



ST. JOHN VALLEY
ADULT AND COMMUNITY
EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE

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Press Release

October 16, 2009

NR09118

NMCC to host community celebration to mark launch of associate degree nursing program in the St. John Valley

Aroostook County - Northern Maine Community College officials will join with local community leaders and representatives of healthcare organizations in the St. John Valley to celebrate the launching of the College's associate degree nursing program in the region at a ceremony at Madawaska High School on Thursday, October 29, at 10:00 a.m.

The celebration, which will take place in the classroom used by the first group of students to begin work on their NMCC nursing degree locally in the Valley, will bring together the students and instructors with key individuals at Northern Maine Medical Center and some of the Valley's long-term healthcare providers. The facilities are serving as clinical sites for the students to complete hands-on work.

Also attending will be representatives from TD Bank, which contributed \$100,000 to NMCC for the nursing program expansion into northern Aroostook County, and officials from the local school districts that comprise the St. John Valley Adult and Community Education Collaborative, NMCC's partner for delivering classes in the region.

"Through this initiative, Northern Maine Community College is working to fill two vital needs in northern Aroostook County - access to both healthcare and health education opportunities for people in the region," said Larry Wold, president of TD Bank in Maine. "We are very pleased to assist with this effort, which will make a real difference in the lives of countless people."

After offering core liberal arts courses to the eight nursing students in the first St. John Valley cohort over the past 18 months, NMCC began delivering its key nursing and clinical component courses to the students at the start of the fall semester via videoconferencing technology with courses originating on the Presque Isle campus. Locally, nursing instructor Sandra Pelletier of Fort Kent was hired this fall to work on-site in the Madawaska classroom and to supervise the nursing students at the local clinical sites.

Introducing NMCC's associate degree nursing program in the St. John Valley followed a concentrated effort by the College, St. John Valley Adult and Community Education Collaborative, and representatives of both the allied health and education communities in the Valley to meet a need expressed by the stakeholders.

“Our efforts are designed to provide access to higher education and to meet a critical workforce development need that will allow for area residents to fill local jobs,” said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. “The generosity of TD Bank, the effort locally in the St. John Valley and on our campus has allowed NMCC to expand the work it is doing to respond to the critical need for nurses in Aroostook County. The collaborative work amongst the healthcare community, business and education is providing access to education that will lead to rewarding careers.”

Results of a survey conducted two years ago by the St. John Valley Adult and Community Education Collaborative amongst healthcare organizations in the Valley showed a high need for associate degree level nursing and other allied health program offerings in the northern region.

The survey responses were confirmed, on a larger scale, during a statewide listening tour of rural Maine conducted shortly thereafter by Maine Community College System President John Fitzsimmons.

TD Bank was among the first organizations to support the MCCS Rural Initiative which has funded efforts to increase access to higher education in rural parts of the state. The expansion of allied health education program offerings in the St. John Valley by NMCC was the first project to be funded through the bank's donation.

“As the demand for healthcare workers – and registered nurses in particular – continues to grow both here in the Valley and nationwide, it is imperative that we capitalize on this opportunity to educate and train this important part of our workforce locally,” said Peter Caron, on behalf of the St. John Valley Adult and Community Education Collaborative. “What seemed like a remote possibility just two years ago is now a reality, thanks to the generosity of TD Bank, and to the efforts of NMCC and the Valley allied health stakeholder group to expand allied health educational opportunities in the Valley.”

The delivery method of the NMCC associate degree nursing program in the St. John Valley is similar to how the College offers its program in southern Aroostook at the Houlton Higher Education Center.

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