



News Release

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August 18, 2006
NR06044

NMCC receives \$14,150 from two County funds and MCF to support “Discover Aroostook” course

Aroostook County - A course developed by Northern Maine Community College, designed in part to entice more young people to migrate to and remain in the region, has garnered the support of the Maine Community Foundation, which has awarded the College nearly \$15,000 through three separate funds to support the initiative.

Discover Aroostook, a new credit bearing course available to NMCC students for the first time this fall, offers a combination of classroom learning and appropriate field experience opportunities that will introduce students to The County through many unique, hands-on learning activities.

The primary goal of the class is to introduce students to Northernmost Maine and enable them to better understand and appreciate the outdoor environment in, and culture of Aroostook County, with an ultimate goal of curbing out-migration from the region. Students will learn basic skills pertaining to fall, winter and spring activities and become acquainted with outdoor recreation areas as well as the history of the region.

Support from the Maine Community Foundation both for the course and to assist with related transportation expenses was awarded through the Gauvin Family Lighthouse Fund, the Saxifrage Fund and the Aroostook County Fund.

A lion’s share of the funding was awarded by the Lighthouse Fund, which has been established by Raynold and Sandra Gauvin, lifelong residents of Central Aroostook, to assist in community efforts to enhance the work ethic and quality of life in the region. Among the stated goals of the fund are to provide assistance for projects seeking to apply community strengths to help solve some of the region’s problems.

“This was a most fitting project for the fund to support. The Discover Aroostook course provides a unique and ideal opportunity for students attending Northern Maine Community College and a most valuable tool in the economic and community development efforts of Northern Maine,” said Raynold Gauvin. “We are pleased to support this important new initiative and the work of the College to assist in development efforts, particularly those related to reversing the out-migration trend that has plagued Aroostook County over past several decades.”

Both the Gauvins and representatives of the Maine Community Foundation and Aroostook County Fund hope their generous contributions will not only benefit students participating in the program, but will also help the College leverage additional funds from other organizations.

“The directors of the Aroostook County Fund certainly recognize the Discover Aroostook course as a most worthwhile undertaking and applaud the efforts of the faculty, staff and administration at NMCC for their efforts in creating this new offering. Having earned our support, the College can now demonstrate to other potential benefactors that the project has strong local and regional support,” said Richard Engels, chair of the Aroostook Fund board.

Work on developing curriculum for the course, which began a year ago, was led by William Egeler, NMCC dean of students and NMCC faculty member Dan Hotham. After initial planning for the course was complete, Egeler began seeking outside funding to assist with expenses, including transporting students to and from recreational and historical sites throughout Aroostook County.

“Without such funding, it would be impossible for the College to provide innovative programming of this nature aimed at addressing one of the major problems facing our area – youth out-migration. We are indeed grateful to the Maine Community Foundation - and in particular to the Gauvin Family Lighthouse, Saxifrage and Aroostook Funds, for their generosity and support. By exposing our students to the myriad of opportunities available to them here in Northern Maine, we believe they will in turn appreciate the region to a greater extent and be more likely to elect to make a living here in The County,” said Egeler.

The concept for the course was first considered following a 2004 report entitled “Migration and Youth Migration from Aroostook County”, prepared by economists Charles Colgan and Bruce Andrews, which revealed factors influencing student decisions to live in Aroostook County after graduation. The report cites that students who chose to live in Aroostook County after graduation listed a preference for the recreation and culture in The County as the most significant reasons for staying in the region behind only closeness to family and cost of living.

The Aroostook County Fund of the Maine Community Foundation is celebrating 20 years of providing grants to Aroostook County organizations who are interested in improving life in their communities.

A statewide organization with offices in Ellsworth and Portland, the Maine Community Foundation works in partnership with donors and community groups to strengthen Maine. For more information, visit the foundation’s website at www.mainecef.org or call toll-free 1-877-700-6800.

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Representatives of the Gauvin Family Lighthouse Fund and Aroostook County Fund recently presented Northern Maine Community College officials with donations to help support the newly developed "Discover Aroostook" course offered by the campus. Accepting the donations are (left to right) William Egeler, NMCC dean of students, and Timothy Crowley, NMCC president. Presenting checks are Raynold Gauvin, who along with his wife Sandy, established the Gauvin Family Lighthouse Fund, Richard Engels, chair of the Aroostook Fund, and Pam Scheppele of the Aroostook Fund.