

## Our Mission

The mission of APP is to enhance Aroostook County's economy; to market the region to the U.S., Canada and Europe; to develop The County's downtowns into attractive and vibrant business centers; and to facilitate an effective economic development dialogue for the region.

## Celebrations

The **Northern Maine Development Commission** (NMDC) and the **Aroostook Partnership for Progress** (APP) were one of four recipients of the Maine Development Foundation's 2006 Champions for Economic Development Award presented at the MDF annual meeting.

"NMDC and APP were selected for their outstanding efforts to promote economic development in northern Maine.

Their partnership led to a new and innovative approach to economic development," said Laurie Lachance, MDF president and CEO. "NMDC and APP have formed a powerful and effective partnership to catalyze the economic development of Maine's vast northernmost county."

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# Connect North America

## Selects Presque Isle for its U.S. Contact Center

Connect North America announced today that it is selecting the former MBNA facility in Presque Isle for the location of its first U.S. contact center. Barry O'Donnell, President and CEO of Connect North America, stated "the company is excited about this opportunity to expand our business in central Aroostook County and we are looking forward to a long and lasting relationship with our employees and the community. We're pleased to be here. The response and support that we have received, since we were first contacted by APP back in April, has been excellent."

Connect North America, when fully operational, will have approximately 300 employees with about 60% of those being full time. Similar to their operations in New Brunswick, Canada, it is the company's intention to provide all the employees with competitive wages and the opportunity to participate in a group health insurance plan and a defined-contribution pension plan.

"We are very excited to have Connect North America join the many other fine businesses in Aroostook County and we look forward to maintaining our relationship with the Company in the years ahead," said Kris Doody-Chabre, APP's Chairperson. "This project is a perfect example of the strength of the APP team working together to make a project happen."



L to R: Andrew Weinrich, Kipany Productions, Robert Clark, NMCF/NMDC, Kris Doody-Chabre, APP Chairperson, Governor John Baldacci, Barry O'Donnell, Connect North America

APP facilitated the prospect and worked with the Career Center to host job information sessions for the company. The Northern Maine Finance Corporation (NMFC) purchased the facility, with financial assistance provided by Northern Maine Development Commission and USDA Rural Development, and worked with various federal and state agencies and the City of Presque Isle to develop a proposal that ultimately made it possible for Connect to locate here." Bob Clark, President of NMFC, stated "This is also a perfect example as to why NMFC decided to purchase the facility from Bank of America a few months ago. Because NMFC owns the building, we were able to present the company with a very competitive proposal."

Connect North America, headquartered in Fredericton, NB, is a leading provider of customized customer relationship management (CRM) solutions. Connect North America has established itself as a successful outbound teleservices company that provides exemplary service and performance to its clients.

"We recognized early on that we have to look at new ways to conduct economic development and this award indicates that we're heading in the right direction," said Robert Clark, NMDC executive director.

For a second consecutive year, the **University of Maine at Fort Kent** has been named to "The Best Northeastern Colleges" for 2007 by The Princeton Review.

"The recognition shines a spotlight on our excellent faculty, our committed staff, and our outstanding students, says Dr. Richard W. Cost, university president.

UMFK is one of 222 schools to receive the "Best in the Northeast" designation, based on criteria from teaching ability of professors to campus food to campus life.

**Maine Mutual Group** of Presque Isle was recently recognized by the Best Places to Work in Maine program.

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#### **Aroostook Partnership provides:**

- Confidential site selection services
- Comprehensive available buildings and sites listings
- Financing
- Venture Capital
- Small Business Development Center
- Business Advocacy

## **LEAD Update**

*Leaders Encouraging Aroostook Development*

**L**eaders Encouraging Aroostook Development (LEAD) has been actively involved over the past several weeks with its transportation committee. The transportation group has been meeting regularly with representatives from municipalities in the region and the trucking industry to provide information on the proposed highway expansion project being developed by Maine DOT. Informational meetings were held for LEAD members and guests in Madawaska, Caribou, Presque Isle and Houlton in preparation for the MDOT public hearings. Those public hearings were an opportunity for citizens to comment on the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS).

