NWACC to Observe Bikini Atoll Commemoration

Event to include remembrance service, Columbia University Fellow talk.

BENTONVILLE, Ark. (February 18, 2013) – As part of the college’s spring themed semester on the Marshall Islands, NorthWest Arkansas Community College will hold an event to commemorate the victims of the March 1, 1954, thermonuclear detonation that contaminated Bikini Atoll and the surrounding islands. The event will feature remarks by Republic of the Marshall Islands Consul General Carmen Chong Gum, a candlelight service, and a presentation by Columbia University Fellow Dr. Jessica A. Schwartz.

The event will begin at noon on Feb. 28, in Student Center 108 on the Bentonville campus. The event is free and open to the public.

The commemoration is divided into two parts to facilitate NWACC’s class schedule. The first begins at noon and lasts until 1:15 and will feature Marshallese music and Schwartz’s presentation titled, “That is the reason I wrote this song: Revisiting Our Nuclear Legacy through Marshallese Remembrance Songs.”

The second half of the event will commence at 1:30 and includes a documentary viewing of the impact of the nuclear testing, a candlelight service, and a reading of names of victims from the atolls of Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap, and Utik.

The U.S. military conducted nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands from 1946-1958. The March 1 test, known as the Castle Bravo test, detonated a thermonuclear weapon over Bikini Atoll, which was 7,000 times the force of the Hiroshima bomb. The test irradiated neighboring atolls inhabited by Marshallese who were unaware of the test or its potential consequences. The nuclear tests had major consequences on the geology and environment of the islands and on the health of the Marshallese people, many of whom now live in Northwest Arkansas. The Bikini Atoll test site was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in August 2010.
The Marshall Islands Themed Semester marks the college’s fifth annual spring themed semester. For more information about the Marshall Islands Semester, contact Dr. April L. Brown at 479-619-2231 or albrown@nwacc.edu.

NorthWest Arkansas Community College is a smart choice for students wanting to pursue quality higher education. As an accredited institution through The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, NWACC is a public two-year institution that serves and strengthens its surrounding communities in Benton and Washington counties by helping our students maximize their potential and exceed expectations. With state-of-the-art facilities, NWACC provides excellent academic instruction and workforce training needed to succeed, offering personalized attention from highly respected faculty, staff, and administrators. For more information, visit www.nwacc.edu.