

NIU DAY OF REMEMBRANCE
CHERYLYN G. MURER, CHAIR
NIU BOARD OF TRUSTEES
10:30 AM, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2009

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Good morning, and welcome to the Northern Illinois University Convocation Center. Thank you all for joining us today for this memorial service. My name is Cheryl Murer, and I am chair of the NIU Board of Trustees and a proud alum.

It is my duty – and my honor – to begin this campus-wide day of remembrance as we mark the one-year anniversary of the terrible events of February 14, 2008. I hope you all can and will participate in the many activities planned today.

Convention holds that we mark anniversaries, both happy and sad, and so we gather here today. We are here today to honor our fallen students whose lives were snatched by a single act of violence. We are here today to honor their parents, their siblings, their families who have suffered immeasurable pain. We are here today to honor the students of this great university who consoled each other, not only on that tragic day, but the weeks and months thereafter. We are here today to honor the first responders who appeared on the scene like angels. We are here today to honor the faculty who so patiently nurtured their students while continuing to prod them to learn and excel.

Thousand of lives touched by FIVE.

There never was a moment's doubt that we would overcome the adversity of the situation; that we would prevail. We discovered in our grief that we were sisters and brothers, united with loved ones and strangers, in the pursuit of healing. We learned how to take care of others – and ourselves. We found in one another the strength to carry on, the compassion that allowed us to cry and the comfort that eventually dried our tears. We realized more than ever the delicate and wonderful gift of life and the priceless value of family and friends. We learned that the best way to move forward – together forward – was to resume our work...to earn our degrees...to teach our classes...to conduct our research. Gayle, Catalina, Julianna, Ryanne and Dan had dreams. We honor them when we fulfill our own. We honor them as well by working to make NIU the best university it can be: every step we take... every degree we grant...every breakthrough we celebrate...is their legacy. We move ahead because that is what they would have wanted. We move ahead because we must.

When President Peters said a year ago that we would not be defined by an act of violence, people everywhere rallied around that promise. Today, we recommit ourselves to that vow. Our hearts were broken on February 14th and among those saddened hearts was that of John Peters. He has cried with the families and with us. He has walked with us and consoled us. He has led this university with valor and compassion.

So it is my honor to introduce to you the 11th President of Northern Illinois University. Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome Dr. John G. Peters.