John Melrose of Maine Tomorrow has been assisting LEAD throughout the process, with Sam Collins and Janet Hughes co-chairing the committee.

"We were very pleased that the public hearing were well attended by folks all over Aroostook County. Those businesses who rely on highway transportation will save millions of dollars in trucking costs on an annual basis, and those businesses employ our people. The time savings alone is a significant impact," says Hughes. "The public hearings focused on the current action plan of MDOT to develop truck routes around Presque Isle and to connect Route 89 to Route 1 and Route 161."

The committee is working with affected communities as the process develops.

*Anyone desiring more information should contact Rod Thompson at 498-8736 or [rthompson@nmdc.org](mailto:rthompson@nmdc.org).*

## **Message from the President**



**N**orthern Maine continues to be attractive to new business and this past quarter proved to be no exception. The announcement of Connect North America was welcoming news for the region. The nationally recognized productivity of our workforce, an exceptional telecommunications infrastructure and an aggressive incentive package that includes, among other programs, both Empowerment Zone (EZ) and Pine Tree Zone (PTZ) benefits make northern Maine attractive to expanding businesses. The latter two programs have proven to be very attractive and provide qualifying businesses with considerable savings that go directly to the "bottom line." These savings can be in the form of federal wage credits of up to \$3,000 per employee, tax free bond financing: accelerated depreciation schedules; 100% state income tax credits, 80% employee

tax increment financing and sales tax exemptions. Frequently we are able to show business that their potential savings can be in the millions of dollars.

In addition to these two important programs, businesses are able to access to a host of other incentive programs quite easily by making one call to APP. The APP is well versed in the programs and can not only apprise the business of the various options but will also "walk" the business through the process to access the various programs. We believe that it's our job to assist northern Maine business compete successfully in a world economy by ensuring that they take full advantage of the federal, state and local programs that are available to them.

*The Pine Tree Development Zone is detailed on page 4.*

## Katahdin Cedar Log Homes Commits to Aroostook Partnership for Progress



**K**atahdin Cedar Log Homes has become the newest partner in the Aroostook Partnership for Progress.

David Gordon, president of KCLH, announced its pledge

of \$20,000 to the private-public economic development partnership created to stimulate the economy of Aroostook County. Gordon emphasized the company's full endorsement and support of the partnership's initiatives by stating that Katahdin Cedar Log Homes is very pleased to join as a partner and member of the initiative.

Partners in the program include the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), Employment Times, Mainebiz, JobsInME.com, the Maine State Chamber, Maine State Department of Labor, and Best Companies Group.

MMG received second place in the medium size companies category (25-199) for employee work ethic, professionalism, and ability to enjoy themselves in the workplace, according to MMG president Larry Shaw.

## Aroostook County on DVD

**T**he Aroostook Partnership for Progress has recently completed a new virtual tour of Aroostook County.

This promotional video, one of the first for the region, explores all that Aroostook County has to offer potential businesses and developers.

The region's strengths -- its cultural offerings, the eager, available workforce, facilities, and economic incentives are all detailed in the nine minute discovery of Aroostook County.

For a copy of the Aroostook County DVD, please contact APP at [Progress@APPme.org](mailto:Progress@APPme.org)

Businesses in Aroostook County will benefit from an agreement established recently by **Northern Maine Community College** in Presque Isle and **Husson College** of Bangor. The agreement generates enhanced baccalaureate and graduate education opportunities for residents of northern Maine.

"This agreement presents numerous benefits for individuals seeking graduate education opportunities and for business and industry in our region," said NMCC President Tim Crowley. "Too often people leave the area to pursue such opportunities and do not return. This will provide a new option."

Dr. Richard Stephens, chief academic officer at Husson, added, "This partnership addresses the needs of Aroostook citizens for educational opportunity and the needs associated with higher education, access and affordability, all through a public/private partnership."

