

Maryville Daily Forum column
Thursday, Nov. 3, 2011
Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

Our themes of student success, engaged learning environments and vigorous community impacts certainly have been front and center in recent weeks. From the success of last month's Homecoming activities to events that will attract more visitors to our campus and community in coming weeks, we are indeed executing on our mission.

It was wonderful to see all of the Homecoming spirit across the community during the weekend of Oct. 22 and the days leading up to it, including the office decorations throughout the campus and the signs at many local businesses. We saw a record crowd for the International Flag-raising Ceremony and dozens of members from our class of 1961 returned to campus for the Golden Years reunion at the Alumni House. The perfect cap on the week, of course, was seeing our Bearcat soccer team win on its Senior Day, our Bearcat football team hand Washburn its first defeat of the season, and our Bearcat volleyball team win a thriller that night against Missouri Southern.

But the passing of Homecoming week hardly signals an end to our engagement opportunities for the fall trimester. Our nationally competitive soils team and forensics team are back in action, and last weekend students from 24 schools across the Midwest were at Northwest as our mock trial team – which provides invaluable experience for our students who have aspirations of entering the judicial field – hosted its Bearcat Invitational Mock Trial Tournament.

Additionally, our Tower Choir, under the direction of Dr. Stephen Town, performs this weekend at the national conference of the National Collegiate Choral Organization at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo. It marks the first time in Northwest's history that an ensemble of any kind has been selected to perform at a national convention, and it's a national championship of sorts for this terrific music group. Furthermore, this month's calendar is filled with theater productions, choir and ensemble concerts, lectures and more.

While strong academic opportunities and an active learning environment are at the forefront of our success, you also can be sure we'll be engaged with the northwest Missouri region and beyond as we enter this season of giving. Let me give you a few examples:

- During Homecoming week, Northwest students collected an outstanding 1,980 cans of food for the Ministry Center in conjunction with our annual canned art contest.
- Last week, Northwest students added to that total by collecting more than 2,100 pounds of food for the Ministry Center during our American Marketing Association's annual trick-or-treat for canned goods initiative. More than 100 students representing various campus organizations took part in the collection as well as helping Ministry Center volunteers weigh, sort, organize and put away the food.

- Our Bearcat soccer team, while in Joplin last weekend for a game against Missouri Southern, teamed up with that University's soccer squad and lent their support to the residents affected by the tornado that severely impacted that community last May. The players removed debris that still litters the streets and volunteered their time at a distribution center where generous donations are still arriving.
- Northwest's Up 'Til Dawn chapter has begun its 2011-12 campaign to raise funds for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. Last year's effort raised almost \$33,000 for the hospital, and organizers hope this year to exceed \$50,000 in donations by the time the campaign ends in March. Up 'Til Dawn's annual "Big Event" is 6 to 10 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 9, at the Student Recreation Center. Open to the public, it's a free carnival-themed event that's loaded with entertainment and centered on a letter-writing campaign. When you come, be sure to bring the names and addresses of friends and family members to mail prewritten letters asking them to donate to the cause.
- Throughout this month, Northwest is sponsoring its clothing drive, "Project Holiday Hope," and we're asking you to donate new or gently used blankets, adult gloves or mittens and hats. Simply leave your donations at collection stations during the Nov. 8 volleyball match (7 p.m.), the Nov. 12 football game (1 p.m.) or the Nov. 15 men's basketball game (7 p.m.), or leave them at collection bins in the Student Union and the Administration Building between Nov. 6 and our Holiday Tree Lighting at the Thomas J. Gaunt House on Nov. 29, at which you are invited to join us. Last year, you helped Northwest collect nearly 400 clothing items, and I'd love to see us top that total this year.

It's engaging in our community through service activities like these that helped put Northwest on the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll last spring for the fifth time since the federal listing was launched in 2006. Through service-learning projects, our students are making a positive impact and developing a connection with the Maryville community, while adding an invaluable dimension to their education.

Dr. John Jasinski is the 10th president of Northwest Missouri State University. For news and events at Northwest, visit www.nwmissouri.edu. For a complete listing of events at Northwest, visit calendar.nwmissouri.edu.