone healthy, but green as well. In recent weeks, the dining experience at the College has been one that stresses sustainability and student involvement. Recently, a group of resident students visited a local Smith's Farm broccoli field and picked produce that was later served to fellow students in the dining commons.

The dining hall also now has a large scale positioned where students dump their waste to visually demonstrate how much garbage is being produced and to encourage students to consider taking just what they intend on consuming. Additionally, the waste is separated into non-organic and organic, with the latter donated to a local farm to feed swine.

Moving forward, a campus committee is currently looking at how to best transform NMCC's fitness center to modernize the space and equipment so that more students take advantage of exercise opportunities. Another group is working on producing a new logo that once designed will be made into stickers that will be placed on healthy food options in the campus bookstore to better help students and employees make healthy choices.

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*Northern Maine Community College student Katelin Collins (right) of St Agatha provides data to determine her body mass index to Coleen Rand (left) of Presque Isle, a medical assisting student. Entering data in the computer in the background are NMCC medical assisting students Owen Thibeault of Mapleton and Colleen Frost of Oakfield. The medical assisting students at NMCC are providing free risk assessments and wellness education to college students and employees every other Monday as part of a concentrated effort on campus to improve overall wellness.*