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## News Release

**April 11, 2008**  
NR08044

### County Coalition plans Totally Trades conference to engage girls in trade and technical professions

**Aroostook County** - A hands-on, day-long event designed to encourage girls to consider careers in fields traditionally dominated by men will bring together 100 participants from schools throughout Aroostook County on Wednesday, April 30, on the Northern Maine Community College campus.

Under a new name, this year's Totally Trades day, which had been called the TNT (Tools 'N Trades) conference since it was first launched in 2004, will feature sessions ranging from carpentry and metal fabrication to firefighting and bridge building, all providing an opportunity for the girls to experience some aspect of the profession through a practical exercise.

"We want to give girls a hands-on workshop experience to spark their interest and/or raise awareness about a career field that they may not have previously considered, as well as provide female role models - women who can lead by example, having already succeeded in pursuing work that traditionally is viewed as 'man's work'," said Suzanne Senechal-Jandreau, regional manager of the Central Aroostook office of Women, Work and Community, a statewide organization committed to improving the economic lives of Maine women and their families.

WWC, NMCC, the Maine Department of Transportation, Women Unlimited, the Maine Career Center, local contractors, local school representatives, and other interested community partners comprise the Aroostook Coalition for Women and Girls in Trades and Technology (ACOWITT), the sponsors of Totally Trades. ACOWITT is one of several local coalitions, united through a statewide Women in Trades and Technology (WITT) coalition, whose focus is to raise awareness of and provide support and opportunity for women and girls who pursue or are pursuing non-traditional careers in trades and technology fields.

The conference is a free, one-day event for Aroostook County girls in grades 8 through 12. Funding for the activity is made possible through monies provided by Louisiana Pacific and the Maine Department of Transportation.

Aside from participating in two workshop sessions, participants will be treated to a luncheon and fashion show featuring women currently employed in non-traditional fields. A panel discussion, featuring several women working in trade and technical occupations, will round out the day.

The conference is generously supported by the NMCC campus community, which serves as a host site for the event, and is a featured activity during the College's recognition of April as National Community College Month.

"We are so pleased to join with other members of the ACOWITT to make this important event possible. As a post-secondary education institution and a vital resource for employers in this region, we want to do everything possible to showcase to students and members of the community what educational and career options are available to them," said Jason Parent, NMCC director of development and college relations.

Conference registration will begin at 8:00 a.m. in the Edmunds conference center. Following an official welcome, participants will break into the first of two sessions focusing on a specific career. A second session will follow, providing the girls an opportunity to experience a second profession.

Individuals seeking more information on the Totally Trades conference, or interested in participating should contact Senechal-Jandreau at 764-0050.

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**Editor's Note: Members of the media interested in covering the conference are encouraged to come to the Edmunds Conference Center at 10:30 a.m. when conference organizers and participants will be available for interviews. Photography/videography opportunities will be provided immediately following the interviews in the second career workshop clusters.**