



News Release

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NMCC students donate a ton of food to Catholic Charities for distribution to food pantries throughout the County as part of state-wide “Graduation: Can Due” initiative

Aroostook County - Northern Maine Community College students today joined in a statewide effort with their counterparts at other community colleges throughout Maine in a food drive to raise \$150,000 in cash and non-perishable food for the state’s food pantries.

Dubbed “Graduation: Can Due,” the initiative was announced by Maine Community College System President John Fitzsimmons during his recent “State of the Community College System” address to the Maine legislature. The project, which is led by the student senates at each of the seven MCCC campuses is set to match \$75,000 in private funds with cash or canned goods.

“By graduation day this May, our students will donate a total of \$150,000 in money and food to food banks across the state,” said Fitzsimmons. “It will be a graduation gift from the Class of 2009, in thanks and appreciation to the people of Maine for supporting their dreams of a college education.”

In northern Maine, that effort got underway in earnest on May 5 as representatives from the NMCC Student Senate donated one ton – or two thousand pounds – of canned food and dry goods to the Catholic Charities Maine on behalf of the NMCC Class of 2009. The food was purchased by Catholic Charities from the Good Shepherd Food Bank in Auburn through a donation made by the student government body at NMCC on behalf of the graduating class, which numbers 200 students. The intent was that ten pounds of food would be purchased on behalf of each graduate, using money raised throughout the year by the student senate through student activity fees and fund raising efforts.

To coordinate the northern region food collection, the student leaders at NMCC are working with the Catholic Charities Home Supplies and Food Bank, which serves all of Aroostook County and coordinates “Feed The County,” an ongoing food drive co-sponsored by WAGM-TV and Aroostook Savings and Loan. The regional food bank serves as a food distribution center for 24 food pantries from Sherman in southern Aroostook to Allagash in the St. John Valley.

“This is a great way to give back to the community,” said Aaron Conroy, NMCC Student Senate president and a diesel hydraulics technology student from Presque Isle, who will graduate on May 16. “People from throughout the area support what we do here at NMCC every day. This is a very worthwhile cause and we are happy to get on board.”

“Our students are part of the Aroostook County community and are involved in giving back in many ways. They serve as volunteers here on campus and in their local communities. This project allows us to give back as a group in a meaningful way and to help people throughout the area,” said Dennis Albert, NMCC Student Senate Advisor.

The demand on food pantries across the state and in Aroostook County has grown exponentially in recent months. The Good Shepherd Food Bank has seen distribution increase by nearly 35 percent compared to last year and the numbers are similar in Aroostook County, where Catholic Charities Home Supplies and Food Bank serves over 33,200 people through the two dozen local food pantries.

“To have any donations of food or money helps us a great deal in our effort to feed people in Aroostook County, which gets more challenging as the need grows each year,” said Dixie Shaw, Catholic Charities program director in Caribou. “I think it is wonderful for Northern Maine Community College students, who come from all over Aroostook County, to help out in this way. What a great partnership – The Community College that serves all of Aroostook County and helps better the lives of its students working hand in hand with another organization that serves all of The County and provides such a valuable service that makes a huge difference in the lives of thousands of area residents.”

In addition to the ton of food donated by the NMCC Student Senate, the graduating class is turning to the campus and community at large to help support the Home Supplies and Food Bank. Donations of non-perishable food items and cash will be accepted throughout the month of May at the information window in the main lobby of the Christie building at NMCC.

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Northern Maine Community College students (left to right) Denise Sock of Ashland, Wendy Genthner of Limestone, Meggan Pratt of Van Buren and Aaron Conroy of Presque Isle, join with NMCC Student Senate Advisor Dennis Albert at the Catholic Charities Maine Home Supplies and Food Bank, the organization to which the NMCC graduating class of 2009 donated funds for the purchase of one ton of food as part of the Maine Community College System-wide Graduation: Can Due initiative.