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News Release

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County “well elders” honored guests at NMCC event

Aroostook County - Aroostook County senior citizens who volunteered in a nursing program initiative at Northern Maine Community College were the honored guests at a celebration recently on the NMCC campus.

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. The culmination of the project has involved bringing all of the students and well elders together for a celebratory appreciation tea.

At the event, students introduced their well elder and presented them with a gift in appreciation for assisting them in their studies. The attendees also heard about current issues relating to healthy living and Medicare from keynote speaker Steve Farnham, executive director of the Aroostook Area Agency on Aging.

“Nursing care of older adults is an important part of our program,” explained Mary Cornelio, NMCC nursing instructor and coordinator of first-year nursing students. “Our students care for older adults in hospitals, nursing homes, and home care. We created the well-elder program to provide a balanced view of aging. When a student experiences a well elder, it’s a revelation.”

When visiting their well elders, NMCC student nurses take vital signs, review medications, and assess home safety and general health lifestyles. Students also gain valuable experience practicing their interview and listening skills. A total of 49 students enrolled in the first year nursing class were engaged in this year’s well-elder program, working with 49 senior citizens primarily from Aroostook County.

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Northern Maine Community College nursing students from central Aroostook and the “well elders” they visited this fall from the greater Presque Isle area gathered for the annual Well Elder Tea at NMCC in Presque Isle. Well Elders participating in the program were (seated, from left): Laurence Park of Presque Isle, Linda Boyd of Mars Hill, Joyce Clockedile of Mars Hill, Betty Mahan of Blaine, David Griffiths of Presque Isle, Merilda Bernard of Presque Isle, Cora Ward-Curtis of Fort Fairfield, and Jacquelyn Holst of Presque Isle. Standing behind the well elder they worked with are NMCC students (from left): Joseph Mortland of Presque Isle, Melissa McCrum of Mars Hill, Cindy Collins of Blaine, Marie Sanderson of Blaine, Jamie McCleary of Presque Isle, Jessica Bennett of Easton, Dahna Hickox of Caribou, and Ashley Rakes of Fort Fairfield.



“Well elders” from the St. John Valley taking part in the reception at NMCC were, seated from left: Simone Dubay and Rachel Berube, both of Van Buren. The NMCC nursing students who worked with them were, from left: Amanda Berube of Van Buren and Angela Lopes of Caribou.



Among the “Well elders” from the southern Aroostook area taking part in the reception at NMCC were, seated from left: Winifred Boutilier of Houlton and Irene Harrington of New Limerick. The NMCC nursing students who worked with them were, from left: Elizabeth Stratton of Hodgdon and Christina Muller of Houlton.