



News Release

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NMCC partners with Healthy Families Aroostook for Smart Baby Night

Aroostook County - Students enrolled in the early childhood education program at Northern Maine Community College are taking the lessons learned in the classroom and putting them into practice through a unique partnership with the Healthy Families Aroostook program.

On Thursday, October 26, ten early childhood students and their instructor Heidi Broad-Smith joined with staff and volunteers of Healthy Families to host a Smart Baby Night in the Edmunds Conference Center at NMCC. The evening of fun and learning was designed to introduce age-appropriate games and activities for children in the age range of newborn through five years.

More than a dozen families and 28 children participated in the two-hour event, which encouraged parents and children to visit various activity stations featuring age-appropriate activities including pat mats, play dough, Zip Lock bag books, hidden object find, singing and story time.

“All of the activities were designed to reach the various domains such as gross and fine motor skills, language and social/emotional,” said Broad-Smith. “It was wonderful for NMCC students to participate. They were able to utilize current techniques that they are learning in class, allowing them the opportunity to use the information, as one of my students put it best: ‘on a real kid’.”

Specifically, NMCC students had the opportunity to see firsthand the reactions of infants and toddlers to the various planned activities, which according to Broad-Smith provided a chance to tie in the information students have researched with the rationale for “why we do what we do” with children.

Broad-Smith was initially contacted by Dora Davis, of Healthy Families Aroostook, several months ago to involve NMCC early childhood education students in the Smart Baby Night and about hosting the event on the College campus. Leading the planning and coordination of Smart Baby Night was Danielle Langley, director of the Aroostook Council for Healthy Families of Maine.

“We were delighted to join in this event and to host it here at NMCC. It is through partnerships with a number of local organizations like Healthy Families that we not only enhance the quality and depth of education and opportunity we engage our students in, but also demonstrate the importance of community involvement and life-long learning as important components of an educated and civic-minded individual,” said Broad-Smith.

The success of the collaborative venture will result in a second Smart Baby Night, currently planned for next April, to mark child abuse prevention month. Following the experience of assisting with the first event, Broad-Smith hopes to have her students assume even more responsibility in the organization and coordination of the springtime event.

“As we reflect on the experience of this event and continue our learning in the remainder of this semester and next, coordinating a second event will be a great way to enhance the students’ learning to an even greater degree,” said Broad-Smith.

Aside from the ten early childhood education students participating in the evening event, an additional six NMCC students assisted in preparing for the Smart Baby Night by creating posters and handouts for each station and assisting in various other capacities.

Participating in the evening program were Melinda Clark, Ciarra Doody and Tara Forcier of Caribou; Christy Bartlett, Grace Yu, Robin Stewart and Charity Keenan of Presque Isle; Kanessa Johndro of Limestone; Christina Merrill of Cary Plantation; and Daisy Saulis-Bear of the Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick.

Assisting in preparations for Smart Baby Night were Kylee London of Houlton, Molly Burton of Presque Isle, Deb Lagasse of Connor Township, Jennifer Smith of Ashland, Kimberly Jandreau of Fort Fairfield, Tammy Corriveau of Caribou, and Harly Barnes-Putnam of Chapman.



Students in NMCC's early childhood education program partnered with the Healthy Families Aroostook program to offer a Smart Baby Night at the College. Among those working with the 28 children who attended were, from left, students Christina Merrill and Melinda Clark, ECE instructor Heidi Broad-Smith, and student Ciarra Doody.