

Awards and trophies often run the gambit from a well-earned representation of a life's work or rare accomplishment, to "everyone gets a trophy" participation awards. In my life, I have earned my share of awards and trophies. The trophy I was most proud of growing up was in the academic quiz bowl in high school.

Though I had made the team, I was not considered one of the top four smartest (those of you who know me well will not be shocked by that). I was on the bench for the first round at regionals when our team captain froze on stage with everyone one looking at her. I guess the pressure was too much. The coach put me in for the second round and I got "in the zone," or at least lucky in the category of questions they asked. Our team went on to the finals and I went on to win the award for answering the most questions at the meet even though I had missed the first round. I surprised my team and coach, but mostly I surprised myself. That was a sweet trophy!

However, some you win and some you lose.

For over 20 years I have tried to win a trophy which has consistently slipped away. I'm talking of course about the coveted Marshmallow Spit trophy at the Howard Olympics. Each year my in-laws, Calvin and Judy Howard, hold the Howard Olympics, a combination loving family reunion and all-out war for dominance. It consists of a variety of games that change each year, but ending in the traditional Marshmallow Spit distance competition.

I am currently 0-20 in that yearly competition. Over the years I have scored in the top three in spitting, but now the new generation is coming into its own. None of the original attendees who were my competition at the inaugural Olympics have won in several years. The all-time record was set last year and stands at an incredible 41.5 feet by my niece Lindsay's 20 something year-old husband. My longest was only about 25 feet last year. Like Joe Montana playing for the KC Chiefs some years ago, I fear my time has passed. Unlike Joe Montana, I never won in the first place.

At NCCC we give many awards. We are so proud of our students who earn medals and trophies from staff and faculty members for their wonderful work! We also give service awards and the Award of Excellence to members of our faculty and staff when they go above and beyond the call of duty to advance our mission. This year the Award of Excellence went to Claudia Christiansen, the Director of Development, for all she does for the NCCC Foundation, and Nathan Stanley, math instructor and Director of Assessment, who cares deeply about student success.

NCCC has received many awards itself over the years. Just a few examples, we have won national awards for our outcomes assessment system and for our design of the Ottawa Campus. We have received service awards from Relay for Life and from the Boy Scouts for hosting many successful events here. The College treasures these awards, but mostly we are proud of the positive effect these events and accomplishments that won us these awards are having on our students and community.

We work very hard on both parts of our mission – enriching our communities and enriching our students' lives. But for a moment I would like to focus on that first part.

The College as a whole works very hard to accomplish our mission of enriching our communities. For instance, last year alone our student athletes performed over 4,400 hours of community service. They help out with all of the large-scale events like the Rodeo, Artist Alley, and Oktoberfest every year, but

also help in smaller yet incredibly important ways like tutoring at Cherry Street Youth Center, or teaching soccer to kids.

Our clubs and organizations get involved too, hosting community concerts, plays and art shows. They often team with groups like St. Cecelia, Chanute Community Theatre, the Fire Escape, the Memorial Auditorium, USD 413 and others to create cultural events for everyone to enjoy.

We work closely with the Chanute Recreation Commission to offer a variety of experiences, most notably hosting youth soccer on our campus. And we host our own summer camp, "Kids College" where youngsters experience a wide range of things from rocket building to fishing.

In a recent survey our employees documented over 7,000 hours of community service per year spent helping a variety of organizations from church boards to public service, to K-12 school support.

NCCC believes very strongly in workforce training, helping a variety of employers find and prepare new employees and retraining existing employees for new challenges. We are a partner with the Chanute Regional Development Authority, helping to attract and retain businesses in this area.

All of this brings me back to awards and specifically a new one that means the world to me.

Recently we were very honored to receive the 2017 Business of the Year from the Chanute Chamber of Commerce. I could not have been more proud of Board of Trustees, employees and students who have helped make this possible.

NCCC is very proud to be a supporter and advocate for all of cities in its service area, but with Chanute we have a long wonderful history. We started as Chanute Junior College in 1936. Chanute has hosted our largest campus for nearly 50 years now when moved from the high school to our current location in 1968. We are proud of our long relationship and proud of the wonderful symbiotic success and growth we have had together.

We know our mission well and spend every day trying to advance it. We understand that to whom much is given much is required. NCCC, its Board, employees and students give all we can to return what has been is given us. We do it to enrich all our communities and our students and that is award enough. But it sure is nice to be recognized for it every now and again.

Thank you to the Chanute Chamber of Commerce for this wonderful recognition.

And now, off to the backyard to practice spitting marshmallows.

If you have any comments about this topic or anything else about NCCC please email me at [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu).