



News Release

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June 29, 2007
NR07063

Retired educator donates books to NMCC library's growing collection of children's literature

Aroostook County - Two months ago Northern Maine Community College celebrated the opening of a newly dedicated space in the campus library for children's literature. Among the individuals attending the ribbon cutting ceremony was Sandra Gauvin, a local retired educator who, aside from other civic and community activities, serves as the secretary of the NMCC Foundation.

For Gauvin, the event poignantly brought together two of her life's passions – encouraging and promoting a love of literature, especially amongst children, and advocacy of higher education as a pathway to lifelong success.

Inspired by the direction and dedication of the NMCC campus community and college personnel, Gauvin has stepped forward to add significantly to the library's collection of children's literature through a donation of 35 books that she purchased over her 25-year tenure as an educator in four central Aroostook schools.

“When I was teaching elementary school, I loved to go into bookstores and buy children's books. I could stay in a bookstore for hours,” said Gauvin. “I also collected many of them on trips my husband and I took, including visits to Arizona, Ireland and Alaska. Most are reflective of the cultures of the places we visited.”

Gauvin, who began her career as an educator at Fort Fairfield High School, has also taught at the middle school level in that community, as well as at the Cunningham Middle School in Presque Isle. She taught her final four years at the Mapleton Elementary School and retired in 2003.

Gauvin's passion for literature, and children's books in particular, dates back to her childhood in Houlton.

“I remember the wonderful times I had at my grandparents’ house in Houlton. In my grandfather’s office was an entire wall of children’s books – not only from our country, but from England as well. I spent many hours reading them and looking at the pictures with wonderment,” said Gauvin.

Upon retiring the educator found herself in possession of a collection of her own, one which she wanted to share with children who could, in turn, experience the same wonderment.

“I had brought my books home when I retired, but I really didn’t have any opportunity to use them again, so I thought the NMCC campus community could benefit from them. I believe strongly in the importance of children being read to often, and children being exposed to as much quality literature as possible during their formative years,” said Gauvin.

Since 2001 the NMCC library, through donations, regular book purchases and grant opportunities, has grown its collection of children’s picture books and children’s literature from non-existent to, with this latest gift, over 300 titles.

“The books we received included a number of international myths and legends which expand our coverage. As with all additions to the library, these books will be available to our students, the parents within our community, and library borrowers state wide,” said Peggy O’Kane, NMCC assistant dean of learning resources. “Through donations we are able to expand our holdings. Currently we are able to maintain our collection size. We are grateful to receive donations of this kind, which actually help us to grow it.”

The NMCC collection is unique in that O’Kane has purposely purchased selections that are either classics, such as Newberry or Caldecott prize winners, or bibliotherapy books. Bibliotherapy or issue books are designed to be used by parents or other caregivers with children who are experiencing stress. These issues include divorce, bullying, nontraditional families, death and/or disease.

“Given the unique emphasis of our collection development policy, our titles are circulated to local daycare providers who may have children in their care who are confronting these issues,” said O’Kane. “Providing an appropriate browsing space for the collection will encourage local day care providers to become even more familiar with the resources available.”

The need for children’s literature and a special section to house the material at NMCC was first identified in 2000, when the College expanded its offerings to include an associate degree program in early childhood education.

Aside from the benefit to NMCC students in the ECE program and local childcare facilities, the collection is also heavily used by parents and grandparents in the NMCC community who have young children. The student body is comprised of a significant number of non-traditional students, an estimated 26 percent of whom have children.

“I hope these children learn a love of not only literature, but of the reading and writing skills that can accompany that love. I hope they learn to enjoy books the way I did as a child, and I hope they get as much out of it as I did,” said Gauvin.

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Northern Maine Community College early childhood education students (left to right) Keilee West and Kylee Millett of Presque Isle, and NMCC assistant dean of learning resources Peggy O’Kane accept a donation of 35 children’s books from Sandra Gauvin, a retired educator from Mapleton.