



News Release

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NMCC brightens and enlightens holiday season by giving away more than 1,100 books

Aroostook County - As County organizations participating in this year's Presque Isle Holiday Lights Parade both collected food and gifts for the needy from parade goers, and yet others handed out candy and other treats to children lining the route, students and employees at Northern Maine Community College took a different twist on the event's spirit of giving.

Acting in the capacity of Santa's literary elves, more than a dozen students, joined by Colleen Harmon of the College learning center, handed out more than 1,100 books to kids of all ages. The free book distribution marked the third year Harmon has lead the initiative, which evolved both as an idea to give-away something that had a connection to the nature of the College and what it offers the community, as well as providing area children with something from which they would benefit.

"Everyone should be able to read and everyone should be able to have books without worrying about it taking away from paying for fuel to heat the home or food for the table," said Harmon. "Sharing a book is like sharing an adventure, and we wanted to make certain all children had the opportunity to enjoy an adventure."

Toward that end, Harmon and several students worked for weeks in advance of the parade to collect donated books (new and used) from various groups and individuals.

"Books are expensive and the price is going up. Once a child or adult reads a book it often sits around on a shelf or is stored away. Our goal was to dust those books off and put them to good use in the hands of a different reader," said Harmon.

Storage bins full of books lined the NMCC float, which was decorated by the NMCC Student Senate under the direction of advisor Dennis Albert. The College entry was designed to appear like a snow hill and had children of NMCC employees and students on sleds atop it. The float led the parade as the first entry.

For Harmon, who began the project three years ago, the annual book give-away evokes a warm feeling on what is otherwise a chilly early December evening. The students who join in the effort also see the project's benefit.

“I enjoyed participating. I think that giving the books to the children shows them that reading is important,” said NMCC student Tammy Deschene of Presque Isle. “I felt like I was giving back and at the same time demonstrating how others care about the children in the community.”

Deschene, Harmon and the students who both worked on preparing the NMCC float and at distributing the books along the parade route received an unexpected benefit from their participation in the effort when they learned the NMCC parade presence was named “best non-profit” entry.

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NMCC students and employees walked along the NMCC float in the annual Presque Isle Holiday Light Parade, handing out approximately 1,100 books to children watching the parade. The College’s float won first place in the Non-Profit entry.