



News Release

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NMCC's "Send 'em Off With Tools" project benefits students and community

Aroostook County - A student-led initiative with the goal of putting tools of the trade into the hands of residential construction graduating seniors at Northern Maine Community College has reached a milestone in its fourth year.

"Send 'em Off With Tools," an annual project undertaken by the second year students in instructor Guy Jackson's program at NMCC, involves a significant fundraising effort, the proceeds from which are used by Jackson and his lab assistant Nathan Gardiner to purchase tools for each of the graduates, based on a "wish list" prepared by the students themselves. Through the efforts of this year's graduating class, under the tutelage of Jackson and Gardiner, a record \$7,000 was raised, bringing the four-year total to just over \$21,000.

"It's a golden opportunity," said Jackson. "It teaches the students that if you put in a little extra effort there is a reward. It also helps the students learn time management skills and how to work with the public. The best part of it all is the sense of anticipation that is built at the end of the project when we present the tools. The students each wonder what they are getting."

According to Jackson, tool give-away day is much like Christmas morning for the graduating seniors. Typically held the week before commencement, the faculty and students involved hold a barbecue followed by the "big unveil".

This year, Jackson and Gardiner presented tools retail valued at more than \$8,000 to nine graduating seniors. The students had spent the past several months raising the funds used to purchase the table saws, power tools and numerous other items purchased.

"It was well worth it," said student Brandon Smith of Mars Hill. "We all needed everything we asked for and even got some smaller things we didn't ask for but that Guy and Nathan heard us talking about and added to our list. This will be very helpful as we start our careers."

To raise money to purchase the tools, students put in to practice what they learned in the classroom. More than two dozen handcrafted items that ranged from an ornate garden swing to a paper towel holder were created by the students outside of class time and sold to the highest bidder in a silent auction held on the NMCC campus in early May.

In addition, the students constructed two storage sheds and a deacon's bench. One of the sheds was purchased by a community member. The students sold tickets on the second shed and bench both on campus and in the community, including at the annual Presque Isle Kiwanis Home and Garden Show held in April.

With both their recently earned degrees and new tools in hand, the students are prepared to enter the workforce.

"I love them already," said Nickolas Gagnon of Van Buren about his new tools. "With all that I've learned over the past two years and now with these tools, I am ready to go. I've already got a job lined up where I can use them."

Aside from benefiting the students, the "Send 'em Off With Tools" project has a positive economic impact in the local community. Jackson and Gardiner purchase all of the tools from local businesses including Advantage Gases and Tools and the S.W. Collins Company.

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Northern Maine Community College residential construction students pose with their new tools at the culmination of this year's "Send 'em Off With Tools" project. Receiving tools were (left to right) Taylor Lovely of Presque Isle, Jim DuVal of Caribou, Nickolas Gagnon of Van Buren, Dan Ford of Hope, David Riopelle of Mars Hill, Niklas Roble of New Sweden, John Kennedy of Castle Hill, Adam Bloom of Castle Hill, and Brandon Smith of Mapleton.



Northern Maine Community College residential construction senior Jim DuVal (right) sells a raffle ticket on the storage shed (shown here) at the Presque Isle Kiwanis Home and Garden in April. The raffle ticket sales were part of this year's "Send 'em Off With Tools" project.