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# News Release

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## *NMCC Celebrates Groundbreaking of Wellness and Student Centers*

**Aroostook County** - Students, staff, College officials and guests gathered at Northern Maine Community College today to celebrate the ceremonial groundbreaking of the Rodney Smith Wellness and Akeley Student Centers.

Mary Smith, originally from Presque Isle now residing in California, offered a gift of \$5 million to the NMCC Foundation last year—the largest single gift ever made in the history of the Maine Community College System. Mrs. Smith had earlier funded alternative energy efforts at NMCC and expressed an interest in helping the College expand services.

“I knew that President Crowley and his staff were concerned about the health and fitness of the students,” explained Mrs. Smith in a letter read during today’s event. “I am so thrilled about what is happening at NMCC. There is such a great work ethic and energy level here. I consider myself very fortunate to be involved in helping the school to grow.”

Another \$1 million is being raised through area businesses and organizations to complete the \$6 million project. The Rodney Smith Wellness Center will be housed in a 10,000 square-foot addition to the A.K. Christie Complex in front of the gymnasium. The Center will feature an area for weightlifting and cardio equipment, a room for group exercises, a classroom to teach wellness and ergonomics, locker rooms and office space. The construction will result in the relocation of the main driveway entrance and the entrance of the centers will become the new main entryway to the Christie Complex.

President Timothy Crowley explained the significance of the project:

“Our students and the community will have an opportunity to intersect wellness activities that encompass exercise and nutrition, as well as personal and professional growth. We are very excited about the opportunity this facility will provide for our community.”

“The NMCC Foundation is so inspired by this important and worthy addition to the College that we are pleased to raise and contribute \$300,000 to the project,” said Vicki Smith, Chair of the NMCC Foundation. “The future of our students will depend on the breath and precision of their training as well as their physical ability to provide service in the workforce for years to come.”

The Akeley Student Center is being built in a renovated area of the John L. Martin and A.K. Christie Buildings. It will include the health center, the college store, an office for student organizations and casual seating areas will be located throughout the center. A walking path, marked by health and wellness information points, a light well and artifacts from the Presque Isle Air Base will be highlighted throughout the complex.

“Mrs. Smith and all the businesses and organizations that have contributed to this amazing advancement have confidence in the future of this College,” remarked Kris Doody, Chair of the Maine Community College System Board of Trustees. “We believe in the programs, the high level of instruction and the students who will graduate and give back to the community.”

Other major contributors to the project are: The Foundation for Maine’s Community Colleges, MMG Insurance, The Aroostook Medical Center, Katahdin Trust Company, York’s of Houlton/Toyota, Key Bank, TD Bank, S.W. Collins Co., Cary Medical Center, Houlton Regional Hospital, and Maine Community Foundation.

The new wellness center is scheduled to be operational during the spring 2014 semester.

[*Background:* The Wellness Center is named for Mary Smith’s husband Rodney, who was an underprivileged youth from England. He became a philanthropist, achieving great success in the Silicon Valley as a businessman and pioneer in the semi-conductor industry.

The Student Center is named for Mrs. Smith’s parents, Robert V. and Hope Greenlaw Akeley, who cared deeply about reading and education, and exemplified the best of our region’s respected work ethic throughout their careers.]

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*Taking part in the ceremonial groundbreaking for Northern Maine Community College’s new Rodney Smith Wellness and Akeley Student Centers were, from left: Timothy Crowley, NMCC president; Vicki Smith, chair, NMCC Foundation board of directors; Gerald Chasses, Leadership Council member of the Foundation for Maine’s Community Colleges; and Kris Doody, chair of the Maine Community College System Board of Trustees.*



*Northern Maine Community College President Timothy Crowley (front left) stands with representatives of several businesses who donated to the Rodney Smith Wellness and Akeley Student Centers project during a ceremonial groundbreaking on May 14 at the College. With him are, front from left: Vicki Smith, NMCC Foundation and Katahdin Trust Company; Gerald Chasse, Foundation for Maine's Community Colleges; Kris Doody, Cary Medical Center. Back, from left: Michael Thibodeau, MMG Insurance; Gregg Collins, SW Collins Co.; Matt McHatten, MMG Insurance; and Michael Kelley, TD Bank. Other major contributors not pictured are: The Aroostook Medical Center, Houlton Regional Hospital, KeyBank, York's of Houlton/Toyota, and the Maine Community Foundation.*