

I reported last month that Jen and I were all set to be “empty nesters”. Alayna, our youngest, has moved out now and Jen and I are adjusting to life the way it used to be 21 years ago before our oldest was born. Here’s what I have learned so far.

You get the TV remote back! Yes! No more, “Dad, what are you watching?!?! Turn it to something we all would like,” which often meant Disney or some romantic comedy. I can now watch an action movie like John Wick in peace, well, as much peace as you can get watching John Wick.

Some items are back on the menu! We stopped making some of our old favorites like jambalaya as they were HATED by the girls. It’s been nice to not have to ask, “What sounds good?” to two teenagers who just shrug, then say “no” to almost every meal suggestion you make.

You can go to sleep at night without worrying too much or waiting for the front door to slam! Are they out all night at college? I don’t know. Sometimes ignorance is bliss.

They actually talk to you on the phone! When they lived at home they were always busy with something else, but now when you call or, SHOCKINGLY they call you, they actually communicate beyond, “Dad I’m watching TV. I’ll talk to you when you get home.”

They may appreciate what we know just a little bit more than they used to! Alayna has called with LOTS of cooking questions, and Abrielle has had some “adulthood” inquiries like, “Dad have you ever heard of a W-4 form?” Yes, I have and I can help.

At home, we may have over-corrected a little as we now have a new puppy at our house to combat the empty nest. Sophie is her name, a half cavalier spaniel/half poodle. She’s been a lot of fun! But I’m looking forward to when she sleeps through the night and is fully house broken!

It’s a new day at the Inbody house, but it is a new day at the college too! A new academic year is all set to begin! It’s always a wonderful time at NCCC, seeing returning students back on campus and new students anxious but excited. And seeing fellow parents dropping students off at the residence hall, perhaps a bit sad as they pull away from campus.

This year is going to be exciting at NCCC! We have a lot of great things planned that will be new this year. For instance we are launching three new academic programs this fall! We have never started three programs in the same semester before. That’s a lot of new options for students. We have added aerostructures, industrial maintenance technology, and paralegal to the LONG list of career and technical education programs we offer at NCCC.

New this year is the Kansas Promise Act that allows a huge group of students who qualify to attend college at NO COST in almost all of those career and technical education courses. Programs like welding, nursing, construction, occupational therapy assistant, HVAC, surgical technology, our three new programs above, and many others are on the list of qualified programs. If you know someone who might be interested in getting a degree or certificate in career and technical education just direct them to the home page of our website. The application is there and the time is right now!

We will also be renovating our newest facility at Ross Lane in Chanute, the recently renamed Mitchell Career and Technology Center! Thanks to generous gifts from the Sunderland Foundation, USD 413, and, of course Mike and CeCe Mitchell, we are breaking ground soon on a \$2.6 million renovation. I’ve seen the first drawings of the building and it’s going to be a real showplace for career and technical

education. Gone will be the days of the old dark tech labs, replaced with a modern, and dare I say, “cool” building that students will be proud to attend.

On the Chanute campus we will be adding turf to the softball field for the first time and re-turfing the baseball field as well. It is hard to believe that it has been twelve years since that turf was installed on the baseball field. It was supposed to last eight years but we got twelve out of it.

While the COVID Pandemic enters a new phase, so have our protocols to deal with it and keep all of our faculty, staff, students and visitors safe. I am excited to tell you that students will be returning to the classroom for face-to-face instruction. Last year we had half the students in class while the others joined by live video. It worked but it was not ideal. This year everyone who wants to be back is back in class. If a student wants to take an online class they have that option, but for the most part, gone are the days of students taking class in their PJs on their phones. Now they just come to class in their PJs.

We are inviting guests back as well! Senior lunch after Labor Day is happening, as are civic club meetings and other public gatherings. Sports will allow fans in the stands, and more importantly during their actual traditional season instead of all crammed in the spring semester. We put on 75 home sporting events in just four months last year! Let’s never do that again. For now we are requiring masks on our campuses until things improve in our service area in terms of active positive cases and hospital occupancy. I appreciate your understanding. Let’s hope things improve soon!

Nothing stays the same except change. It is a time of excitement as we embrace all these new changes at home and at the college. What a year it will be! Now I have to take the dog out...again.

If you have any questions about this column or anything else at the college, please email me at [binbody@neosho.edu/](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu)