

Maryville Daily Forum column
Thursday, Dec. 6, 2012
Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

With the holiday season upon us, I've spent time reflecting on all the things for which I'm thankful this year. There is much about Northwest and our communities to celebrate, and I am so thankful for your contributions, continued dedication to Northwest and our culture of not only supporting our students, but each other. I could not possibly cite all of the aspects of Northwest life for which I am thankful, but please permit the chance to provide a snippet of areas of gratitude.

I am thankful for strong partnerships Northwest has forged with the Maryville community and other institutions. The city and Northwest are continuing a partnership on the Fourth Street Improvement Project, which has moved into the engineering and design phase. Northwest continues working with Maryville City Manager Greg McDanel and the Maryville City Council, and we are exploring several other ideas, initiatives and partnerships. Recently, we also strengthened our partnership with North Central Missouri College with the signing of an agreement that adds to our collaborative efforts and enhances our nursing program.

I am thankful for the wonderful support we receive from friends and community members. During our last Bearcat football regular season game, we announced a gift from Nodaway Valley Bank – the largest cash gift in athletics history – which provides funding for a new state-of-the-art video board and will help the athletics department enhance the game-day experience for our students and fans. This kind of support is important as we continue to assess our comprehensive campaign readiness and help mold Northwest's future.

I am thankful for our alumni and the success they are having after they leave Northwest. Alumni like Rachel Sneed, who is teaching music to children in China, Crystal Combs, who recently received two teacher of the year awards in Iowa, and Grant Venable, who is working with Be the Change Volunteers to build and equip schools in developing countries.

I am thankful for our Bearcat culture, the hands-on experiences we offer students and all of our faculty and staff who support student success – every student, every day. Students in Dr. Elyssa Ford's History of American Folklife course recently unveiled a wonderful exhibit, "The People and Places of Folk Music," that they designed and installed for the Nodaway County Historical Society. Other fine examples can be found in the national recognition earned by our student-operated radio station KZLX, which is advised by Dr. Jonathan Pluskota, the iPhone applications built by students in Dr. Michael Rogers' mobile computing course, or the Charolais bull, which was born and raised by Northwest students on the R.T. Wright Farm and last month won Reserve Grand Champion at the American Royal Livestock Show for the second consecutive year.

I am thankful for our culture of giving back to our community and to others. In conjunction with our annual holiday tree lighting ceremony Nov. 27, Northwest collected numerous blankets, warm weather clothing and goods for our annual Project Holiday Hope campaign to benefit families in need. It capped a generous outpouring of support by you and our Northwest community this fall as David Weichinger, Nodaway County director for Community Services, shared with us that Northwest donated about 5 tons of food and goods to the Ministry Center through collection drives organized by students and departments. Additionally, Northwest's Student Dietetics Association, Student Athlete Advisory Committee and KXCV radio station collected a combined \$1,600, plus 500 pounds of food, for the Backpack Buddies program.

As we enter this holiday season, I encourage all of us to step back, consider our blessings, show gratitude and reach out to those less fortunate.

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