

**Maryville Daily Forum  
Thursday, June 5, 2014**

**Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President**

It doesn't seem like it's already been a month since we closed out our 2013-2014 academic year at Northwest Missouri State and celebrated our spring commencement ceremonies, but the June calendar tells us otherwise. Yet, the hard work and activities that occur daily at Northwest do not cease during the summer months, and last weekend was indeed an eventful one that celebrated our past, present and future.

We welcomed some 275 active members and alumni – ranging in age from 18 to 85 – of Northwest's Delta Nu chapter of the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity back to campus to celebrate the chapter's 60th anniversary. Activities included a golf outing last Friday, a military recognition ceremony Saturday and culminated with a dinner banquet – and many stories were told about the impactful experiences Northwest and our community have on shaping lives. We were pleased to host Northwest's eighth president, Dr. B.D. Owens, and his wife, Sue, as part of the celebration along with numerous other individuals from so many walks of life.

Also, 44 students graduated Saturday from the Missouri Academy of Science, Mathematics and Computing – our early-entrance-to-college program that allows students to work toward an Associate of Science degree along with their high school diplomas – as members of that program's 13th commencement class.

Another highlight came Saturday afternoon as we celebrated the legacies left by Dr. Robert and Virginia Foster and commemorated the renaming of the University's new fitness center in their honor.

The contributions of Dr. Foster, who served as Northwest's seventh president from 1964 to 1977 and passed away in 2008 at the age of 90, were significant. Under his leadership, the campus expanded greatly and saw several major construction projects. He was instrumental in the creation of the Northwest Foundation, which soon funded the building of the Memorial Bell Tower – a campus icon today. He also had a leading role in securing funding to establish KXCV/KRNW, Northwest's award-winning 100,000-watt National Public Radio affiliate.

Dr. Foster, however, had a strong and loving life partner in his wife, Virginia, and it is only fitting as we prepare to transform the former aquatic center into a first-class health and fitness center that we recognize her contributions to the University of which the Fosters were so proud to be associated.

We had hoped Mrs. Foster would be with us for the renaming ceremony, but she passed away May 8 – just short of her 98th birthday. Mrs. Foster, who grew up in Maryville, was poignant and consistent about the importance of relationships and the focus on students. That is for what the Fosters stood, and Mrs. Foster was quite proud of where Northwest is headed with our focus on the health and wellness. The Fosters were advocates of students, and the dedication of the Foster Fitness Center – supported by our students – will stand testament to their lifelong advocacy of Bearcats.

A committee that includes representatives of our Department of Health and Human Services and Facility Services team is working with an architect to finalize plans for the facility. We aim to break ground later this summer and are targeting fall 2015 for the building's opening.

Add to that, the construction soon to begin on the Fourth Street Improvement Project will greatly enhance the corridor that connects the campus' main entrance with Maryville's downtown. We are so grateful for our partnership with the city and City Manager Greg McDanel's tremendous work on this project.

This is an exciting time at Northwest, and there are a few other notable events coming up this month.

Northwest's Summer Movie Series continues at 7 and 9 p.m. each Tuesday through July at the Ron Houston Center for the Performing Arts. Also, our summer camp season is underway with more than 550 campers having joined us this past weekend and thousands more expected to attend several athletics camps as well as our annual middle and high school choir and band camp. Northwest summer orientation dates for first-year students are June 20 through July 2 and will bring welcome traffic to the campus and our local businesses, too.

Finally, mark your calendar for the annual Northwest Night at the St. Joseph Mustangs Game – a popular summer tradition for Bearcat Nation – at 7 p.m. Saturday, June 21, at Phil Welch Stadium in St. Joseph.

*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).*