### Northern Maine's Flourishing Creative Economy

Across northern Maine, individuals, organizations and communities are getting involved in "creative" economic development. They believe that in the new global economy, Maine's creative economy initiative will become one engine that will revitalize our communities, protect and preserve our landscape, retain our youth and attract new businesses and residents to our region.

Energy and imagination are what it's taking for the arts to flourish in central Aroostook County. Citizens and community leaders joined forces to create a place where the culture and life in the region can thrive. The Wintergreen Arts Center provides artists, at all levels, with the opportunity to express and develop their talents and showcase their work. The Center, with more than seventy-five volunteers, hosts classes in painting, drawing, sculpture, fiber arts, theater, fashion design, digital arts, film and photography. "This has been an incredibly positive experience

for everyone involved," said Laura Cannon, President of Wintergreen Arts Center. "The Center is a place for everyone to enjoy."

In the Saint John Valley, the community celebrates its Acadian and Swedish cultural heritage through a variety of events and historical structures. The St. John Valley International Cultural Route, utilizing an audio CD, is an initiative that celebrates the traditions and culture of northern Maine and New Brunswick. The area's rich cultural heritage is a must visit for anyone interested in exploring northern Maine's Acadian and Swedish history.

The Southern Aroostook Cultural Arts Project (SACAP) is a regional arts organization that is comprised of artists, community members and educators. SACAP brings shows to the area highlighting single artists or group shows; hosts workshops of interest to local artists including professional development, looking at art, and learning new techniques; sponsors cultural events and offers artists opportunities to network at a monthly critique group or at the public gallery openings with community members.

## Pine Tree Development Zone

**Eligible Business:** Any business located within a designated Pine Tree Zone, engaged in a qualified business activity. Zone boundaries and qualified activities defined on website.

### Benefits and Incentives:

- 100% sales tax exemption for building materials and all tangible personal property
- 100% state income tax credit for the first 5 years of operation followed by 50% state income tax credit for the next 5 years of operation
- ETIF equal to 80% of employees' state income tax withholdings for 10 years
- TIF districts established in zones are excluded from municipal area and original assessed value limitations.

More on Maine's Pine Tree Development Zone and Empowerment Zone details can be found at [www.APPme.org](http://www.APPme.org).

*To receive this newsletter electronically, please send your email address to [Progress@APPme.org](mailto:Progress@APPme.org)*

## Investor Profile – Dead River Company

Dead River is one of the largest distributors of petroleum products to residential and commercial customers in northern New England.

Founded by Charles Hutchins in 1907, Dead River Company started out in the timber harvesting industry along a remote branch of the Dead River in scenic western Maine.

In the early 1930's, the company acquired franchise rights to a chain of gas stations in northern and eastern Maine, setting up corporate headquarters in Bangor. From these beginnings, Dead River steadily expanded into the sale of a wide range of petroleum products throughout Maine.

Still a family-owned company 100 years later, Dead River has become one of the largest retailers of home heating oil and propane in northern New England. With over sixty years of experience in the oil business, it continues to expand operations in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

As a large company, it has the resources to meet customers heating needs even under difficult circumstances, such as the disastrous Ice Storm of '98. Despite its size, Dead River maintains the values of a small-town, family company, by operating regional offices that employ local people.

Dead River also owns and operates a number of convenience stores located throughout Maine.

Dead River was a founding investor in APP, recognizing the need and opportunity for economic growth in Aroostook County. According to Alan Landeen, Regional Manager of Dead River, "We are very pleased to be a part of Aroostook Partnership for Progress. We believe this type of private-public partnership is the future of the economy of Aroostook County."

## Featured Property



### Former MBNA Facility

#### Fort Kent, Maine

- 10,419 sq ft
- 16 acres
- 119 fully equipped work stations
- economic incentives
- ample available workforce

*For more information, contact Walt Elish at [welish@APPme.org](mailto:welish@APPme.org)*

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