

Maryville Daily Forum column
Thursday, Jan. 3, 2013
Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

I hope today's column finds all of you well and recharged for 2013. We had a wonderful fall trimester at Northwest that included many accomplishments and achievements, and I'm so proud of the role our community continues to play in Northwest's success, from our partnership to enhance the Fourth Street corridor to the students in our advanced advertising strategies course who last month delivered some stellar recommendations to rebrand the Mozingo Lake Recreation Area. Classes at Northwest resume Jan. 14, and I am looking forward to the new calendar year with anticipation of more great things for our university.

We closed our fall trimester and celebrated the accomplishments of a new group of Northwest graduates Dec. 14. A total of 459 students received their degrees during our winter commencement ceremony, and it was our second largest winter graduating class, behind only the 473 winter degree recipients in 2004.

Let me give you a snapshot of this latest graduating class:

- There were 355 undergraduate degree candidates, 98 graduate degree candidates and six specialists in education degree candidates.
- They ranged in age from 20 to 56 years old.
- The top three undergraduate majors in the graduating class were elementary education, business management and agricultural business, and the top graduate degree is applied computer science.
- Our graduating international students represented four countries – the Bahamas, India, Nepal and China.

Each of our graduates accomplished great things during their years at Northwest, and some made tough sacrifices to earn their degrees. Northwest students exhibit characteristics of persistence, perseverance and commitment to attain their goals, and this collection of graduates was no different. There are a multitude of stories we can share – you can find a few more of them by visiting Northwest's website – but I want to mention a few others here.

Sherry Wray of Maryville is one graduate who epitomizes the word "perseverance." Sherry began her college career at Northwest in the fall of 1980. As a single parent, she eventually put college on hold to work and raise her son, Alex. Sherry returned to classes in the spring of 2002, but in 2003 she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She has battled the disease ever since, as it has spread to several other areas of her body. But she pushed forward and received her bachelor of science degree last month in therapeutic recreation.

Sheri Roush set another fine example of persistence and perseverance. She was working toward her degree in food and nutrition with a dietetics emphasis when her mother, Phyllis Ware, was involved in a car accident that left her in a wheel chair. As a result, Sheri, who works at Head Start in Maryville, stepped away from her schooling to care for her mother. Through it all, both Sheri and Phyllis have remained positive and resilient. Sheri returned to Northwest to finish her degree and graduate in December. Phyllis, meanwhile, is working toward her degree in industrial psychology at Northwest and is president of Northwest's Association of Nontraditional Students.

Additionally, for the first time Northwest recognized its graduating military veterans with honor cords of intertwined red, white and blue satin to signify their service. Northwest honored Cody Alexander, Brian Hunter and Dale Sharp for their academic accomplishments, and we are pleased to claim them now as Bearcat alumni. We also keep in our thoughts graduate Bryce Webb, who was deployed to Afghanistan a

week before our commencement ceremony, and we gathered for a special commencement ceremony in his honor Dec. 5.

There are so many personal stories of courage and success among the class of 2012. As residents of northwest Missouri, your commitment to their success – every student, every day – is indeed impactful, and I thank you for the important role you play in making them feel welcome and part of our community. As we look to 2013 and beyond, on behalf of the Northwest Leadership Team, I wish you the happiest of new years!

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