

County veterans urge VA official to save ARCH program

BY CHRISTOPHER BOUCHARD
AROOSTOOK REPUBLICAN & NEWS

CARIBOU — Veterans and supporters from around the region gathered at Cary Medical Center on Tuesday to share their concerns and push for renewal of a model rural health program that is set to expire in early August.

U.S. Veterans Affairs Under Secretary for Health Dr. David Shulkin assured the veterans that they would be taken care of no matter what happens to the popular Access Received Closer to Home or ARCH program. Shulkin, who was invited to Caribou by members of Maine's congressional delegation, toured the facility with U.S. Sen. Susan Collins and U.S. Rep. Bruce Poliquin to learn more about the program, which was established in Caribou in 2011 as one of five pilot sites around the country.

The veterans and members of Maine's congressional delegation touted the importance and benefits of the program, which they said has proven highly successful and cost-effective for veterans in Aroostook County, providing the health care they need closer to home and saving them a potentially 600-mile round trip to the Togus VA Medical Center in Augusta.

Collins and fellow U.S. Sen. Angus King have introduced legislation that would

keep ARCH running through 2021, while Poliquin and fellow Rep. Chellie Pingree submitted a companion bill in the House.

Still, Collins said she separately was trying to get the VA to administratively authorize continuation of the program permanently.

“My hope is that we can work out an administrative solution through the VA that would void the need for legislation,” Collins said Tuesday. “I have been able to get a two-year extension funded in the military construction and VA appropriations bill which will be on the Senate floor next week. In committee, there was no objection to it, but that's a long way from becoming law.”

Collins said she would continue to pursue both avenues, but because of all the uncertainties with passing legislation, “I believe we may be able to solve this through the Secretary [of Veterans Affairs] using his waiver authority. My top priority is to prevent [the program] from expiring in August, because then veterans will have to travel to Togus for specialty care. They could still get primary care at the community-based clinic that is here in Caribou, they could still get long-term care at the veterans home attached to the hospital. But they would have to go to Togus for specialty care, and that's just too difficult for many of them.”



COURTESY OF U.S. REP. BRUCE POLIQUIN'S OFFICE

A crowd of nearly 100 veterans and supporters gathered in Cary Medical Center's Chan Center on Tuesday morning to hear U.S. Rep. Bruce Poliquin and Veterans Affairs Under Secretary Dr. David Shulkin speak about the ARCH program and a possible long-term administrative solution to the issue of veterans health care in northern Maine.

Poliquin also stated in a press release issued after the gathering that Shulkin and other VA officials had indicated they were working to extend the ARCH program services without the need for legislation.

A crowd of nearly 100 veterans and supporters gathered to hear Shulkin speak at the medical center and to voice their concerns regarding veteran health care.

Veteran Ken Powers spoke of his difficulties with the Veterans Choice Program, a controversial alternative to the ARCH program.

“I have been trying to get approval for a spinal injection for over a month and a half through Choice,” said Powers. “I have called diligently, and was told to cancel two appointments because I didn't have approval. I got a phone call last week, saying I was scheduled for a follow-up appointment. I said, ‘A follow-up appointment for what?’ and they told me it was for the spinal injection I had. I had to explain that they told me to cancel that because I was still waiting for approval. Now, I'm

going on two months.”

Shulkin told Powers that this was “unacceptable,” directed him to a member of Health Net in the audience who would assist him, and assured the veteran that the situation would be resolved within the day.

Jim Gehring, adjutant of the Disabled American Veterans Smart-Ricker No. 10 in Presque Isle, praised the ARCH program and applauded the VA's efforts to help veterans.

“First of all, I have no complaints,” Gehring said. “Secondly, I want to thank

you for coming up here to hear what we have to say. I know, collectively, the issue is to get ARCH approved and do something down the road that will put a permanent program in place. It's easy for us to criticize the VA because they're like a big company, but what we don't do is say thank you for what you do up here.”

The audience members, as well as the guests from Washington, D.C., erupted into applause at Gehring's kind words.

“We talk about ourselves as a community working together,” continued Gehring, “but that extends downstate to Bangor and Togus, because if we didn't do it together as a group and work together, nothing would get done. I have no complaints, and I don't think the majority of people in this room have a complaint.”

Roger Felix, commander of the Lister-Knowlton VFW Post 9389 in Caribou, also complimented the VA's efforts.

“You've got a tough job with these folks here,” said Felix. “I just want to say that, no matter what the program is, the fact that you're putting veteran's health at the forefront of today's issues is greatly appreciated. Aroostook County is a very small place on the face of the United States and ... we're highly grateful to be making such an impact to bring the attention of people from Washington.”

