



News Release

Contact:
Jason Parent
Development and
College Relations Office
33 Edgemont Drive
Presque Isle, ME 04769
Phone: (207) 768-2808
Fax: (207) 768-2813
jparent@nmcc.edu

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Maine Veterans' Home experience with NMCC student nurses underscores importance of partnership between College and County healthcare facilities

Aroostook County - When faculty in the associate degree nursing program at Northern Maine Community College elected to send their students to the Maine Veterans' Home in Caribou this semester as a new site for clinical learning, they expected the 14 prospective nurses would be the beneficiaries of a positive, hands-on learning experience. Those expectations were certainly met, but the good that has come as a result has been more far reaching.

The addition of the Veterans' Home this fall to the several other healthcare facilities in Aroostook County that serve as sites for clinical experiences for NMCC nursing students has resulted in a positive spin-off for the facility, specifically its residents and staff.

"It has been wonderful. Everyone gains – our staff, the students and certainly our residents," said Diane Sinclair, director of nursing at the Veterans' Home. "I can't say enough about how good it has been having them here. The teaching part is critical for the students, but the residents have so enjoyed having the students in our facility. They get extra special attention from them. The staff values their interaction with the students and NMCC instructors. All have been very professional and the experience has been a very positive one."

The interaction has resulted from the various hands-on duties in which the staff at the Veterans' Home engaged the student nurses, including helping with patient medication administration and daily living activities. According to NMCC nursing faculty, experiential learning opportunities such as these and the willingness of local facilities to host the students are important to the student's overall experience.

The nursing students enhance the theory portion of their nursing courses by having clinical experiences which involve direct client care in a variety of health care settings, including, but not limited to, acute care (hospitals), long-term care (nursing homes), skilled nursing facilities, public schools, home care agencies, and other venues. Such is the case with first semester students. They are scheduled for clinical rotations in long-term care settings in the general regional areas.

“NMCC has been fortunate to have close contact with the Presque Isle and Caribou Nursing Homes, TAMC's long-term care facility in Mars Hill, and similar facilities in Houlton and in Calais. For several years there have been preliminary discussions in adding the Maine Veteran's Home to the potential sites for student clinical experiences. It was decided that this year we would schedule a rotational group of students to go to the MVH for those experiences as there is a diversity of the client population that would enhance the students' education,” said Betty Kent-Conant, chair of the NMCC nursing and allied health department. “This experience, like all others for students in clinical settings, was very positive and met the educational objectives required by faculty.”

As the NMCC nursing students were making an impression on the residents at the Veterans' Home, Kent-Conant and the other faculty members working with the students realized an additional benefit to the experience.

“Maine Veterans' Home provides our students with a diverse population of residents,” said Daryl Boucher, who serves as both a nursing faculty member and emergency medical services program coordinator at NMCC. “Typically, nursing homes have a higher population of female residents. At the Veterans' Home, not only is there a larger population of males than we typically see, it also provides us the opportunity to work with a governmental system of healthcare. Students gain valuable experience in working with governmental documentation requirements in a different system. Working with Veterans is also positive for students because residents have the opportunity to share life experiences with them.”

As a result of the positive experience, Boucher, Kent-Conant and Sinclair are looking forward to placing students in the facility in future semesters.

“Clinical experiences provide the integral part of application of knowledge from the classroom to having the opportunity to apply, first-hand, those concepts in the real world. As such, students are able to provide direct nursing care, such as client physical assessment, medication administration, and selected procedures and nursing interventions required for individual care,” said Kent-Conant. “We are most grateful to the Maine Veterans' Home and all of the other County healthcare facilities who welcome our students in to their organizations.”

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