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For immediate release

June 14, 2017

Next Step Maine Scholarships Awarded

Funds to be awarded to employees pursuing college degrees and certificate programs

AUGUSTA, Maine - \$20,000 has been awarded to 16 Maine employees who applied this spring for the Next Step Maine scholarship program, a statewide initiative that awards funds to Maine employees that are currently pursuing a bachelor's degree, associate's degree or certificate program. There were 27 completed applications from 17 different companies and 2 educational institutions.

“I am always so inspired by the stories of the Next Step Maine scholarship recipients--both the recipients' commitment to furthering their education and professional skills and the employers' investment in increasing the credentials of their workforce,” said Gilda Nardone, Executive Director of New Ventures Maine and Next Step Maine Employers’ Initiative Advisory Council member. “It’s a concrete example of a pathway for Maine adults to pursue and complete college degrees.”

Next Step Maine is a program of the Maine Development Foundation (MDF), a private, non-partisan membership organization that drives sustainable, long-term economic growth for the state of Maine. MDF's strategic focus is a productive workforce. Jan Kearce, MDF VP of Programs, shared, “I was honored to present awards to an outstanding group of individuals who demonstrate that passion and determination can indeed overcome the many obstacles faced by adult learners. We need that kind of tenacity to ensure that Maine has a workforce that can sustain and grow our economy.”

The Next Step Maine 2017 award winners are:

Lisa Bouffard and Sara Smith from Bowdoin College, Casey Brann from Eastern Maine Medical Center, Ashley Bubar from Eastern Maine Development Corporation, Kristi Carlow from the Office of Maine State Treasurer, Marcel Dubois from Tri-County Mental Health Services, Felicia Fortier from the Charlotte White Center, Inna Fox and Amanda Sawyer from Mercy Health System of Maine, Heather Haney from Aroostook County

Action Program, Diane Marhirwe from Spurwink Services, Meghan Muth from Eastern Maine Health System, Sandra Powers from Community Concepts, Inc., Lacey Robbins from Waterville Pediatrics, Shawn Ryder from OHI, and Abigail Smith from Penobscot Community Health Care.

Next Step Maine received donations and grant support from the Maine Community Foundation, Bangor Savings Bank, The Reny's Charitable Foundation, and Maine Chapter of Association for Talent Development.

Scholarship awardees, their employers and family members were recognized at a unique breakfast awards ceremony on Thursday, June 8 at the Senator Inn, in Augusta.

Since 2013, the Next Step Maine program, through its donors, has contributed more than \$80,000 in scholarships and helped 65 Maine employees attain advanced education in their field. Recent alumni of the program have experienced success in a variety of ways, including pay increases, promotion and career advancement. The goal of the Next Step Maine scholarship program is to support and recognize working adults who are going to school while managing jobs, families, and other responsibilities.

Scholarships are available for employees of Next Step Maine employers - committed employers who have joined a no-cost statewide initiative to advance the educational attainment of Maine's workforce.

To learn more about Next Step Maine and how to become a Next Step Maine Employer, please visit <http://www.nextstepmaine.org/>.

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About the Maine Development Foundation (MDF):

The Maine Development Foundation (MDF) is a private, non-partisan membership organization that provides leadership, trusted research, and creative partnerships to enable Maine business, community and policy leaders to drive Maine's long-term economic growth. Created in statute in 1978, the nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation works statewide across all sectors. MDF includes more than 250 statewide members including business people, educators, government officials and community leaders that are passionate about Maine's economy. MDF provides a common ground for leaders to discuss and act on issues affecting Maine's economy. Learn more at www.mdf.org.