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY COMMENCEMENTS

York County Community College

WELLS — Donato J. Tramuto will be the keynote speaker for York County Community College's 21st commencement to be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 14, at the Ogunquit Playhouse, 10 Main St., Ogunquit.

Tramuto is the CEO and president of Healthways Inc. and the chairman and founder of Physicians Interactive Holdings. He is also founder of the Tramuto Foundation, a nonprofit organization he created in 2001 to help young individuals achieve their educational goals. In 2011 he founded Health eVillages, a program residing at the not-for-profit Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice & Human Rights and funded by PI, which provides state-of-the-art mobile health technology including medical reference and clinical decision support resources in challenging clinical environments around the world.

Tramuto serves on executive leadership boards including the Boston University School of Public Health dean's advisory board, the Physicians Interactive board of directors, the Robert F. Kennedy US Leadership Council, Chairman of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice & Human Rights Europe Board, the Healthways (NASDAQ) board of directors, and the Maine Economic Council. He previously served on the Duke University Fuqua health care advisory board, as well as on the Regis College board of trustees from 2006 to 2013. In 2005, 2009 and 2012, Tramuto was selected by PharmaVoice as one of the Top 100 Most Inspirational Healthcare Leaders in the Life Sciences Industry.

In May 2012, he was recognized by The Boston Globe as one of the Top 12 Innovators in Massachusetts for his work on Health eVillages. In 2013, he received the Healthcare IT News H.I.T. Men & Woman Award in the Innovators category.

Tramuto was selected as one of four distinguished recipients of the 2014 Ripple of Hope Award from the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice & Human Rights alongside former Secretary of State and first lady Hillary Clinton, Academy Award-winner Robert De Niro and Grammy Award-winner Tony Bennett.

Washington County Community College

CALAIS — Washington County Community College students will graduate from their two-year programs at

11 a.m. Friday, May 13, in Calais High School gymnasium.

Keynote speaker will be Joyce Maker, who will share her own story with graduates and the meaning she has found from a life in public service.

Born and raised in Calais, Maker has spent decades committed to the community, including serving on the school board and City Council. She took her efforts to assist the residents of Down East Maine to the state level, and now serves in the Maine House of Representatives. She also participates in empowerment programs for young women such as Maine NEW Leadership.

University of New England

PORTLAND — The University of New England has announced that its 2016 commencement speaker will be Dr. Robert Michael Franklin Jr., who is the James T. and Berta R. Laney Professor of Moral Leadership at Emory University in Atlanta and director of the religion department of the Chautauqua Institution.

The UNE ceremony will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 21, in the Cross Insurance Arena at One Civic Center Square in Portland.

Franklin has served on the faculties of the University of Chicago, Harvard Divinity School, Colgate-Rochester Divinity School and at Emory University's Candler School of Theology, where he gained a national reputation as director of black church studies. He also has served as program officer in human rights and social justice at the Ford Foundation and as an adviser to the foundation's president on future funding for religion and public life initiatives. In addition, Franklin was invited by American film producer Jeffrey Katzenberg to prepare an online study guide for the congregational use of “The Prince of Egypt,” a DreamWorks film (1999). He also served as an adviser to the History Channel's presentation titled “The Bible” (2013), among other accomplishments.

Unity College

UNITY — Rue Mapp, an international conservationist, activist and writer who has spoken of a “nature deficit disorder” in America, will be the commencement speaker at 11 a.m. Saturday, May 14, at Unity College.

Mapp, who will address the Unity College Class of 2016, is founder of the nonprofit organization Outdoor Afro, overseeing a national volunteer leadership team of 30 men and women in 16 cities around the United States that uses a mul-



BDN FILE

Members of the University of Maine class of 2010 keep a beachball aloft during the commencement ceremony at the Alfond Arena on May 8, 2010.

timedia approach grounded in personal connections and community organizing to build broader community and leadership in nature. From its grass-roots beginnings, Outdoor Afro has been recognized for emphasizing the importance of racial and economic diversity in the outdoors.

Mapp's work has been featured in publications including the Wall Street Journal, Backpacker magazine, Ebony magazine, Sunset magazine, NPR and others. She also has been recognized with numerous awards and distinctions.

Mapp also serves on the board of the Rails to Trails Conservancy, American Camp Association and Outdoor Industry Association. Most recently, she was appointed to the California State Parks Commission by Gov. Jerry Brown.

Saint Joseph's College

STANDISH — Saint Joseph's College will hold its 2016 Commencement at 10 a.m. Saturday, May 14, with Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish of Tofronto, a Palestinian physician and an internationally recognized human rights and peace activist, as keynote speaker.

