



News Release

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Irish gathering at NMCC kick-offs READ program with unveiling of posters featuring former Senator George Mitchell and two NMCC Mitchell Scholars

Aroostook County - St. Patrick's Day came four months early at Northern Maine Community College, as the campus community hosted a November 17 Irish gathering to kick-off a new campaign to promote reading for enjoyment and extend well-wishes to a student who will spend the coming semester studying in Ireland.

Former U.S. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell and two Northern Maine Community College students, who were fortunate enough to be named recipients of a peace scholarship established in his honor, were the first to have their posters unveiled as part of a new READ campaign launched by the College library.

NMCC student Lucas Ireland, this year's recipient of the George Mitchell Peace Scholarship, won the award based on his academic success and commitment to community service. He will travel to Ireland to study at the Cork Institute of Technology in January.

"We are all very proud of you. This is a great opportunity," said NMCC President Timothy Crowley in his opening remarks. "When you stood with Senator Mitchell to pose for a photograph when he visited campus earlier this month, you had an opportunity to stand with greatness. I encourage you to stay in touch with the Senator and write to him about your experience."

Crowley was joined by family and friends of Ireland and members of the campus community in the College library to wish him well as he prepares to depart for Ireland in two months.

In his comments, NMCC Dean of Students William Egeler recalled a memorable moment from earlier this year when Ireland was being considered for the Mitchell Peace Scholarship. "I remember meeting your grandmother and how she told me, while pointing her finger at me, that 'Lucas is the best candidate, and he will be the best to represent Maine proudly.' You will gain a great international perspective and come back and share your experience. We know you will do well because you have to report back to your grandmother," Egeler added as he acknowledged Ireland's grandmother who was in attendance.

Guy Jackson, NMCC residential construction instructor, who serves as Ireland academic advisor and himself has Irish roots, also paid tribute to his student beginning with a quip. “What size suitcase are you taking? Maybe I can fit into it,” joked Jackson. “On the serious side, Lucas is a responsible and respected student. He has that famous County work ethic. I will miss him next semester, but wish him all the best.”

Gail Roy, assistant dean of learning resources, who coordinated the Irish celebration, followed Jackson with a description of the READ promotion and some personal thoughts about Lucas Ireland and the importance he has placed on reading while growing up. Roy and NMCC student Candice Rivera also presented Ireland with a number of gifts from the College, including books on Ireland, a scarf with the College logo with a Gaelic phrase that read: “there is no strength without unity,” and a gift certificate donated by the Irish Setter Pub.

The American Library Association established the READ campaign, a literacy program to encourage reading for enjoyment. For over twenty-five years, the ALA has sponsored the campaign that displays posters of notable Americans and celebrities who are photographed with their favorite book to lend support to the simple but powerful message: READ! The series is the most widely recognized promotion for literacy and libraries, and it is now possible for libraries to create their own posters using software developed for this purpose.

“The ultimate aim of the READ campaign is to emphasize that reading is as enjoyable as it is important and to encourage students, faculty and staff to take advantage of the resources available at the library to all members of the NMCC family,” said Roy. “The READ campaign at NMCC is intended to remind the campus community that reading—especially the reading of books—is entertaining and edifying, a means through which the reader can both gain exposure to a variety of human perspectives and improve general language skills. We begin that project here today with the unveiling of our first three posters.”

Roy, Crowley and Ireland proceeded to reveal the posters featuring Senator Mitchell and Ireland, as well as NMCC graduate Kent Corey, the recipient of the George Mitchell Peace Scholarship in 2003.

In addition to the ceremony and poster unveiling, NMCC’s library also began its exhibit featuring a new collection of books about Ireland and its people and culture. The reception held afterwards featured appropriately themed refreshments, including Irish breakfast tea, coffee, scones, and Irish Brack bread prepared by NMCC Sodexo campus dining services and student Shannon Smart.

The George Mitchell Peace Scholarship fund was created in 1998 to honor former U.S. Senator and Maine native George Mitchell for his work and dedication in helping to facilitate a peace accord between Northern and Southern Ireland and his lifelong commitment to public service. The selection process is very competitive and many students from community colleges in Maine apply.

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NMCC President Timothy Crowley (left) and Gail Roy, assistant dean of learning resources, present the first three posters in the NMCC READ campaign. They are joined by NMCC student and Mitchell Peace Scholar Lucas Ireland and his parents, Jill and Wayne. Lucas Ireland, along with NMCC graduate and former Mitchell Scholar Kent Corey and former U.S. Senator George Mitchell are the first to be featured in the reading for enjoyment poster series.