

With all this warm weather we are having I was remembering back to my summers in Michigan. It rarely got past 80 degrees there in the summers, which was lovely. But with those summers came very harsh winters! It was not worth the tradeoff.

I'm an Oklahoma boy by birth and while we had our share of weather there when I was growing up, I was unprepared for just how bad it was in the Snow Belt of Michigan. I'm not exaggerating when I say that the average snowfall for our town was 99 inches each year. Here in Kansas we get significant snow, however, you might expect a warm day soon to melt that off. Not so in Michigan. The snow just stays until spring.

Christmas 2002 I remember returning to Michigan from visiting family here, after driving all night so the babies would sleep through it. I was dead tired, ready for sleep, only to find a literal Wall of Snow in my driveway that had been plowed there. The town got some 24 inches of snow while we were gone and the snowplows just kept piling it up in my drive with no one there to dig it out. I parked across the street, got my snow shovel and dug out the drive while the family slept in the car.

Later that day, after I rested a bit, my wife took out a map of Kansas, drew a circle around the southeast corner of the State and simply said, "Anything in here will be fine." Message received. I started looking for a job closer to home.

It turned out to be an amazing win-win. Neosho County Community College was looking for a Vice President for Student Learning and I was looking to move up from the Dean level.

You can't get much closer to Fredonia, my wife's girlhood home, while working in higher education. And Chanute was just 100 miles straight up Highway 169 from my boyhood home of Collinsville, OK. Jen had left her degree program in school counseling at PSU to follow me to Michigan, so she was able to complete her degree. Our parents got to have their granddaughters close by, and our kids, in turn, got to have a closer relationship with them. Plus, free babysitting! I got to move up the ladder and, I believe, NCCC got a good administrator who later became the President.

And the weather was MUCH better!

It was a win-win all the way around. I always love it when I can find a win-win solution, where everyone or nearly everyone in a situation can come away with a victory. Ok, my old college lost a Dean, but let's face it, they lost me on about the 30th time in one winter I had to dig out that driveway.

Thanks to the State of Kansas, NCCC has some new opportunities to provide some win-win situations for our students and maybe for you as well!

Last year you heard about the Promise Act. It's a State of Kansas initiative to provide career and technical education (CTE) in a large variety of programs, such as nursing, welding, and occupational therapy assistant, at no cost! Kansas got more nurses, construction workers, HVAC techs, etc., which we sorely need right now, NCCC got much wanted enrollment, and students didn't have to pay or take out a loan for their tuition and fees! It was a real win-win!

In fact, NCCC was one of only five community colleges to give out all of our Promise Act scholarships. Over \$190,000 worth of scholarships went to 64 students, an average of about \$3,000 per student. We actually gave out more than our allocation and got more money from the State, which was wonderful! Those 64 avoided significant student loan debt and moved forward with their aspirations in CTE fields

that are in high demand. The Promise Act requires that they live in the State for at least two years, so soon they will be making a great salary and returning those tax dollars to Kansas to help the next set of students.

The Promise Act was funded again for next year, so we have more funds to help students get that CTE degree or certificate and get a great paying job – all at no cost! Thank you Kansas!

And we have another win-win opportunity new this year. The State of Kansas gave the community colleges the opportunity for tax credits! After July 1, if you give NCCC money for deferred maintenance or capital improvements you will get 60% of that donation back on your state taxes for 2022. So, if you give our foundation, say \$1,000, then when you file your taxes next April, Kansas will give you back \$600 of that donation on your taxes! NCCC gets \$1,000 to improve our facilities for our students, and you get \$600 off your state taxes! That's a huge win-win!

If you are interested in getting one of these tax credits please let me or Kelly Colter, the Director of Development, know soon. Her email is kcolter@neosho.edu. These tax credits are on a first come, first served basis. We have a limited amount of tax credits we can give out. These are for both personal and business taxes too, so some businesses might be interested as well. Please contact us soon if you want part of this win-win!

Coming to Kansas in 2003 is something I have never regretted. Jen and I raised our family here, found wonderful jobs, great friends, and a beautiful community. Our families loved having us close and my girls got to have a meaningful relationship with their grandparents. It has truly been a win-win for us.

While I don't love those hot Kansas days ahead this summer, I sure don't miss that snow shoveling!

If you have any questions about this column or anything else about the college, or are interested in a tax credit, please email me at binbody@neosho.edu!