



NEWS RELEASE

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UNE honors 'Alfond Angel' at Forum dedication and celebration

Biddeford, Maine — Standing on center ice, facing hundreds of cheering students, alumni and guests waving UNE pennants, University of New England President Danielle Ripich held her hand to her heart, exclaiming, “Sometimes big dreams do come true!” at the grand opening celebration today for the Harold Alfond Forum.

The forum is UNE’s new \$20 million, 106,500 square-foot athletics and student life complex, now the largest gathering space on UNE’s campus.

Soon after she joined the university six years ago, Ripich dreamed of building a student center that would become the heart of the university. She enthusiastically shared her vision and recalled meeting an individual who called UNE “the little school with big dreams.”

At today’s dedication ceremony, President Ripich recognized the “man of vision who was truly an angel for this institution, who has once again transformed us into a community with this Forum at its heart – Mr. Harold Alfond.”

The Forum was made possible by a \$7 million lead gift from the Harold Alfond Foundation announced in 2010. In 1995, the Foundation donated \$2.5 million to build UNE’s first academic building, the Harold Alfond Center for Health Sciences, which remains the anchor for UNE’s medical school, the only one in Maine.

The new facility includes an NHL-sized ice hockey rink with 900 seats; a basketball court with 1,200 seats; classrooms for athletic training and applied exercise science programs; strength and conditioning facilities; a cyber café for dining and student study space; conference rooms, and offices for UNE’s Athletics programs.

Present at the grand opening was Harold Alfond Foundation chairman Gregory Powell, as well as Foundation board members Peter Alfond, Bob Marden and Larry Pugh, UNE trustees, other donors, and representatives from the many organizations involved in construction of the Forum. More than 41 companies and subcontractors from Maine were involved in the building construction.

UNE Board Chairman Mark Doiron called it “more than just a building...but a reflection of UNE’s most important value – our students.”

Foundation Chairman Powell said, “Harold Alford was a businessman and a philanthropist, but he was also an avid sports fan and an athlete himself, and when he visited this university [in 1994], he realized it had a close connection with health care for America, and he was very glad to support it...because he could see the beginnings of a huge team effort, an effort that culminates today.”

At the close of the event, women’s ice hockey captain Jenni Poulin and men’s hockey captain Brent Bourgeois had a ceremonial face-off to celebrate the teams’ inaugural games at the rink. The women’s team played their first game against Endicott at 4:00 p.m., and the men host University of Rhode Island for an exhibition game Friday evening.

On Sunday, October 28, UNE hosts a free Open House for the public from 1:00-3:00 for tours, refreshments, music and skating on the newest ice rink in southern Maine.

The Alford Foundation has also committed an additional \$3 million for interprofessional health care workforce education at UNE.

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