

NORTHERN MAINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE RECOGNIZES STUDENTS IN NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS

Meet Heather Copeland, a senior in the business administration program at NMCC. Heather grew up on a small Christmas tree farm in Mapleton, where she quickly developed a strong work ethic and became a young entrepreneur. From the time she was ten years old, she worked on the farm trimming trees, making wreaths, managing employees, conducting sleigh rides, and assisting customers. With an interest to someday own the family business, Heather decided to attend college to receive formal training in business administration.

However, Heather's plans changed when her family decided to close the tree farm last December. As Heather considered what to do next, she was offered a wonderful opportunity that would allow her to advance with her current employer. Heather was promoted to manager at the Easton One Stop where she has been working for the past year and a half. She has been co-managing the business since last December and is looking forward to her new role. Among her many duties, Heather will be responsible for operating and maintaining the convenience store, deli, and gas station. Heather is motivated to grow the business. "I want to make it a more successful business than it already is." Heather feels honored to be offered this position at such a young age and after being employed at the store for a short period of time. She feels her customer-service experience and education helped her land the job.

In addition to earning an associate of applied science degree in business administration in May, Heather plans on returning to NMCC in the fall to complete an associate of applied science degree in accounting. Heather feels that having both degrees will help her succeed at work. She is confident that the knowledge and skills she has acquired at NMCC will be applicable to her managerial responsibilities. "I am learning new things every day to apply at work." Heather enjoys her classes, especially accounting. "Nancy Cowett is a great teacher and makes accounting enjoyable."



Photo: Heather Copeland, Business Administration Student at NMCC

Heather enjoys the customer service aspect of business the most. "I like talking to the customers and making them feel welcome." She enjoys the one-on-one communication with the patrons and getting to know them. "After a while, you know what the customer wants."

Even though women in business has become more prevalent in recent years, Heather feels that some vendors and customers are taken aback when they see women in positions of authority. For example, on the family farm, Heather's mother was "the boss". According to Heather, customers assumed that her father was in charge and were surprised to learn that a woman was running the business. Her mother dealt with buyers, wrote contracts, and managed the field crew while her father had a full-time job elsewhere. Heather saw firsthand that a woman was capable of operating a business.

Heather believes that women have strengths that can benefit them in the business field. "Women are good at customer service and connecting to customers on an emotional level." Heather also states that women work well with vendors and tend to be more understanding if there are issues.

In addition to attending NMCC and working, both full-time, Heather is also a volunteer firefighter in Easton. She is currently working on her firefighter I and II certifications. Including Heather, there are currently three females and twenty-eight males that work as firefighters. For several months, Heather was the only female in the group. When she started, she made it clear to her male counterparts that she didn't want to receive special treatment because of her gender. In the four and a half years that Heather has worked there, she reports that she has been treated like "one of the guys" and that she is viewed as another firefighter, not as a female. "I work just as hard and have the same training as they do. We are equals." Her husband is also a firefighter and was the person who encouraged her to be a volunteer.



Heather chose NMCC not only because it was close to home, but also because both of her parents graduated from the college when it was Northern Maine Vocational Technical Institute (NMVTI). Her mother was also a drafting instructor at the college several years ago. Heather has fond memories of visiting her mother at NMCC when she was a child.

Also, Heather was the lucky recipient of the alumni full-tuition raffle not once, but two years in a row. Heather won 12-credit hours for two semesters in each of the two years. Friends of her family bought the raffle tickets and designated Heather as the recipient. This significantly influenced her decision to return to NMCC to earn a second degree.

Heather offers advice for females who may be considering a career in business. "You can do it. The idea that business is a man's job is not true. Anyone can have a business mind."

Heather shares her secrets to academic success. "Work hard and put effort into everything you do. If you only put half the effort in, you will only get half the result."

**Quick Facts:
General & Operations Managers**

Job Duties: Oversee activities directly related to making products or providing services, review sales and activity reports and other performance data to measure productivity and goal achievement, manage staff, prepare work schedules, and assign specific duties, interview, hire and train new employees.

Skills Needed: Active listening, critical thinking, complex problem solving, and judgment and decision making.

2013 National Average Pay: \$46.36/hour; \$96,430/year

Job Outlook: Projected to grow 12% between 2012-2022

Source: O'Net Online (2014)

NMCC Business Administration 2013 Graduate Success Rate (Employed, Cont. Education, or both): **91%**

For more information about non-traditional programs available at NMCC, please contact Lori Smith, Student Support Career Specialist at 768-2793 or nlosmith@nmcc.edu



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