



# 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

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## **Annual Aroostook County Relay for Life is the most successful one to date**

**Aroostook County** - This year's annual Relay for Life for Aroostook County was held at Northern Maine Community College on June 6 - 7. Sixteen area teams took part to help raise funds for the American Cancer Society. This marked the most successful year in the history of the Aroostook County event, with more than \$27,000

Relay for Life is a fun-filled overnight event designed to bring together those who have been touched by cancer in our community. The event celebrates survivorship and raises money to help the American Cancer Society in its mission to save lives, help those who have been touched by cancer, and empower individuals to fight back.

This marked the thirteenth year that a Relay for Life was held in Aroostook County, and the second year that the event was hosted at NMCC. The Relay was previously hosted first at the Aroostook Center Mall and then at the University of Maine at Presque Isle for several years before the change to the NMCC venue.

"This was such an exciting year," said Becky Maynard, chair of the local Relay for Life planning committee. "We had the largest turnout of community members to date during the public portion of the evening, cheering us on during the survivor/caregiver lap and the parade of teams, and helping us to recognize those being honored and remembered during the luminary Ceremony of Hope. We also had the largest number of teams making the commitment to stay the entire night, with a record number of walkers on the track even in the early morning hours. Most importantly, we raised a record amount from our event for the American Cancer Society."

According to Maynard, last year's event had been the most successful one to date, raising more than \$18,000 and recognizing more than 600 people who were either cancer survivors or who had lost the battle. This year's event has raised more than \$27,000 to date and honored or remembered more than 1,200 people during the luminary ceremony.

“This year was totally amazing in way of community support,” said Mike Hart, community executive for development for the American Cancer Society’s New England Division. “We had more teams, more luminaria and more survivors than ever! The stories people were telling us were truly moving. It’s about being a community that takes up the fight...and the people of Aroostook County have definitely taken up the fight!”

According to Hart, the money raised by participants locally at this event goes directly to the American Cancer Society’s lifesaving programs which happen right here in Aroostook County as well as throughout Maine.

Several local businesses and organizations took on the cause this year and had teams of walkers for the event. Northern Maine Community College and The Aroostook Medical Center both had two teams taking part. In addition to an overall team from each organization, the Student Nurses Association at NMCC and the Oncology Unit at TAMC also had teams. Other businesses and organizations participating included: ACAP, Ashland School Department, the Caribou and Presque Isle Inn & Convention Centers, Cary Medical Center, Fort Fairfield High School, Maine State Employees Association, Maurice’s, McCain Foods, MicMac Health Department, Teague Park, University of Maine at Presque Isle, and WAGM-TV.

Several area businesses were also key to the success of this year’s Relay for Life as sponsors. Northern Maine Community College provided invaluable support for the event, opening its facilities at no charge, coordinating all of the logistics involved in hosting such an event, and providing a wide level of staff support, both in planning for the event, the set-up and clean-up, and during the event itself. Also providing tremendous support to the Relay was The Aroostook Medical Center. Not only did they once again sponsor the barbecue, providing all of the food and personnel to make it happen, but they also provided food and support for various other activities occurring during the Relay as well as staff support in organizing and running the event.

Katahdin Trust Company provided assistance in promoting the event, providing an advertisement that ran on the local radio stations encouraging people to come to the event and support the cause.

In addition to the in-kind support provided by NMCC, TAMC and numerous other local businesses, the following companies and organizations were financial sponsors of the Aroostook County event at the \$1,000 level: Time Warner, Maine Tobacco Quit Line, and the Presque Isle and Caribou Inn & Convention Centers. Sponsors at the \$500 level were: FairPoint Communications, McCain Foods, North Country Auto, and the University of Maine at Presque Isle.

