



News Release

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NMCC to mark National Medical Assistants Week October 20 - 24

Aroostook County - Northern Maine Community College will join with higher education and medical facilities across the country to mark National Medical Assistants Week October 20 through 24, with activities designed to involve and educate the public about the profession, as well as one of the College's newest programs.

Since 1984, the third week of October has been designated nation-wide as Medical Assistants Week to honor and acknowledge the 350,000 medical assistants working in the field and the many of thousands of medical assisting students preparing to begin their career. This academic year, the commemoration holds special significance at Northern Maine Community College, as the first-ever group of students enrolled in the two-year program will earn degrees next May.

Two events are planned at NMCC on Friday, October 24. To accommodate the work schedules of the more than 20 working medical assistants and other health care professionals that serve on the College program advisory committee, a breakfast will be held at 6:30 a.m. in the Edmunds Conference Center. In addition to thanking the community members for their support in developing and guiding the program through its first year, the breakfast will involve a discussion amongst the medical assisting students, faculty and professionals on progress to date and an update of upcoming program accreditation activity.

Following the breakfast, the students will present teaching projects they recently completed, which include visual presentations of healthcare topics that are commonly experienced in the profession. The exhibits will be on display for the public in the Christie Lobby at the College between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. The students will be present to discuss their work.

"The presentations provide a great opportunity for the students to take key points and apply it to real life situations," said Susan Dugal, coordinator of the medical assisting program at NMCC. "It helps them to develop critical thinking skills and gets them to use resources. It also helps improve oral communication skills, which are vitally important in the medical assisting career field."

Medical Assistants week is sponsored annually by the American Medical Technologists, who have selected “Taking the Pulse of our Nation” as the theme for this year’s celebration to emphasize the commitment of the professionals as vital members of the healthcare team.

Medical assistants perform routine administrative and clinical tasks needed to keep the medical offices and clinics of physicians, podiatrists, chiropractors, and other medical professionals running smoothly and efficiently. Others in the profession may work in outpatient surgical centers, laboratories, or hospitals.

The services provided by medical assistants include both the office administrative and clinical aspects of their place of employment. Administrative duties include keeping patient records, managing financial matters, handling insurance arrangements, processing correspondence, and overall office management.

Clinically, the medical assistant prepares and assists in patient examination, records laboratory data, assists with office surgical procedures, performs basic physical assessment and measures vital signs.

Northern Maine Community College officially welcomed its first students into the program in the fall of 2007. The development of the two-year program was in direct response to the specific request of regional healthcare practices and professionals, who were looking to fill positions throughout Aroostook County in what is identified as one of the fastest growing professions by several key organizations, including the U.S. Department of Labor.

“Medical Assisting is a growing field and I have been proud to play a role in developing a program that will address the growing need for healthcare services in Aroostook County, as well as offering an opportunity for gainful employment in the region. It is wonderful to see the outcome of teamwork between NMCC and the community it serves,” said Dugal.

In developing the medical assisting program, NMCC followed the guidelines and standards delineated by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs. College officials will pursue accreditation through CAAHEP, which can only begin six months after the first class graduates.

As was the case with the program’s inception, a key component for the new program is the continued collaboration with area partners in delivering the education. Several area medical practices and hospital departments have provided sites for student clinical externship sites.

“One student has already been recruited and hired in a medical office practice,” said Dugal.

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