



# News Release

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## **Over 100 years of combined experience involved in 30<sup>th</sup> annual Sinawik house**

**Aroostook County** - It's rare that a crew of tradesmen with its members having 18 to 28 years of experience in their craft collaborate on a single building project. However, the buyers of this year's Sinawik house, Rino and Susan Marquis, are fortunate enough to have this group of experts overseeing the construction of their new home.

Sinawik is the result of a partnership between Kiwanis and Northern Maine Community College that began in 1976. The founders of the non-profit organization wanted it to provide benefits and enrichment to both the community and the College, and it has done exactly that for three decades. In honor of this long-standing partnership, NMCC hosted a celebration on Tuesday, April 24.

According to Dan Lee, chairperson of the Sinawik board, "the Sinawik house is [an all-around] win situation. Sinawik donates scholarships to NMCC students as well as annual funds for Kiwanis programs. The home owners get a break on materials by using NMCC's purchasing power, and the labor is essentially free since it is supplied by the students. This is a quality home at a substantial discount. The College also gets real world experience for the students."

The Marquis won't have to sacrifice the quality of their home for free labor, though. Roger Crouse, the college's computer aided drafting instructor, has been involved in 28 Sinawik houses and carefully selects one student each year to act as a sort of apprentice during the design of the house. They work closely with the buyer to be sure they are satisfied. "The number one thing that I have learned over the years is that the customer is always right," smiled Crouse.

Guy Jackson, residential construction instructor at the College, feels that the project has different lessons in store each year. "Some people think that these projects are the same every year, but that's not true. Every year is different from the one before, and while some houses might be similar, no two are quite the same. It's a great, real-life learning experience."

Jackson has served as the general contractor of the project for 26 years. He oversees essentially every aspect of the process from the blueprinting stage to purchasing materials to the final touches on the house itself. While the work he puts in extends far outside his classroom hours, he considers the project a part of his teaching duties and puts in as much time as he must, including nights and weekends.

Alan St. Peter, plumbing and heating instructor, has 18 Sinawik houses under his belt. He guides his first year students on installing the plumbing fixtures in the home, while his seniors work on installing the heating system . “It’s great to be part of number 30,” said St. Peter. “I hope the program continues throughout the rest of my career here and beyond.”

The welding and metal fabrication instructor, Dennis Albert, has also been involved in 28 of 30 homes. “My students are responsible for the installation of the ductwork throughout the house in the beginning stages,” said Albert.

Brian McDougal is the chair person of the trade and technical department at NMCC. “Makes me feel old,” joked McDougal. “I’ve been here for 28 of them.” His 28 years of experience with the Sinawik project are in the electrical field. He was the electrical instructor for much of his career and continues to teach several classes in addition to his duties as department chair.

The “rookie” of the team is Chuck Kelley, who is the current electrical construction and maintenance instructor. Although he has been an instructor at the College for more than 10 years, it has only been for the past two years that he has been leading the electrical construction program and working with those students on installing the wiring in the Sinawik house. “The number one thing to me is that the students get to put something together that doesn’t get torn down when they are done,” said Kelly of his perspective of the Sinawik project. “It’s an excellent program that gives them real life troubleshooting experience.”

The six associated faculty members bring a total of 130 years of combined expertise in their given fields to the project.

Tuesday’s event featured an indoor barbeque and live music from Overdrive. Tours of the home were also given by students involved with building the home.

During a noon ceremony, five NMCC students were presented scholarship checks from the Kiwanis Club. Residential construction seniors Brandon Berube of Presque Isle and Ryan Tierney of Island Falls; electrical construction and maintenance senior Christopher Anderson of Fort Kent; plumbing and heating senior Emily Goodine of McLeod Hill, NB; and residential construction first year student John Kennedy of Castle Hill were each presented a scholarship. All students who work on the Sinawik home and have financial need are eligible for the five scholarships presented annually.

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