My faith has taught me that in all situations, I am to give thanks. As a business professional, I often forget these words. How many times have you dealt with an angry customer, had a proposal to fall through, or landed a big contract, only to see it fall apart? It is difficult to have a grateful attitude when things around us are not going as planned. An interesting observation I have made, however, is that negative people seem to have negative outcomes. As an experiment, the CoC staff and I decided to make a few small changes. For 21 days we made the commitment to each other that we would not complain, criticize, or gossip. In addition to that, each day we wrote down three things we were grateful for. I will confess, being thankful was a lot easier than being less critical! Nonetheless, we developed an accountability system and began our experiment. We were not prepared for the outcome! Gratitude shifted our focus from what life lacks to the abundance of what life has to offer. Taking a daily inventory of things we were thankful for improved more than our attitudes. It helped reduce stress, improved health, increased productivity, and strengthened personal and professional relationships. Wow! Over the past three months we have continued to take inventory of our “three thankfuls”. At first, it was difficult to think of three things every day. As time passed, however, it became increasingly easier.

Below we have listed a few things to get your brain trained toward grateful thinking:

- Smiles
- Good food
- Education
- A Great Book
- Music
- Pets
- Small Things
- Life
- Time
- Beauty
- Daylight
- Memories
- Good Service
- Talents
- Changes
- Job
- Opportunities
- Nature

As Thanksgiving approaches, we wanted to share this gift to our members by sharing our story. We challenge you to start having a grateful attitude not just at Thanksgiving, but throughout the year. And by the way, you are #1 on my list today of things to be grateful for. Thank you for your investment in the CoC! We appreciate you!

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Nominate your favorite small business today

Small-business owners practice what they preach when it comes to supporting their local communities. According to the latest findings (April 26, 2013) of the American Express OPEN Small Business Monitor, 70 percent of entrepreneurs say they purchase and source goods and services from other small businesses. Almost all (96 percent) small businesses are committed to supporting their local communities through different activities, such as donating to local organizations (70 percent) and participating in community projects (69 percent). Additionally, 83 percent “shop small” (shop at independently-owned businesses in their neighborhoods) for purchases unrelated to their businesses.

“We should all draw inspiration from small businesses that remain steadfast optimists and loyal contributors to local communities and causes despite an economic environment that remains uncertain,” says Susan Sobbott, president of American Express OPEN.

“Adversity is nothing new to the vast majority of entrepreneurs, and our research shows that while they have concerns about the near future, they have learned a great deal from recent trials and are better positioned to grow in the long term.”

CoC Window Display Contest

The Christmas in Lights Window Decorating Contest, will light up our shopping districts to encourage exceptional storefront window displays county-wide. The objective is to recognize businesses that enhance the city’s shopping and dining experience. The Christmas in Lights Window Display Contest encourages businesses to create a festive winter holiday atmosphere by decorating the exterior of their storefronts with holiday lighting. This program is open to all businesses. The window display will be judged on Friday, November 8. There will be a $100.00 prize for the winner of each of the following categories: 1. Best retail store, 2. Best restaurant, and 3. Best office building. The city has a wonderful variety of businesses, big and small, which are essential to driving our local economy and the local shopping experience. The Chamber’s Retail committee members want to highlight those businesses that are going the extra mile to attract shoppers and visitors. You may download the application form by going to cullmanchamber.org website. The form is listed under the member center at the bottom of the Chamber homepage.

Christmas in the Cullman area

As we approach the Christmas season, all of Cullman County will be bustling with activities of the season. Please be sure to check the Chamber’s event calendar online at www.cullmanchamber.org regularly so you don’t miss out on these great specials and events.

If your business will be offering specials, events or a way for the community to “GIVE BACK” during the holidays, please be sure to send a link to the Chamber so that we can post it on our facebook page and our calendar of events. Email your information to info@cullmanchamber.org.

Happy Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a time to reflect on the things for which we’re truly grateful. At Edward Jones, we’re thankful to serve our clients and our community. During this holiday season and every day, we wish you all the very best.

Ron Mann, AAMS®
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