



News Release

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NMCC students, faculty and community members to mark national Medical Assistants Week with luncheon celebrating new program's first semester

Aroostook County - For two decades the third week of October has been designated nation-wide as Medical Assistants Week to honor and acknowledge the 350,000 medical assistants working in the field and the many of thousands of medical assisting students currently attending programs. This year, the commemoration holds special significance at Northern Maine Community College, where students and faculty involved in the institution's newest program will mark the inaugural semester with a luncheon that will include the signing of a city proclamation and the first meeting of a group of two-dozen community members who will serve as the advisory committee for the medical assisting two-year program.

Festivities will get underway on Monday, October 15 at 12:00 noon in the Edmunds Conference Center at NMCC with a luncheon that will begin with the signing of a proclamation by Presque Isle City Council Chairperson Walt Elish and City Manager Tom Stevens officially declaring the week as Medical Assistants Week in the Star City. Following the proclamation signing, 24 medical professionals from throughout Aroostook County will gather for the first NMCC Medical Assisting Advisory Committee meeting.

"We are very excited that NMCC will be having its first Medical Assisting Advisory Committee as a kick-off to Medical Assistants Week. It will provide an opportunity for all of us to meet now that the program has been approved by the Maine Community College System and as we welcome our first students this fall," said Susan Dugal, coordinator of the medical assisting program at NMCC. "I know many in the healthcare community worked very diligently to assure that a quality program was developed that would serve the needs of the medical office practices, the students, and most importantly, our community members who will be using these services. Medical Assisting is a growing field and I am proud to play a role in developing a program that will address the growing need for healthcare services in Aroostook County, as well as offering an opportunity for gainful employment in Aroostook County. It is wonderful to see the outcome of teamwork between NMCC and the community it serves."

Medical Assistants week is sponsored annually by the American Medical Technologists, who have selected “Medical Assistants: The Heartbeat of Healthcare” as the theme for this year’s celebration to emphasize the commitment of the professionals as vital members of the healthcare team.

Medical assistants perform routine administrative and clinical tasks needed to keep the medical offices and clinics of physicians, podiatrists, chiropractors, and other medical professionals running smoothly and efficiently. Others in the profession may work in outpatient surgical centers, laboratories, or hospitals.

The services provided by medical assistants include both the office administrative and clinical aspects of their place of employment. Administrative duties include keeping patient records, managing financial matters, handling insurance arrangements, processing correspondence, and overall office management.

Clinically, the medical assistant prepares and assists in patient examination, records laboratory data, assists with office surgical procedures, performs basic physical assessment and measures vital signs.

Northern Maine Community College officials were given final approval by the Maine Community College System Board of Trustees to begin offering an associate degree program in medical assisting last winter.

The development of the two-year program is in direct response to the specific request of regional healthcare practices and professionals, who are looking to fill positions throughout Aroostook County in what is identified as one of the fastest growing professions by several key organizations, including the U.S. Department of Labor.

In developing the medical assisting program, NMCC followed the guidelines and standards delineated by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs. College officials are now pursuing accreditation through CAAHEP.

As was the case with the program’s inception, a key component for the new program will be the continued collaboration with area partners in delivering the education. Several area medical practices and hospital departments have already been identified as sites for student clinical externship sites.

Students enrolled in the NMCC program will be involved in hands-on learning at a variety of sites with experienced medical assistants.

Local community leaders serving on the Medical Assisting Advisory Committee include: Sandra San Antonio and Michelle Mathieu of Northern Maine Medical Center, Shawn Anderson and Lisa Caron of Pines Health Services, Doreen Smith of Cary Medical Center, Glenda Dwyer, Cam Hayward, Brenda Baker and Paulette Bell of The Aroostook Medical Center, Susan Deschene and Linda Mountain of the Aroostook County Action Program, Julie DeMeare, Polly Joslyn, Wendy Gagnon, and Janine Stewart of Houlton Regional Hospital, Tabitha Fagin of Health Information Services, Angela Bubar of Full Circle Health Care, Mary Beaulieu, a local practice manager, Susan Bouchard of Fish River Rural Health, Devin McHatten of Northern Maine Endoscopy, Linda Mastro, health clinic manager at NMCC and the University of Maine at Presque Isle, Dr. Lawrence Crystal and Dr. Carole St. Pierre-Engels.

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