



News Release

Contact:
Jason Parent
Development and
College Relations Office
33 Edgemont Drive
Presque Isle, ME 04769
Phone: (207) 768-2808
Fax: (207) 768-2813
jparent@nmcc.edu

November 30, 2007
NR07127a

NMCC brightens and enlightens holiday season by giving away more than 1,000 books at PI Holiday Light Parade

Aroostook County - As County organizations participating in this year's Presque Isle Holiday Light Parade on December 1st collected food and gifts for the needy from parade goers, and yet others hand out candy and other treats to children lining the route, students and employees at Northern Maine Community College took a different twist on the event's spirit of giving.

Acting in the capacity of Santa's literary elves, the NMCC volunteers handed out more than 1,000 books to kids of all ages enjoying the parade. The free book distribution marks the fourth year the Presque Isle College has undertaken the unique project.

The initiative, led by instructor Colleen Harmon, evolved both as an idea to give-away something that had a connection to the nature of the College and what it offers the community, as well as providing area children with something from which they would benefit.

"Everyone should be able to read and everyone should be able to have books without worrying about it taking away from paying for fuel to heat the home or food for the table," said Harmon. "Sharing a book is like sharing an adventure, and we wanted to make certain all children had the opportunity to enjoy an adventure."

Toward that end, Harmon and volunteers worked for weeks in advance of the parade to collect donated books (new and used) from various groups and individuals.

"Books are expensive and the price is going up. Once a child or adult reads a book it often sits around on a shelf or is stored away. Our goal was to dust those books off and put them to good use in the hands of a different reader," said Harmon.

Boxes full of books filled the back of the NMCC emergency medical services training vehicle, which served as the "book mobile" for the parade. Several College students and employees handed the books out to children along the route.

The “book mobile” which led the parade was accompanied by NMCC’s parade float entry, which this year, to reflect the literary theme, focused on the popular holiday story “T’was The Night Before Christmas.” Students in NMCC’s residential construction program constructed a huge bed that featured a “mother” reading the popular story to children of College students and employees.

For Harmon, who initiated the project four years ago, the annual book give-away evokes a warm feeling on what is otherwise a chilly, and this year a down-right frigid, early December evening. The students who joined in the effort also saw the project’s benefit.

That was especially the case for Jo-Ellen Kelley of Limestone who has participated in the NMCC parade book distribution in the past and did so again this year. The NMCC and Husson College student is also the executive director of the Literacy Volunteers of Aroostook County.

“I think everyone looks forward to it now,” said Kelley. “In my work with adults throughout the County, I visit many homes of families who don’t have any books at all. There are so many children for whom this project provides them with a first book of their own. This is additionally a really good opportunity for the Literacy Volunteers of Aroostook in helping to raise awareness to the importance of literacy.”

For 2007 NMCC graduate Michael Black of Presque Isle participating in the project as a student during her years attending the College continues now that she is an alumna. Black has assisted Harmon this year in collecting and preparing the books for distribution.

“It’s nice to see the campus community come together to benefit the children of the County. We will support these children by encouraging them to develop a love of reading,” said Black. “This is a wonderful project to be a part of. I wanted to lend a hand even though I am no longer an NMCC student.”

#####



Northern Maine Community College student Shannon Smart dressed as the “mother in her kerchief” reads “Twas the Night Before Christmas” to children of fellow NMCC students on the big bed float constructed by NMCC residential construction students.



Northern Maine Community College students, faculty and staff pose for a quick photo as they unload books from the back of the NMCC book mobile at the Presque Isle Holiday Light Parade. The volunteers distributed 1,000 books to children of all ages lining the parade route.



Northern Maine Community College early childhood education instructor Heidi Broad-Smith gives one of the 1,000 books distributed by College volunteers to a child attending the Presque Isle Holiday Light Parade.