

I love Thanksgiving! And not just because of my Mom's ice cream pumpkin pie, (which is outstanding by the way - I'll get you the recipe if you contact me). It is also a time of reflecting on all we have and being grateful for what we have received.

NCCC is so lucky to have such a wonderful supportive service area in Neosho, Franklin, and Anderson Counties. The county and city leadership, the businesses and public schools have been so great to work with as we go about our mission of enriching our communities and our students' lives.

I feel very blessed to have such a wonderful group of employees. It is the faculty, administration, and staff that make NCCC a great college. I am thankful for our excellent students who give us purpose.

Personally, I have a great many things to be thankful for. I have a great family with my beautiful, intelligent wife and two awesome daughters (can you tell they proof read my columns before I send them in?). But on this special holiday, I would like to spend a moment to give a very public thanks to a person that I have never met, one that helped me immensely.

I went through college on a series of loans, grants, and my own part-time work as a desk clerk at a residence hall. As the son of a high school secretary and a Greyhound bus driver our family was not well off and I had to find my own way to pay for college. But part of my college expenses were paid by a music scholarship and for this, I am truly grateful.

For four years I sang baritone in the select choir at Oklahoma State University under the direction of Dr. Jerry McCoy. It was daily practice for one hour followed by the occasional performance. I loved being in the choir, meeting people, and sharing my limited talent. I enjoyed the music very much as it offered me so many new experiences.

In my freshmen year, I was picked to sing in an octet that was accompanied by a four-piece orchestra. I had never heard violins and other stringed instruments played in person before, only recordings. It was like I was hearing stringed instruments for the first time. I told my director with wide-eyed wonder that I could hear the sound echoing off of the wood! It was so rich and beautiful. That was a wonderful experience. But I am digressing.

I needed to sing in the choir for the scholarship. I greatly needed that money to help me get my bachelor's degree. It was not a lot of money, but it meant that I borrowed less to get through my first degree. And now I have gone on to get my masters, doctorate and to succeed professionally. Would I have gone to college without getting that scholarship? Sure, but I would have been in a lot more debt when I graduated and I would not have made friends in the choir that I still have today or learned to love music as much as I do now.

Someone gave Dr. McCoy money to attract singers, to have a good choir for the institution, and to help a student get through school. I never learned the name of my benefactor. I just know I am so thankful for the help he and/or she gave me. So I am sending out this public thank you to that person who greatly impacted my life in hopes that this message reaches them.

Many of you reading this had a similar experience. You might have received a scholarship or award of some type to help you get through college. Maybe you played a sport, or got an academic award, or received a service scholarship. You made it through school in small part because some stranger you never met (or maybe you have and didn't know it) helped you.

Each year many people give money to our college to help our students. Last year the college foundation gave out \$39,206 worth of scholarships to NCCC students. On the students' behalf, please allow me to say thank you. Those funds truly help.

I will take a moment and tell you that the college still has tax credits to sell for this year. When you "buy" a tax credit, say for \$500, the college gets the \$500, but you get a tax credit worth \$270 that you can take directly off your Kansas taxes. It is the best way to give to the college for the maximum personal benefit. The money will be used to modernize our science labs that have not been updated since 1968. We are also using tax credit money in revitalizing our health sciences labs with a new simulated hospital in a renovated Rowland Hall.

Perhaps it is time to help someone the way you were helped. If you would like to help students too, please contact me or Claudia Christiansen at the college.

I hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving! Thanks for reading my column! Thanks for supporting our college. And I have just one more thanks to give – thanks to the Borden milk man that gave my grandma the ice cream pumpkin pie recipe so many years ago! (Wow, I'm salivating as I type this.) As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions at binbody@neosho.edu.