

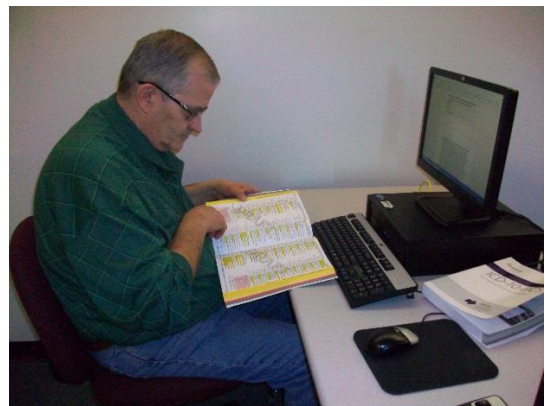
## NORTHERN MAINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE RECOGNIZES STUDENTS IN NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS

When Elmer Whittaker came to NMCC last year to help his stepson apply for college, he wasn't planning on completing an application for himself. An NMCC alumni from Presque Isle, Elmer had already earned an Associate in Applied Science degree in Automotive Technology 15 years ago. However, after speaking with staff and learning about the Health Information Technology (HIT) program offered at NMCC, Elmer decided to return to college.

Before choosing a program, Elmer had to carefully review all of his options, taking his age and health into consideration and choosing a career that he would be physically able to do. "I chose HIT because it is not as physically demanding on the body as other professions are."

Throughout the years, Elmer has had a variety of jobs in retail, construction, and farming. "Because I have had different jobs throughout

my life, I want to find a job that I can do and stay with it. I feel that I can work in the HIT field longer than in other fields." Elmer's interest in the medical field was heavily influenced by his family, as several of his family members work in healthcare. Unfortunately, Elmer and his family have endured physical ailments in recent years, which also increased his desire to pursue a career in healthcare.



*Photo: Elmer reviewing his coding manual.*

When Elmer first entered HIT, he didn't know what to expect. "I wondered how I would react to being around younger, female students. I

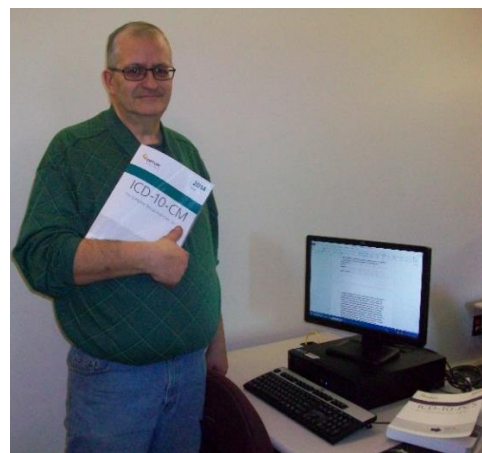
wondered if they would accept me. I have found that I can be myself and still be a part of the class.” Although it took some time to become comfortable in class, Elmer has realized that age and gender do not matter. “HIT is open to all ages. Age and gender have nothing to do with it.” Elmer states that he is “just another student” and is treated well by both instructors and peers. “If you respect the people you work with, then you can expect that in return.”

Elmer describes HIT as being a challenging program. “Being an older student and being removed from school for so long, I have to put extra work into it.” Elmer has been able to apply what he is learning in his classes to his personal life, whether it’s participating in conversations with his family about health-related topics or while caring for his ill sister.

When Elmer graduates in May of 2015, he may pursue medical coding with the option of working from home. He may also work in a hospital like his wife, who is a registered nurse.

“There are many jobs within HIT that you can do. You don’t have to work in a hospital setting. It’s a very broad field with many opportunities.”

Elmer shares his secrets for success. “You need to have a basic routine, develop a schedule, and do your assignments regularly.” Elmer also offers advice for males considering a career in HIT. “Don’t let your gender be the deciding factor for doing the program. It doesn’t matter.”



For more information about non-traditional programs available at NMCC, please contact Lori Smith, Student Support Career Specialist at 768-2793 or [lsmith@nmcc.edu](mailto:lsmith@nmcc.edu)



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