

**Maryville Daily Forum
Thursday, Nov. 7, 2013**

Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

Northwest Missouri State University represents so many things to our region and our alumni throughout the world. So many people return to this "home away from home" each fall to celebrate what is a significant and special part of their lives.

The spirit that envelopes the campus during Homecoming week is always a joy, and I am always thankful for our students' commitment – along with our community's support – to making it successful. This year, students collected some 2,500 pounds of canned food for the Maryville Ministry Center during the annual canned art contest.

The International Flag Raising Ceremony, as always, also was a joyous occasion that highlights our diversity. And it's always a joy to reflect on our great athletics history during the annual M-Club Hall of Fame induction. This year's inductees included Maryville native John Edmonds, who played for the Bearcat football team from 1999 to 2003 and was one of two Division II athletes named a National College Football Scholar-Athlete in 2003.

Now, as we move into November, our students, faculty and staff turn their attention to finishing the fall trimester strong, in addition to the number of holiday-themed events that showcase the unique skills and hard work of our students. Among them, Northwest's Department of Fine and Performing Arts presents "The Nutcracker" as a puppet show Nov. 14-17, Nov. 21-24 and Dec. 5-8, and the 40th Annual Yuletide Feaste, featuring the award-winning Madraliers, is Dec. 6-7.

The support of people like you and the communities that make up northwest Missouri play a vital role in what makes Northwest Missouri State University great. Northwest benefits from the good people, places, events and stories of our region.

But recently, we have been cast in a light that is not so positive. The issue upon us of an alleged assault in Nodaway County is both sad and filled with plenty of choices and decisions that should be explored. Justice must prevail.

Yet, I am curious about how a community and a region can be cast in a blanketed approach by national and international media outlets. I ask we put away the sensationalism, the focus on ratings and selling papers and refocus on what makes northwest Missouri special – the good people, places, events and stories of our region.

We are a community that is filled with diverse industries, hard-working and salt-of-the-earth people, a plethora of churches and parks, a diversity of cultures and ideas, an educational system focused on student development and an unbelievably rich network of people and organizations helping their brothers and sisters in need. This has been the case for the last century and a half, was the case last month and is the case today.

My wife, Denise, and I chose to move here some 27 years ago. We have raised our kids here and celebrated our region. We are proud residents, and we are humbled to serve a leadership position in the region with so many authentic people who focus on uplifting others.

And so, I choose to focus forward. I expect justice to prevail, but I will not be changed in my everyday actions as we strive to make this region and this world a better place through education, economic growth, healthy living communities and connections to something much larger than us.

I ask that we reflect on all that is good in our lives and our community. Take some time during this Thanksgiving season and give thanks to the people and organizations around us. Let's not cast stones, but instead cast gratitude and inspire continued positive growth and hope.

Let's keep focusing forward and enhancing our region for the sake of the people to come after us.

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