



News Release

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NMCC students participate in “Operation Keep ME Warm”

Aroostook County - A contingent of 18 Northern Maine Community College students, led by their instructors and working in small groups of three, fanned out over several Aroostook County communities on October 19 to assist in “Project Keep ME Warm”, a statewide initiative to assist Maine home owners with the greatest need.

As a result of the day-long effort coordinated by NMCC faculty members Guy Jackson of the residential construction program and Charles Kelley of the electrical construction and maintenance program, more than a dozen homes in Presque Isle, Mars Hill, Blaine, Bridgewater and Monticello are more energy efficient heading into the cold winter months.

“Project Keep ME Warm”, Maine's three-year-old highly successful public-private partnership involves a four-day intensive community service project that sends volunteer teams to “winterize” homes for Maine’s low income senior and disabled homeowners. Volunteers install energy conservation and efficiency products to reduce energy use, energy bills, winter drafts, and to improve comfort.

The statewide goal this year is to winterize 3,000 homes in a two pronged effort: 1,500 during the four-day statewide service project and an additional 1,500 through local partnerships between service organizations and colleges, including NMCC.

The students and instructors participating in the project from NMCC were provided with materials and supplies, including caulking, plastic sheeting for windows and foundations, energy efficient light bulbs and other materials to install at the homes of area residents who signed up for the program and met the eligibility guidelines.

“It is nice to be able to help folks in the community,” said Karen “Woody” Simpson of Ashland, a senior in the residential construction program who traveled to work on homes in Blaine along with classmates Brandon Berube of Presque Isle and Chanel Gagnon of Cyr Plantation. “It gives us experience and allows us to take what we have learned in class and put it into practice, while at the same time contributing and helping others in need.”

In addition to benefiting the local community and providing the students a practical application of what they learn in the classroom and laboratory at NMCC, instructors in both of the participating programs see additional benefit to the students' professional development.

“The big benefit is that it gives students the opportunity to develop customer relation skills. As future professionals in residential and electrical construction, we are training them and teaching the technical skills they will need to succeed, but participation in programs such as this takes that one step further in that it will demonstrate the importance of how to relate to your client or customer – in this case the homeowners we are helping,” said Kelley.

Although students participating in the program work independently in small groups of three, Kelley and Jackson visit many of the sites to check on student progress and speak with the homeowners about their students' work.

“The feedback from the people our students help is always so positive. They don't only comment on the quality and efficiency of the work, but also praise the students on how friendly and nice to work with they are. As an instructor, I am always pleased to hear this because it will truly be a measure of how effective the students will be when they enter the workforce,” said Jackson.

“It's a good opportunity to help people,” said Chris Anderson an electrical construction student from Fort Kent. “This is a project where we really know we are making a difference.” Anderson, along with classmates Jacob Garrett of Fort Kent and Jan Perreault of New Canada worked on homes in Monticello.

Other teams of students from NMCC participating in “Project Keep ME Warm”, included Frank Hafford of Connor, Taylor Inman of Mars Hill, and Mark Yeo of Bass Harbor. The three electrical construction students worked on homes in Bridgewater.

A group comprised of Jake Chambers of Fort Fairfield, Josh Gonsioroski of Presque Isle, and Matt Harrington of Machias, and a second team of Curtis Harrison of New Limerick, Phil King of Presque Isle, and Kenneth Morrow of Fort Fairfield, worked on homes in the Presque Isle area. Chambers, Gonsioroski, Harrington and Morrow are electrical construction and maintenance students. Harrison and King are enrolled in the residential construction program students.

Winterizing homes in Mars Hill were residential construction students Aaron Boyd and Garrett Killcollins of Mars Hill and Ryan Tierney of Island Falls.

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NMCC students Curtis Harrison and Kenneth Morrow winterize the Presque Isle home of Mavis Czosnek as part NMCC's day-long participation in "Project Keep ME Warm".



Instructors and students from Northern Maine Community College who took part in the Keep ME Warm project on October 19 are, from left: residential construction instructor Guy Jackson and his students Woody Simpson, Ryan Tierney, Chanel Gagnon, Brandon Berube, Garrett Kilcollins, Phil King, Aaron Boyd and Curtis Harrison; electrical construction students Kenneth Morrow, Matt Harrington, Jake Chambers, Chris Anderson, Josh Gonsioroski, Jacob Jarrett, Jan Perreault, Frank Hafford, Taylor Inman, Mark Yeo, and their instructor Chuck Kelley.