

Homecoming is a celebration of all of us

By Tisa Mason

Since my return here after three years away, I have been fond of saying “There’s no place like home.” I said that a lot, and wrote it a lot more, in the first few months after I came home to Fort Hays State University. Now we are in the middle of the one special week of the year that we call “Homecoming,” and I get to say it again: There’s no place like home.

From wherever they make their homes now, from near and far, thousands of people will come back to Fort Hays State this week because it is a place that makes a home in their hearts.

Here they will gather to celebrate a place where their futures began. We give special recognition to two groups, the 50-year (class of 1968) and 60-year graduates (class of 1958). They even have a special FHSU Alumni Association organization, the Half Century Club.

The Alumni Association will recognize three outstanding alumni with the Alumni Achievement Award for their accomplishments in their careers and for their service to community, state and nation, and to the university. Two others, who graduated more than 10 years ago but less than 15, will be honored with the Young Alumni Award for their accomplishments and service. One alumni will receive the Nita M. Landrum Award for volunteer service to the Alumni Association and FHSU.

These alumni return to a place that meant so much to them in their early years. They come to a place they once knew very well to see how it has changed, to take note of its growth. They come especially to see friends, classmates, faculty and staff.

One special event at every homecoming is the Half Century Club Luncheon and Induction. This year, the class of 1968 will officially be welcomed into the club.

People who are now in the beginning or middle of their working careers, like the half century Tigers, are also here to see what is the same and what is not, what is old and what is new.

The visitors will gather into various other reunion families. This year has several special events for specific disciplines and interests. There is something for everyone:

- Of several events featuring art and design graduates and students, one will involve molten iron being cast into forms.
- A social for basketball alumni, men and women from all years.
- A 10-year reunion for tourism and hospitality management graduates.
- A celebration to mark the 80th anniversary of the Department of Political Science.
- A luncheon for geosciences alumni.
- Tailgate events for Tiger Friends and Family, the College of Education, and tourism and hospitality alumni, in addition to all the tailgate parties for individual families or groups.
- A 5K Run/Walk for fitness buffs and people who just like to run or walk.
- Several T-shirt exchanges, where you can trade in some other university’s shirt and get an Tiger Gold on Friday T-shirt, instead.
- Special reunion events for alumni of the 1974 baseball team.

All of these activities and events, and many others, are not only for the graduates but for faculty, staff, family and community, because all of those things are part of what we are. This week is set aside – designed – to bring all the different parts and pieces together to rejoice in what we have done, individually and together. It means bonfires, parades, football and soccer and a host of other things that can’t be listed in a schedule of events – sights, sounds, conversations, old friends, new friends, old things and new things.

In other places and in other ways, I have said that the culture of Fort Hays State encourages and rewards hard work, dedication and perseverance. Our students, faculty and staff, our alumni and our friends, are dedicated to the proposition that we all need to be life-long learners, unafraid to experiment and innovate. We are committed to each other's success and the success of our community, state, nation and the world. We help and encourage each other. Together, we have worked and learned.

Today, this week, at home – which, by the way, there's no place like – we celebrate together. The welcome mat is out. Come join us.