Abuelaish was born and raised in the Jabalia Refugee Camp in the Gaza Strip and has overcome many personal hardships, including the tragedy of his three daughters' and niece's deaths in the 2009 Gaza war. He is a best-selling author of the autobiography “I Shall Not Hate.” Abuelaish lives with his five children in Canada where he teaches as an associate professor at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health.

Honorary degree recipients will be Abuelaish, whose charitable organization Daughters of Life Foundation helps advance health and education opportunities for women and girls in the Mid-

dle East; Anna Gould of Bedford, Massachusetts, philanthropist and co-founder of Camp Sunshine; and Mary Kneeland of Religious Sisters of Mercy of Standish, who has devoted more than 55 years to charitable work including functions at Saint Joseph's. All three will receive a Doctor of Humane Letters.

Student speakers will be Michelle Stansfield of Berwick, on-campus valedictorian, who is receiving her Bachelor of Science in nursing; and Patricia Kearney Luvin of Rockville Centre, New York, online graduating speaker, who is a certified Catholic chaplain graduating with a Master of Arts in pastoral theology. Luvin is a spiritual care coordinator for Metropolitan Jewish Health Systems, serving as a chaplain to their hospice and palliative care patients.

University of Maine

ORONO — The 214th Commencement at the University of Maine will be held in two ceremonies at 10 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Saturday, May 14, in Harold Alfond Sports Arena on campus.



White

UMaine's commencement will have more than 1,800 undergraduate and graduate students, including more than 40 doctoral degree candidates.

Both ceremonies are ticketed events and live streaming will be available.

Tips for attending commencement, provided by UMaine Police Department, are a maine.edu/news/blog/2016/05/02/tips-attending-umaines-214th-commencement-ceremonies/.

The morning ceremony includes the College of Education and Human Develop-

ment, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Division of Lifelong Learning and the Maine Business School. The afternoon ceremony includes the College of Engineering and the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture.

Honorary doctorates will be awarded to two alumni: United States diplomat Pamela White, the former ambassador to Haiti and The Gambia, an Auburn native now living on Orrs Island, Maine; and Leonard Minsky, community leader and retired president of Superior Paper Products Inc., who lives in Bangor and Sanibel Island, Florida.

White is the commencement speaker for both ceremonies.

The 2016 valedictorian is Nicholas Fried of Millersburg, Pennsylvania, an animal and veterinary sciences major, with a minor in chemistry; Connor Smart of Lincoln, the salutarian, is a double major in accounting and finance, and is the Outstanding Graduating Student in the Maine Business School.

Also being honored will be four faculty members in anthropology, engineering technology, marine sciences and political science.

This year's Distinguished Maine Professor is anthropologist Paul “Jim” Roscoe, a world-renowned leader in cultural anthropology who is a professor of anthropology and a cooperating professor in UMaine's Climate Change Institute and the School of Policy and International Affairs.

Howard M. “Mac” Gray, professor of construction engineering technology, will receive the 2016 Presidential Outstanding Teaching Award; Neal R. Pettigrew, professor of oceanography, will receive the 2016 Presi-

dential Research and Creative Achievement Award; and Amy Fried, professor of political science, will receive the 2016 Presidential Public Service Achievement Award.

University of Maine at Presque Isle

PRESQUE ISLE — Nicholas C. Donohue, president and CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, will deliver the address during the University of Maine at Presque Isle's 107th Commencement ceremony, to be held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, May 14, at Wieden Gymnasium.

During the event, an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree will be presented to Donohue.

As president and CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Donohue is leading efforts to reshape New England's public education systems to be more equitable and effective for all learners.

Before joining the foundation in 2006, Donohue was a special master at Hope High School in Providence, where he oversaw implementation of the Rhode Island Commissioner of Education's order to reconstitute the school. Before his service at Hope High School, he was commissioner of education in New Hampshire. He also has served as New Hampshire's deputy commissioner of education and as a trustee of the University System of New Hampshire and the New Hampshire Community Technical College System.

As a leader in education transformation, Donohue has worked to promote equitable learning opportunities and close the achievement gap. Throughout his career, he has championed innovative approaches to expand access to high quality learning opportunities for all learners, especially for those who are underserved. His leadership in education reform continues to challenge traditional notions of schooling to respond to our changing world and prepare all learners to contribute to a thriving democracy.

In 2015, Donohue was named as one of the “50 People Shaping the Future of K-12 Education” by Getting Smart, a mission-driven organization and online community focused on accelerating and amplifying innovations in teaching and learning. Additionally, he serves on the boards of directors for the International Association for K-12 Online Learning and Grantmakers for Education. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Wesleyan University and a Master of Education degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.