

It's one of my favorite times of the year, Pre-Christmas – formally known as Thanksgiving! Christmas continues its march towards total domination. I saw Christmas-themed TV ads in mid-October. My fancy radio has 13 (!) Christmas music stations already on the air in early November. And now there are three cable channels that play romantic Christmas-themed movies 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

My wife LOVES these movies. If you love them too see if this sounds familiar. Big city girl moves to quaint small town for (INSERT REASON) and meets a widower/divorcee (PICK ONE) with a small child who has lost the spirit of Christmas. Can she rekindle his love of the holiday while falling in love herself? I'm betting yes. Together they save the town from financial ruin, or win the baking contest, or enlist the help of Mrs. Claus/A Christmas Angel (PICK ONE AGAIN) to save the day while finding love for themselves. Ugh. Reach for the Kleenex.

My favorite Christmas movie is Die Hard.

But as much as I love Christmas, we can't forget about Thanksgiving. Giving thanks is so incredibly important. Researchers who study happiness have found that one of the key ingredients to keep your happiness level high is gratitude. Taking action to show how grateful you are for what you have and who you have become is one of the secrets to happiness. Folks who show their gratitude to others through letters, notes, or personal visits to the people they are grateful to report a higher level of happiness for MONTHS after taking that action.

Try it yourself and see! Think about someone in your life that has made a difference to you, then write them a letter telling them how grateful you are for what they did. The research says you'll be happier and the person receiving the letter will be happier too. According to the research, writing that letter is more effective in raising your happiness level for a longer period of time than receiving about any present this Christmas. And all it costs to do it is a stamp and some time. Remember letters? Turns out the US Post Office still delivers those.

With this in mind I would like to say thank you and show my gratitude for some folks that are making a big impact on NCCC in 2019.

Earlier this year NCCC purchased a factory on Ross Lane in Chanute for \$275,000. It is a 64,000 square foot facility, so that makes the cost a mere \$4.30 a square foot. Wow, that's quite the Black Friday special! Much of the value of that facility was essentially donated to the college to make this deal happen. So a big thank you to the former owners of the Midwest Cabinets factory, especially John Griffin, for making this happen. By the way, the \$275,000 came from our out-district fee account which is replenished by fees paid by students who live outside our taxing district. No local or state aid was used to pay for the building. So thanks to those students too!

Another person who wishes to remain nameless is helping us more fully utilize the new building well ahead of our previous timeline. About 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the Ross Lane building will be used for an indoor practice facility for many of our outdoor teams, like baseball, softball, track, and soccer. It's not a lot of fun to practice outside during January in Kansas. There is being "tough" and then there is frostbite.

The administration had a plan to phase in the usage of this new facility over the next couple of years as money was available to fix it up. It was a factory after all, and many changes are needed to make it into an athletic practice field. Fortunately, NCCC received a generous anonymous gift which paid for about half of the netting and artificial turf needed to bring the facility on line right now! So, we will be ready

for students to practice in January 2019 instead of later in the fall or January 2020. Thank you anonymous person! You are greatly appreciated!

We will be having an open house for the Ross Lane facility on January 17<sup>th</sup>, from 4pm-6pm. Please come join us to see the results of these generous gifts!

Later in 2019, beginning in the summer, the Trustees will be moving forward with renovation of the dining hall and the Oak Room, which is our formal dining room and board meeting room. The dining hall and the Oak Room are used by the students often, of course, but also by a large number of community groups, clubs, and organizations. We also host seniors there every Thursday for lunch, often at the same time we are hosting other events Like Rotary, Chamber of Commerce meetings, or International Week in the Oak Room. It's used a lot and it's getting crowded.

NCCC has received a very generous donation from the Ash Grove Foundation to fix up the Oak Room and restore it to the fancy meeting/dining room it was designed to be. Thank you so much Ash Grove Foundation!

Due to the addition of the Ross Lane facility we are moving some employees around a bit. This office musical chairs will vacate some space in the Student Union and allow us to expand the dining hall by a significant amount. The result will be another area that can serve as an extension of the existing dining hall or a separate added dining room when the need arises.

Great Western Dining has given to this project. Great Western is the company we hire to provide food service for the campus. They do an excellent job! We will be adding some new capabilities and updating some equipment in the kitchen as part of this, or have already done it. Have you seen the white addition on the side of the Student Union? That's a brand new refrigerator/freezer for the kitchen, which is about three times the size of the old one that was fading out. If you know our wonderful chef, Clarke Wilson, he is very happy with this addition! Thank you Great Western.

We are also receiving a number of individual donations toward the dining hall project, which is wonderful! If you would like to help make this new expanded dining room a reality, please contact Claudia Christiansen at [cchristiansen@neosho.edu](mailto:cchristiansen@neosho.edu) or (620) 432-0327. If you are a member of one of the groups who use these rooms, we would love to have your help making them even better for you and our students. Remember that part above about expressing gratitude for things you are thankful for and what it does to your happiness level? One way to express gratitude is by giving to causes you believe in. Think of the happiness you will get from it, both in giving the gift and using the new rooms in the future! You'll know you helped make that happen!

If all goes well the new Oak Room and expanded dining hall should open in the fall of 2019. We will try to raise as much as we can through additional donations. However the remaining money for this renovation will be coming from fees paid by students who live in the residence halls, as well as the Student Union fee. Again, no local or state tax money will be used for the expansion. Thank you again fee-paying students!

There are so many people to thank for all they do for NCCC and our students. If I start to try to list them all, it will greatly extend this article, and I'm sure you'll agree it's long enough already. Plus, I'll wind up accidentally forgetting someone and that would greatly lower their happiness level in being forgotten and

mine as well. I'll just say I greatly appreciate everyone who plays a role in helping NCCC achieve its mission. Thank you all so much!

Happy Thanksgiving to one and all! Enjoy family, friends and food. And make time for a Christmas-themed romantic formula movie! There's three different ones on right now as you read this. Trust me.

If you have any questions about this article or anything else about the college feel free to email me at [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu).