



News Release

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NMCC's "Freezin' Falcons" to participate in "polar dip"; community support sought

Aroostook County - A team of Northern Maine Community College students and employees will travel to Pleasant Point on the coast of Downeast Maine on Friday, February 27, to take a "polar dip" at 12:00 noon into the frigid Atlantic Ocean. This annual event, featuring around 100 dippers from colleges and universities in both Maine and New Brunswick, supports Maine's Ronald McDonald House charity.

The NMCC group, appropriately named the "Freezin' Falcons" – to honor the school's mascot – will be led by Dr. William Egeler, dean of students and a veteran of past polar dips. Egeler is currently recruiting students, faculty and staff for his team, which will consist both of members who will enter the water and others who will serve as 'towellers' and watch out for the dippers during and after the swim.

"The services provided by the Ronald McDonald House to the people of Maine, and especially to the people of Aroostook County, are vital. I am pleased to participate in an activity, alongside students and employees from NMCC, that will benefit so many individuals in such a profound way," said Egeler. "Community service activities such as this not only benefit the intended recipients of the service; all who participate benefit."

Among those taking the icy plunge this year will be Lori Keith, a 2006 NMCC graduate, who is now employed in the College Bookstore. This will be Keith's sixth consecutive year participating in the polar dip. In 2004, she joined the team as a toweller. The past four years she has taken the plunge herself, and this year will participate for the third time as an employee.

"I know everyone thinks we're crazy, but it really isn't as bad as it sounds. For the dippers, our adrenaline is pumping at maximum capacity and usually the water temperature is warmer than the air temperature, so it actually feels balmy when we run in. The towellers, on the other hand, have to stand and wait for us to run in and come back out so it is very cold for them. I have been on both sides of the coin and have to admit that I would much rather be the dipper," said Keith. "I honestly do enjoy this event. We have a lot of fun doing it and it is a wonderful opportunity to raise money for the Ronald McDonald House in Bangor and show what caring, giving people we have here at NMCC."

The annual event, sponsored by the Washington County Community College student senate, has raised more than \$130,000 since it was first held in 2000.

A new twist has been added to this year's festivities. Polar dip participants are being asked to adhere to the theme, "Polarstock," a play on Woodstock but with – as organizers say – a cold feeling of happiness and flower power. The year 2009 marks the 40th anniversary of the famous concert and festival in upstate New York. Egeler is looking to his fellow County dippers to bring their creativity along with their courageousness and have fun while supporting a great cause.

"The goal is to raise as much money as possible," said Egeler. "You don't have to look very far to find someone in Aroostook County who has benefited directly from the Ronald McDonald House."

One such family is Leah Buck and husband Peter Goheen of West Chapman, both employees at NMCC. Buck stayed at the Portland Ronald McDonald House near Maine Medical Center for six weeks in the summer of 2003 after giving birth to her now five-year-old son Clint, who was born 15 weeks premature. "They call it the House That Love Built, which is more than just a slogan—my family is very thankful for the opportunity to stay at RMH," said Buck.

"Our precious boy was clinging to life, and even though I couldn't hold him, or even touch him, I needed to be close. The only time I left him was to go to the Ronald McDonald House in Portland to try to sleep, shower or eat. The Ronald McDonald House became my safe haven where I could go, just a few blocks from the hospital, knowing that I could be back at his bedside in minutes if the doctors called," recalls Buck.

The house has an entire team of volunteers that create a clean, comfortable environment for parents of sick children who, like Buck, were unable to focus on anything but the latest report from the doctor. "When you have a critically ill child, every new day brings a strange mix of hope and fear. The staff and volunteers at RMH understand this and they work very hard to make every guest feel comfortable and welcome. Most of the volunteers at RMH have been touched by similar experiences; many of them have been guests themselves at one time," said Buck.

To support the efforts of the NMCC "polar dip" team and contribute to the Ronald McDonald House of Maine, individuals are asked to forward donations to the NMCC student affairs office, 33 Edgemont Drive, Presque Isle, ME 04769.

For more information on the "polar dip", contact Egeler at (207) 768-2792.

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Peter Goheen and his son Clint check out the snowmobiles during the Fall & Winter Expo held at the Forum in September. Clint is a happy, healthy five year old, despite being born 15-weeks premature. As is the case with many families in northern Maine, Clint's family found the Ronald McDonald House in Portland to be a safe haven while their loved one struggled for life at Maine Medical Center.