



## *Press Release*

**September 29, 2008**

*NR08090*

### **New mural featuring Star City educational institutions unveiled in downtown Presque Isle**

*Presque Isle* - A first-of-its-kind project to be undertaken through Presque Isle's initiative to breathe new life and a new look to the downtown was unveiled at a celebration held in the center of the city today.

Leaders of Presque Isle's Downtown Revitalization effort joined with city officials and representatives of the area's three educational institutions to unveil a new mural. The 104 foot pictorial large print adorns a concrete support wall on Main Street next to the Key Bank building between State and Hall streets.

A collaborative effort between Maine School Administrative District 1 and Presque Isle's two institutions of higher education, Northern Maine Community College and the University of Maine at Presque Isle, the mural features vibrant color photos and design elements representing each institution.

"The major theme is to highlight the excellent educational opportunities in our community," said City Manager Tom Stevens. "We're fortunate to have these entities in Presque Isle. We're unique in that fact that we have two institutions of higher education in the same community. We hope that this mural will be the catalyst for future murals in not only Presque Isle, but throughout Aroostook County. A mural adds charm to a community."

The inaugural mural in the Star City was unveiled in style with a ceremony featuring the Presque Isle Middle School Jazz Band and comments by representatives of the organizations who worked on the project. Following the entertainment and greetings, students from UMPI, NMCC and SAD 1 removed the covering to reveal the artwork.

“This undertaking, and the mural that has come as a result of a collaborative effort between the educational institutions and the city, illustrates the wide array of high quality educational opportunities available to the people of Presque Isle and northern Maine. The mural also serves as a very visible example of the education continuum we offer locally,” said NMCC President Tim Crowley. “We see many students who graduate from Presque Isle High School, move on to NMCC to earn an associate degree, and continue to UMPI to complete their baccalaureate degree. All three organizations play a vitally important role in educating the future workforce and leaders of our region.”

“We are pleased to be able to join together with SAD 1 and NMCC on this project to bring more energy and color to our downtown, and we feel especially honored that the City of Presque Isle and the Presque Isle Downtown Revitalization Committee approached us about participating in this first-of-its-kind project specifically because of the value this community places on public education at all levels,” UMPI President Don Zillman said. “We see this as a way to thank our community for their continuous support of our endeavors while also serving as an important first step in bringing permanent art and other visual installations to Downtown Presque Isle.”

The original concept for a mural was first discussed in 2006 with a simple observation that the retaining wall on Main Street in front of Key Bank could be made more attractive if it had some color other than the gray concrete. Stevens ran with the idea and spoke with some of the participants involved in the Downtown Revitalization effort, where the idea of a mural was born. Presque Isle business owners Rick and Sandy Guerrette of 27 Sign Place were brought on board to work on the project

At the same time, the Downtown Revitalization Committee appointed a three-member subcommittee (Patty LeBlanc, Ted Roberts and Billie Brodsky) to work with Stevens on the project. After several proposals the photo mural was selected. The City Council agreed to a lease arrangement with Key Bank to allow the mural to be placed on their wall at no cost.

The mural was designed over the course of six months by Dick Harrison, the University of Maine at Presque Isle’s coordinator of graphic design, photography and website. Harrison's time and labor served as an in-kind donation from the University for the project.

With this first mural now a Main Street fixture, officials hope this will spark the creation of more murals throughout the Downtown Presque Isle area.

#####



*Officials from each of the three educational entities featured in the mural, the City of Presque, and the Downtown Revitalization Committee were all on hand to unveil the mural during the September 29 festivities. Taking part in the ceremony were, from left: Walt Elish, Presque Isle City Council; Don Zillman, president of the University of Maine at Presque Isle; Tim Crowley, president of Northern Maine Community College; Gehrig Johnson, superintendent of MSAD #1; Patty LeBlanc, member of Presque Isle's Downtown Revitalization Committee; and Tom Stevens, Presque Isle city manager. With them is one of the students who helped to unveil the mural; a number of students from NMCC, UMPI and SAD #1 performed the unveiling, while members of the Presque Isle High School Jazz Band performed.*