

**Maryville Daily Forum column**  
**Thursday, July 5, 2012**  
**Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President**

I hope you are having a relaxing and enjoyable summer and staying cool during this stretch of heat. Certainly, there are no signs of activity cooling off at Northwest! Once again, our community has hosted thousands of visitors from throughout the region this summer for Northwest's annual SOAR days, a variety of camps and community events.

SOAR, which stands for Summer Orientation Advisement and Registration, is an annual, daylong event to help incoming freshmen gain a better understanding of what they can expect during their first year at Northwest. Throughout eight SOAR dates occurring last month, Northwest drew about 1,300 incoming freshmen, plus their family members. Additionally, our assorted music and athletics camps have drawn more than 2,300 campers from throughout the four-state region.

Furthermore, events like the Heart of America Tractor Cruise help show off our Northwest hospitality. For the June 22-23 tractor cruise, about 190 tractors of all makes and models were parked adjacent to College Park on the Northwest campus, and more than 500 people attended the gathering before the tractors headed on to Conception Abbey that Saturday morning. All proceeds went to northwest Missouri children's charities.

No doubt, our June 23 Northwest Night at the Mustangs game also will go down as a highlight of the summer. Our Northwest contingent, which included many alumni and community members, helped set an all-time attendance record for the Mustangs with 4,231 at the historic Phil Welch Stadium in St. Joseph. Thank you to all of you who attended in support of Northwest and the Mustangs.

Looking ahead this month, our summer camps continue with opportunities for flutists and soccer players, among others, to learn from our talented staff and faculty. Also, there are just four weeks left of Northwest's free Summer Movie Series. Movies are shown each Tuesday at 7 p.m. in the Ron Houston Center for the Performing Arts and at 9 p.m. at the College Park Pavilion, weather permitting.

One of the events we are excited about this month is the series of cover crop workshops hosted by Northwest's Department of Agricultural Sciences. With the help of a grant from the Missouri Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), these workshops are aimed at educating local producers and gardeners on the virtues of using cover crops in their traditional production systems. The one-day event will feature guest speakers, including local producers, university experts and personnel from the NRCS. Free and open to the public, these workshops are a valuable learning opportunity we are pleased to offer to the community.

The workshops will be 8:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 10, beginning in Charles Johnson Theater. Onsite registration begins at 8 a.m., although pre-registration is recommended online at [www.nwmissouri.edu/ag/](http://www.nwmissouri.edu/ag/) or by calling the department at 660.562.1155.

We also are turning our attention to the upcoming school year. Projected enrollments for the fall are strong with, as I mentioned, about 1,300 freshmen set to become Bearcats. Additionally, the Board of Regents last week approved Northwest's FY2012-13 budget, which reflects a 2.6 cost-of-living adjustment for all Northwest employees. The budget also sets aside increased funds for scholarships, rising utility costs and facility improvements.

It was a lot of work and we remain mindful of continued challenges ahead in higher education, but I am proud that this budget supports the lifeblood of the University and will help us address our aging infrastructure. In addition, it reflects Northwest's priorities in protecting the access, affordability and quality of the education experience we offer and value at Northwest.

As I explained to Regents, Northwest has strengthened its financial position and this is a baby step. The University's leadership team remains committed to ensuring Northwest offers competitive salaries and benefits. It is our goal to continue to attract and keep the kinds of quality employees who not only make Northwest a place where students want to earn their college degrees but who also contribute to the local community, as so many of our employees have throughout the University's history.

*Dr. John Jasinski is the 10th president of Northwest Missouri State University. For news and events at Northwest visit [www.nwmissouri.edu](http://www.nwmissouri.edu).*