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Totally Trades conference planned to engage girls in trade and technical professions

Aroostook County – A hands-on, day-long event designed to encourage girls to consider careers in fields traditionally dominated by men will bring together 100 participants from schools throughout Aroostook County on Wednesday, April 25, on the Northern Maine Community College campus.

The Totally Trades conference will feature sessions ranging from carpentry and bridge building to heavy equipment operation and welding, all providing an opportunity for the girls to experience some aspect of the profession through a practical exercise.

“We want to give girls a hands-on workshop experience to spark their interest and raise awareness about some potentially high opportunity and high wage career fields that they may not have previously considered, as well as provide female role models – women who can lead by example, having already succeeded in pursuing work that traditionally is viewed as ‘man’s work’,” said Suzanne Senechal-Jandreau, conference planner and regional manager of the Central Aroostook office of Women, Work and Community, a statewide organization committed to improving the economic lives of Maine women and their families.

The conference is a free, one-day event for Aroostook County girls in grades 8 through 12. Funding for the activity is made possible through monies and in-kind services provided by the Maine DOT/Federal Highway Administration, Maine Department of Education, Time Warner Cable of Maine and Women Unlimited. Local monetary sponsors include; Northern Maine Development Commission, Sarah LeClaire (Attorney), K-PEL Industrial Services, McCain Foods USA, Soderberg Construction, S.W. Collins, Dr. Donald Cassidy, and Solman & Hunter, P.A. with in-kind support from Rathbun Lumber.

The conference is generously supported by the NMCC campus community, which serves as a host site for the event, and is a featured activity during the College’s recognition of April as National Community College Month.

“We are so pleased to join with Women, Work & Community to make this important event possible. Technical skills and programs have always been the core of the College, beginning back in our original days as a vocational technical institute to now, fifty years later, as a comprehensive community college. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase to students and members of the community what educational and career options are available to them,” said Karen Gonya, NMCC associate director of development and college relations.

Conference registration will begin at 9:00 a.m. in the Edmunds conference center. Following an official welcome, participants will break into the first of three sessions focusing on a specific career. A large group activity facilitated by Women Unlimited will wrap up the day.

Individuals seeking more information on the Totally Trades conference can go to www.totallytradesmaine.org or contact Suzanne Senechal-Jandreau at 764-0050.

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Editor’s Note: Members of the media interested in covering the conference are encouraged to come to the Edmunds Conference Center at 11:00 a.m. when conference organizers and participants will be available for interviews. Photography/videography opportunities will be provided immediately following the interviews in the second career workshop clusters.