



News Release

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NMCC alumna introduces President Obama before he makes remarks on training for the unemployed; 2007 nursing program graduate from Washington County cited in President's remarks as success story

Aroostook County - A 2007 graduate of Northern Maine Community College was singled out by President Barack Obama as she stood next to the Commander in Chief at a press conference earlier today on job creation and job training. Maureen Pike of Baileyville, an alumnae of NMCC's associate degree nursing program, offered at Washington County Community College, introduced the President and was cited by Obama as an example of a displaced worker who enrolled at a community college and is now working in a new career as a result of the retraining she received.

"Maureen lost her job as a physician's receptionist, but she didn't lose hope. She took it as an opportunity to upgrade her skills and earned an associate's degree in nursing from a community college. As a consequence, today she works as a registered nurse," said Obama after being introduced by Pike, who was standing to his right in the press briefing room at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. "The only reason she could afford to do that while supporting her twins was because the state of Maine allowed her to keep her unemployment benefits and study with the help from a Pell Grant."

Pike, who now works as a registered nurse in the medical/surgical unit at Calais Regional Hospital, learned that she would be meeting President Obama just a few days ago. According to Teena Dominee, NMCC's nursing program distance coordinator in Washington County and Pike's supervisor at the Calais hospital, Pike approached her about "needing a few days off" from her night shift at the medical center.

According to Dominee, Pike indicated that she had been nominated by a friend as an example of a displaced worker who has successfully been retrained through a community college and had started a new career. Pike lost her job as a receptionist in a physician's office at the beginning of 2005. She enrolled in NMCC's nursing program offered at a distance in Washington County on the campus of Washington County Community College.

“Had it not been for this program and these opportunities, I would not be a registered nurse at Calais Regional Hospital today. I know that I'm very lucky; there are few states that allow people to keep unemployment benefits while earning an associate's degree. Thankfully, Maine is one of them,” said Pike just prior to introducing President Obama.

While earning her NMCC nursing degree at Washington County Community College, Pike, a single mother, raised two teenage twins.

“This is just awesome,” said NMCC President Timothy Crowley upon learning of the news and watching a video clip on the internet earlier this afternoon of Pike standing next to Obama and being highlighted by the President in his speech. “Not only does this highlight the importance of the work of community colleges nationwide, but it serves as great example of a successful graduate of NMCC, who earned her degree as a result of a unique partnership between two of our system campuses. It's all about cooperation between campuses and providing opportunity for students in our state.”

Pike is remembered by nursing faculty at NMCC as an advocate for her fellow students and as a strong advocate for her patients.

“She became a spokesperson for her class in Washington County. Whenever there was a question from the site, she was typically the person who would address it over our videoconferencing system,” said Betty Kent-Conant, chair of the NMCC nursing and allied health department.

“I am not surprised that Maureen is being used as an example by the President of the United States,” said Dominee, who worked in the classroom and in clinical sites with Pike and is now her work supervisor. “She was eager to learn, would speak up for others and is a strong patient advocate.”

Obama's speech was designed to introduce new steps the President will be launching to give people across the country who have lost their jobs the chance to go back to school and get retrained for the jobs and industries of tomorrow.

NMCC has recently been lauded across Maine for launching a special semester in March to accommodate displaced mill workers and others impacted by the economy in the region.

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NMCC nursing program alumna Maureen Pike (left) looks on while President Barack Obama delivers a speech on job creation and job training.