With just over a month to spare, members of the Missouri State-West Plains university community met their goal of giving 50,000 hours of service to area communities as part of the Operation 50K initiative.

The year-long community service initiative began following 2013 commencement ceremonies as a way to honor the campus’ 50th anniversary. Students, faculty, staff, alumni and others with ties to the university were asked to log their volunteer hours online until 2014 commencement on May 17 with hopes of reaching the 50,000-hour goal by that time.

Instead, the goal was surpassed just over a month before the deadline, and University officials were able to announce at the May 17 commencement ceremony that a total of 56,531 hours had been contributed.

When calculated at Missouri’s minimum wage of $7.50 per hour, Operation 50K participants gave $423,982 worth of labor to the community through such causes as the Adopt-A-Street program, local Boy Scout troops, the West Plains Area Boys and Girls Club, Christos House, 4-H programs, Habitat for Humanity, the Red Cross and the Salvation Army, among others.

In August, Missouri State-West Plains was ranked sixth in the nation in the “Best Community Colleges” category of the 2013 Washington Monthly College Rankings.

Editors at Washington Monthly based their rankings for community colleges on two sources – The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the U.S. Department of Education measures of student retention and completion.
Missouri State-West Plains wrapped up its year-long 50th anniversary celebration this past year with a 1963-themed gala dinner Sept. 12 at the West Plains Civic Center and a grand reception Sept. 16 at the Student Recreation Center.

Through dramatic readings, guests to the sold-out gala dinner were reminded of the many changes that have occurred at the University during the past 50 years and were told the accomplishments of the past have prepared the University for continued success in its mission for years to come. The event proved to be great fun and a huge success.

The Sept. 16 celebration marked the very day classes began at the University 50 years ago. More than 700 community leaders and dignitaries, area residents, and students, faculty and staff attended the event to mark the historic milestone and welcome Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon as the event’s featured speaker. Nixon praised the University for being “a beacon of higher education” and a “campus of opportunity” for area residents – past, present and future.

Donations to the Annual Fund are making a direct and immediate impact on the lives of students attending Missouri State-West Plains.

Begun in 2007, the fund provides money for five different University areas that cannot be funded through state appropriations or tuition. These areas include campus technology/labs/facilities, scholarships, emergency grants, educational initiatives and University/Community programs.

The funds keep students in school and fill in the gaps that state-appropriated budgets cannot.

For more information about the Annual Fund and methods for giving to the University, contact the development office at 417-255-7240 or visit the office’s website at www.wp.missouristate.edu/development.
Missouri State-West Plains received a $2.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor through its Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) Program. The grant, which began Oct. 1, 2013, and extends through Sept. 30, 2017, will fund several new academic programs in allied health and agriculture for displaced workers in the area, other unemployed and underemployed adults, and veterans.

Enrollment at Missouri State-West Plains increased 1 percent for the 2013 fall semester. The figures show 2,123 students took classes at the University during the fall semester, compared to 2012’s overall tally of 2,102 students.

The William and Virginia Darr Honors Program surpassed the 100-student, single-year enrollment mark for the first time in its 15-year history during the fall semester. More than 470 students have enrolled in the program since its inception. Approximately 90 percent of the program’s graduates have transferred to four-year institutions and graduated with a bachelor’s degree.

A total of 278 students were candidates for graduation at Missouri State-West Plains’ May 17 commencement ceremony at the West Plains Civic Center. In addition, 41 students in Missouri State University-Springfield’s graduate and undergraduate degree programs, some of which are available locally through the Missouri State Outreach Program, also participated in the ceremony. Missouri State University Board of Governors member Orvin Kimbrough gave an inspiring keynote address.

For the 18th consecutive year, Missouri State-West Plains students scored at or above the national average on all five categories of the CAAP examination.

In addition to numerous publications by faculty members throughout the year, Associate Professor of English Frank Priest served as editor of Yonder Mountain: An Ozarks Anthology, published by the University of Arkansas Press. The anthology features poems, short stories and essays that celebrate the region’s unique culture while addressing the changes it faces as it becomes more diverse. Distinguished Professor of English Craig Albin and Associate Professor of English Phillip Howerton contributed pieces to the anthology, along with such authors as Donald Harington, Sara Burge, Marcus Cafagna, Art Homer, Pattinann Rogers, Miller Williams, Roy Reed and Daniel Woodrell.

Professor of History Ed McKinney was featured in Missouri State University-Springfield’s Public Affairs Spotlight website series. He was recognized for his efforts to pass along the old-time music of the region, individually and as a member of the Sunnyside Up band. The Public Affairs Spotlights feature students, faculty and staff members of the Missouri State University System who live the public affairs mission.

Rachel Peterson, recruitment specialist, Missouri State University Staff Excellence in Community Service Award
Barbara Nyden, assistant professor of accounting/entrepreneurship, Governor’s Award for Excellence in Education
Dr. Herb Lunday, dean of student services, Staff Excellence in Public Affairs Award

Missouri State-West Plains, Business of the Year Award, Greater West Plains Area Chamber of Commerce
Mariah Gregg, Missouri State-West Plains graduate, Missouri State University Board of Governors’ Citizen Scholar Award
Dakota Bates, Student Government Association president, Campus Compact’s Newman Civic Fellows Award