



News Release

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Expert in older adult healthcare issues to speak at NMCC “Well-Elder Tea” November 20

Aroostook County - A nationally recognized expert on the health care needs of older adults will help celebrate the success of a program that connects first-year nursing students at Northern Maine Community College with seniors living in communities throughout the region.

Amy Cotton, a state and national speaker who has authored many continuing education publications on geriatric health issues, will speak before first year NMCC nursing students and more than 40 senior citizens from throughout Aroostook County who have assisted the students in the College Well Elder program.

Cotton, of Hampden, will present during the Well Elder Tea on Thursday, November 20, at 1:00 p.m. The event will be held at two sites, at NMCC in the Edmunds Conference Center for students taking courses on the Presque Isle campus and their well elders, and at the Houlton Higher Education Center for students taking courses in southern Aroostook and well elders from that region. Cotton will deliver her remarks in Presque Isle, and they will be broadcast live to Houlton using the college videoconferencing system.

The Well Elder program pairs members of the first year nursing class with healthy senior citizens who volunteer to allow students into their homes throughout the semester to practice their assessment techniques. The unique program has been a part of the nursing curriculum at NMCC for more than a decade.

“The focus of our first semester students is the adult and older adult,” said Betty Kent-Conant, nursing and allied health department chair. “The clinical experience for these students is scheduled in long-term care facilities and nursing homes. However, residents in these type of facilities represent only about five percent of the total elder population, so this is a wonderful chance for students to observe and experience ‘normal’ aging in the individual’s own environment.”

When visiting their “well elders” NMCC student nurses take vital signs and review medications, home safety and general health lifestyles. Students also gain valuable experience practicing their interview and listening skills.

“As faculty, we truly want to instill a sense of appreciation and respect for the well elders,” said Daryl Boucher, first year nursing student coordinator. “This project allows the students to not only understand the importance of assessment, communication or history gathering, it allows them to gain a new appreciation of all the accomplishments and contributions made by the older generation.”

As featured guest speaker at the Well Elder Tea, Cotton will discuss health topics in the area of gerontology. The director of operations and nurse practitioner at the Center for Healthy Aging in Bangor, Cotton developed the organization’s virtual health center model in 1997 and has an active clinical practice making house calls for homebound elder’s primary health care needs as well as providing dementia consultation.

She is a part-time instructor at Husson University teaching the older adult health core curriculum to nurse practitioner students in the graduate program. Cotton was awarded fellow status by the National Gerontological Nursing Association in 2005, recognizing her clinical expertise and leadership in the field of gerontology during her 21 years in nursing.

In 2008, Cotton was one of 16 nurses selected nationally for a fellowship in the inaugural Sigma Theta Tau Honor Society of Nursing’s Geriatric Nursing Leadership Academy. She actively serves and volunteers on many local, state and national senior health coalitions and boards to promote quality healthcare and service to older citizens.

A total of 31 students enrolled in the first year nursing class on the Presque Isle campus and an additional 16 students participating in the NMCC nursing program offered at a distance in Houlton are currently engaged in the well elder program.

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Amy Cotton