

**Local newspaper column
Thursday, Sept. 19, 2019**

Dr. John Jasinski, Northwest Missouri State University President

Family Weekend is upon us next week at Northwest Missouri State University, and it's one we look forward to each fall – because we embrace family at Northwest. The importance of not just family but support systems cannot be overstated at our university. These support systems motivate our students to be successful. They are guiding forces in our offices and in the communities in which we live. We lean on them to learn about the past, serve us in the present and, through input, help us in the future.

Bearcats pride themselves in making connections – “Bearcats Connect” is one of our marketing slogans – and we value what we have come to call the “Bearcat Family.” Certainly, the activities planned as we celebrate Family Weekend at Northwest are reflective of that, and we invite you to join us.

To kick off the weekend, we welcome President Emeritus Dr. B.D. Owens, who led Northwest from 1977 to 1984, and his wife, Sue, to reflect on their time at the university. Both graduated from Northwest and were members of the Student Senate. Dr. Owens, of course, guided our institution through a series of challenges during his presidency – not the least of which was the fire that nearly destroyed the historic Administration Building, the 40th anniversary of which we celebrated in July. We look forward to hosting a Q&A with B.D. and Sue at 2 p.m. Friday, Sept. 27, on the third floor of the B.D. Owens Library and encourage you to join the conversation. Then, from 3 to 4 p.m. in the library, take an opportunity to view a collection of Sue Owens' poetry books, which showcase her watercolor and acrylic paintings.

Friday evening, Northwest honors seven distinguished members of our family during our annual Alumni Awards Banquet, sponsored by the Northwest Alumni Association. I'm always amazed by the level of achievements and impacts of our alumni – throughout the world! – and this fall's award recipients are representative of that. They include Randell Moore, a sought-after economics expert; Rodney Edge, an Army veteran and president of a global logistics firm; and Dr. Ashley Leger, an accomplished paleontologist in Los Angeles. Additionally, closer to home, we honor Dr. Michael Rogers, an associate professor of computer science and information systems; Dr. Richard Fulton, a longtime political science professor; Allison Strong Hoffmann, who serves as the director of academic success and retention; and our talented university chef, Brad Jackson.

Family Weekend also provides a variety of entertainment that includes our annual Freshman/Transfer Showcase and features Northwest's newest performing arts majors. This year's production, titled “Directions” and directed by Professor of Theatre Dr. Joe Kreizinger, features original short plays and monologues written by Northwest students. Performances are 7:30 p.m. Sept. 26-28 in addition to matinees at 2 p.m. Sept. 28-29. Tickets are \$10 and may be purchased by phone at 660.562.1321 or at the box office up to one hour before the show.

Our Student Activities Council offers free evening entertainment for families. Comedian Kevin Bozeman performs at 6:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 27, at the Ron Houston Performing Arts

Center. Folk-rock band Arts Fishing Club performs at 7 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 28, at the Raymond J. Courter College Park Pavilion. Additionally, the Northwest Athletic Trainers hosts their annual 5K Run/Walk, beginning at 7 a.m. Saturday at Lamkin Activity Center.

And, of course, we have football. Our Bearcat football team takes the field against the University of Central Oklahoma at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 28, at Bearcat Stadium. Before the game, the Bearcat Zone tailgate starts at 11:30 a.m. in College Park. We'll also recognize our Northwest Family of the Year.

September is nearly over, but the 2019-20 academic year is only beginning at Northwest. Activities are abundant on the campus. Our Bearcat athletics seasons are off to successful starts, and our census enrollment date is next week. Looking ahead to October, Northwest hosts its seventh annual Missouri Hope emergency response field training exercise Oct. 4-6 and is seeking community members to volunteer as role players for the disaster scenario (learn how to volunteer by emailing Peter Adam at padam@nwmissouri.edu). Later in the month, during the week of Oct. 21-26, we host our annual Homecoming activities, which this year include a special event to kick off the university's "Forever Green" capital campaign.

As residents of our surrounding communities, you are part of the Bearcat Family, and we hope to see you on the Northwest campus to connect with us – during Family Weekend and year-round!

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