

I was pulling up to a drive-thru last week in Chanute, picking up some food for my family. I rolled down my window to pay when the attendant told me that there was no charge. "What?" I replied. "The person in front of you paid for yours," the attendant told me. Wow. How nice! Whomever did this, I hope this column finds you so I can say thank you. I, in turn, paid for the car behind me. I'm hopeful that it went on for a while.

At the college on Monday, I received a forwarded email from a student who wanted to send a message to the President. I always wince when I see this. I was getting ready for an indictment of something we did or tried to do. My wife, Jen, can tell you I always take these comments pretty hard. But, instead, the email was a pleasant surprise.

The student told of where their life was headed but how through the employees they met at NCCC, the student was able to get great grades this semester. The student wants to transfer on to university and become, in their words, an "educated person." They wanted the President to know just what a difference NCCC has made in their life. Wow again.

There is a quote I'm fond of that came to mind through these two small events – "So shines a good deed in a weary world." This is actually a slight updating of a line in Shakespeare's, *The Merchant of Venice*. Who said it? That great philosopher Willy Wonka. Longtime readers of this column know I love movies (perhaps a little too much).

It is a very weary world right now. There is no denying it. People are tired, stressed, angry, disappointed, and fearful, all at the same time. So, in an effort to shine a bit, here are some good things happening at NCCC despite this weary world.

Every other year we survey our students as to how satisfied they are with the college and how well we are meeting their expectations. Our report this year shows that we are way up from the previous study in almost every category - student services, instructional effectiveness, campus climate, student centeredness, admissions and financial aid, and academic advising effectiveness! In almost every area we did a better job of meeting student expectations than other community colleges in the nation we were compared to!

We have received the first round of approvals from the Technical Education Authority subcommittee for two new programs we hope to bring to the area in fall of 2021, Aerostructures and Industrial Maintenance Technology. While we still have to go through a few more hoops to get final approval, I believe we will. That could mean local training for good paying local jobs. And we are partnering with USD 413 (Chanute) and USD 257 (Iola) to bring even more new programs to the area in the coming years.

For the first time this fall we will be offering construction and certified nursing assistant at the LaHarpe Technical Center to area high schools including USD 257 (Iola), USD 256 (Marmaton Valley), USD 505 (Chetopa), USD 235 (Uniontown), USD 479 (Crest), and USD 366 (Woodson). The partnership between these districts to create the LaHarpe center has been wonderful and we are happy to be a part of it.

At Ottawa we will be adding a Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) program to the Ottawa campus and expanding that program in our northern service area. This is an exciting expansion of our program!

Our nursing certification boards (known as the NCLEX) pass rate has increased substantially in the first quarter so we are happy about that too! In fact, Ingram's Magazine named us one of the top nursing programs in the area, and the number two community college for nursing!

On campus, among the employees we began an electronic message board to spread cheer. We called this board "SHO Kindness." Employees have posted many messages of support and thanks to keep spirits up.

We continue to give the Ben Smith Service Award each month to an employee who goes above and beyond the call of duty. They get the award through nominations from students, community members and fellow employees. Those who were nominated but who were not selected for the award still get a card from me that lists what the nominator wrote about them. I see the cards pinned up to employees' bulletin boards in their offices. It certainly brightens their day to receive the nominations.

And, most importantly among our good deeds and news, we had over 400 students graduate earning a combined over 600 awards total this academic year! That is outstanding! Congratulations to all of the graduates! They succeeded despite COVID-19, something that should add a little extra honor to what they have accomplished.

So as we continue to mitigate against the pandemic, installing various plans to keep our students and employees safe through the crisis, it is important to stop and see what is going well, and what good deeds do exist.

Now more than ever it is important to spread some kindness, compliments, and love. If you want to make a difference in these times then do what you can to help others. It is time to spread good deeds to shine brightly in this weary world.

If you have any questions about this column or anything else please contact me at binbody@neosho.edu.