



News Release

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“Leave It To Beaver” star Jerry Mathers to visit NMCC campus to meet County residents as part of “Help Is Here Express” nationwide bus tour

Aroostook County - Aroostook County residents will have the opportunity to meet American TV icon and “Leave It To Beaver” star Jerry Mathers, when the popular former child actor visits the region on Monday, November 10, on the “Help Is Here Express” bus tour.

The bus, which is touring the country with Mathers, will make its central Aroostook stop at Northern Maine Community College in Presque Isle at 12:00 noon on November 10. Mathers will speak about the effects of chronic disease to interested members of the public. The NMCC visit will run through 2:00 p.m.

In addition to the Presque Isle stop, the “Help Is Here Express” will visit Fort Kent earlier in the day with a 9:00 a.m. stop at the Fort Kent Town Office, and a 3:30 p.m. visit in southern Aroostook at Houlton Regional Hospital.

In 1957 the television series “Leave It To Beaver” debuted, bringing actor Jerry Mathers, who played “The Beave”, into the hearts and homes of America. An immediate success, the show soared in the ratings, gained national attention and ran for six seasons, totaling 234 episodes. Currently shown on TV Land and in countries throughout the world, “Leave It To Beaver” has made Mathers an American Icon. His television movie, “Still the Beaver”, was one of the top ten movies of the week for 1982 which led to the development of a new series entitled “The New Leave It To Beaver.” Named as one of the most well known individuals in television history by People Magazine in 1989, Americans and people throughout the world are familiar with Jerry Mathers, who is currently one of the nation’s leading lecturers on living with and dealing with diabetes.

Mathers will travel to the County on the “Help is Here Express” to help uninsured and financially-struggling Mainers access information on programs that provide prescription medicines for free or nearly free. The bus tour is part of the Partnership for Prescription Assistance (PPA) – a nationwide effort sponsored by America’s pharmaceutical research companies – raising awareness of patient assistance programs and the need to effectively address the rising and alarming rates of chronic disease in the United States. Patients can also learn about new medicines in development to fight chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and asthma.

To date, the PPA has helped more than 5 million people across America, including more than 21,000 patients in Maine. Since its launch in April 2005, the PPA bus tour has visited all 50 states and more than 2,000 cities to raise awareness about patient assistance programs.

The “Help is Here Express” is staffed by trained specialists able to quickly help uninsured patients in need access information on more than 475 patient assistance programs, including nearly 200 programs offered by pharmaceutical companies. When the “Help is Here Express” moves on, patients can visit PPA’s easy-to-use Web site (www.pparx.org) or call the toll-free phone number (1-888-4PPA-NOW) where trained operators field calls in 150 languages.

Aroostook County residents can also call United Way’s 2-1-1 service, Maine’s health and human service information and referral line, which partnered with PPA and other health agencies and hospitals in a county-wide collaborative launched last spring to increase Aroostook County residents’ access to important prescription drugs. Currently this pilot program with 2-1-1 is available only to residents of Aroostook County.

“With the number of people affected by chronic disease increasing every year, the PPA and its message of hope is now more relevant than ever,” said Billy Tauzin, President of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA).

The Milken Institute along with the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease (www.fightchronicdisease.org) note there are more than 844,000 cases of common chronic diseases in Maine, including cancer, diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, stroke, mental disorders, and pulmonary conditions. Those diseases are responsible for seven out of every 10 deaths in the United States, and the Milken Institute research states that more than 83,000 Mainers have heart disease, 69,000 are affected by diabetes, and 53,000 suffer from cancer.

Innovative medications and treatments – along with improved access to prescription assistance program information through the PPA— may help to reduce the number of deaths caused by chronic disease every year, according to Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease. Medicines in development by America’s pharmaceutical research companies include 277 life-saving and life-improving medicines for heart disease and stroke, 646 medicines to treat several types of cancer and 95 medicines for diabetes.

“The PPA is meant to help people who are uninsured and financially-struggling,” added Tauzin, “But for patients in Maine suffering from chronic disease, it is especially important for them to know that help is here.”

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Jerry Mathers "Beaver"

