November, a Reminder to be Thankful

At the end of November we celebrate the holiday of Thanksgiving, a time when families try to gather as many family and friends together to share a meal and be mindful of the blessings in our lives and acknowledge our thankfulness for them. While it is not the only time that most of us express our thankfulness, it is a pleasant reminder that we need to do so and more often. By definition thankful is “gratitude, a positive emotion or attitude in acknowledgment of a benefit that one has received or will receive” or “glad that something has happened or not happened”.

No doubt thankfulness is certainly another aspect of civility. As children we were taught manners. On the top of the list was when someone did anything for us, we were to respond with a “Thank You”. Does it seem silly or meaningless after a while? Someone opens a door for you, another let you go in first, your bridge partner places their cards on the table, a guest helps you clean up, you are complimented on an accomplishment. I say emphatically NO.

Thankfulness creates a constant and continual atmosphere for civility. When one person acts and then the other responds in a grateful manner, positive emotions erupt between both. In sports we see the affects immediately. One team member assists another in a tackle. The play ends and they can jump up and down, hug each other, and have big grins on the faces. They are back on the line ready to work for the next play. A bridge partner complements the play of the hand. Confidence is built in both players. While I can give you many more examples, I ask that you think of some of your own.

Sadly, I have seen in many sporting events when a mistake is made, the player is yelled at, belittled, humiliated, and blamed in front of his peers. This player becomes isolated, team members seem to feel that they have to stay away. Now how ready is the team when that member returns to the field. Probably the player feels not quite as much a part of the team and the team members are untrusting and will try to compensate. I would expect not a good performance from them all.

On the other hand I have seen many coaches have thankful ways to deal with a misplay and players coming up and encouraging. Both feel the thankfulness. The erroring player feels that others understand humanness and the team knows that when they make a mistake, the team will provide support. The player and the team are ready together. A civil environment reigns.

Many conversations that we have are friendly, happy, and enjoyable with general agreement. Others are in situations where decisions need to be made and there are differing points of view. If we give a thank you to the person for expressing an opinion on the subject, would we get that same feeling of cooperation as with a sport’s team. Everyone present will speak their mind and together the best decision is made. The path is paved for any future decisions that need to be made. A thank you is a powerful action of civility.

I want to thank the entire Door County Civility Project and all our residents for their continued efforts to insure that Door County is working to always be civil.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving and give a thank you whenever you can.

Orlaine I. Gabert

Door County Civility Project