

Community Comment
November 20, 2015
Sam Pennisi

On being Grateful

Next week is the thanksgiving break for our schools. That means, of course, that Thursday is Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is the perfect time to, well, give thanks. We say this but we don't do it with real meaning. It's a very positive way to assess our lives and community. My wife often asks our grandchildren at dinner what the best thing was that happened to them today. Even in small children, the question sets the stage for thinking positively rather than the negative.

~~I don't know what you have to be thankful for but I know what I'm thankful for.~~

I can't help but thank my ancestors for surviving and having children that would one day lead to me. I know this is selfish but I'm glad to be here. Not only that, they must have been somewhat healthy since they passed that on to me as well. I especially thank my grandparents; all four of who came from Sicily. These were the family heros. They risked leaving everything that they knew to come to America and test the American Dream. They came as young people with full knowledge that they had to learn a new language and a new culture and would most likely never see the family they left behind again. I'm also thankful for the community and country they found. While there was a certain amount of discrimination to these kind of dark, fast talking, mediteraenians, they were able to find their place in this melting pot. ~~They somehow knew that education for their children and grandchildren was the best way to gain success and build respect. They also urged us to be part of the political system to the extent we could. This was something that they did not have available to them in Italy.~~

I'm thankful to my parents for setting an environment where education was expected. We were told to go as far as our talents would take us. While they couldn't support us much monetarily, they did in every other way. Along the way, I have many teachers to be thankful for. Some really taught well, some were like mentors, and some gave time and interest to counsel me. I had the priveledge to teach at HSU along side some excellent professors. I'm thankful for what they shared with me. Mostly, though, I'm thankful for the students I had. ~~By and large, they pushed me to be the best teacher I could be. They were smart and creative and respectful and taught me more than I taught them.~~

I'm thankful for my chosen family. My wife Sharon is truly a life partner. We share all decisions and she makes me better than I am alone. I'm thankful for both my girls. I always thought that if you raise kids to be kind, good people and they find happiness then you have done your job as a parent. But both my kids are teachers. Their job is to make a difference in kids lives. They are both excellent at what they do.

I'm thankful for this community that let me be a part of it. I had the honor of serving as an elected councilmember. To a family of immigrants, being elected meant being a Real American. I'm hopeful we can work through the fear of the terrorist attacks and regain our American ideals. I am thankful for that hope.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.