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*Northern Maine Community College's team prepares to take to the track for the Parade of Teams, marking the official beginning of the Relay for Life on June 6. The College hosted this year's event, which was the most successful one in the thirteen year history of the Relay for Life in Aroostook County.*



*Prior to the start of this year's annual Relay for Life, there was a special lap dedicated to cancer survivors and caregivers. Among those leading this year's lap were Kevin Simmons (holding banner on right), owner of the Caribou and the Presque Isle Inn & Convention Centers, and his mother, Jean (beside him). Simmons has been fighting cancer for the past three years, and the Relay for Life marked the first time he has been back to the County since November, 2006.*



*A Survivors Reception was held during the evening to honor both cancer survivors as well as those who have worked so hard caring for loved ones in the battle against cancer.*



*The Aroostook Medical Center once again hosted a barbecue for Relay for Life participants and their families. From left, Bruce Sandstrom and Steve Poitras from TAMC were on hand to cook for the June 6 event. Poitras also returned the next morning to cook pancakes for Relay participants.*



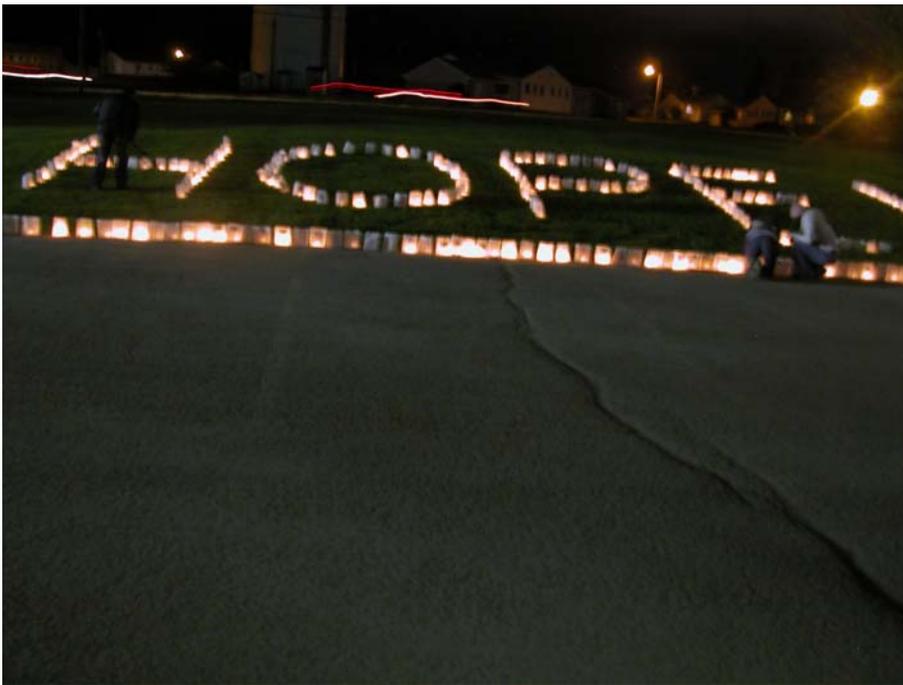
*As part of the efforts to make the Relay for Life an event for the entire family, a series of children's activities took place during the evening. These events were coordinated by Heidi Broad-Smith, NMCC's early childhood education instructor. Above, volunteers help children decorate cookies. Other activities included making sock puppets and kites, decorating t-shirts, and more.*



*Aroostook Idol 2007 Erin Buck entertained the audience with her live performance during the Relay for Life at NMCC. Also performing was Aroostook Idol 2006 winner Annie Charles.*



*Members of the Presque Isle Fire Department were on hand to light the more than 1,200 luminaries that lit up the track during the night, each bag honoring a Cancer survivor or remembering a loved one who has lost the battle to Cancer. A large number of volunteers, including a local Girl Scout troop, helped to fill the bags with sand and a tea light candle and line them up around the track.*



*In addition to lining the track during the Relay for Life, luminaries lit up the word "HOPE" on the lawn adjacent to the track. During the Ceremony of Hope, the names of all of those being honored and remembered through the luminaries were read aloud.*