“The deepest craving of human nature is the need to be appreciated.” Credit for that bit of insight into the human psyche goes to American psychologist and philosopher, William James. And while the saying might make a great page for a quote-a-day calendar, perhaps for some day in January or August (actually, any other day than April 15th would probably do), it turns out that there may be more behind this feeling of thankfulness. A lot more.

First of all, let’s not confuse the feeling of gratitude, which is positive, with that of indebtedness, which is seen as more negative reaction to a favor. An obligation, if you will. You know, the kind of feeling one has when one starts paying back a loan. No, gratitude is a far more pleasant experience. And, frankly, it’s something that we humans feel and express quite often. In fact, a 1998 poll found that a majority of American (67%) said they express gratitude toward others “all the time.” Beat that, France.

So, what are the motivating factors behind gratitude? Psychological research has uncovered four of them. It found that a person is more likely to experience gratitude when he or she receives a favor that is perceived to be (1) valuable by the recipient, (2) costly to the benefactor, (3) given with benevolent intentions – meaning he or she is seeking nothing in return, and (4) given gratuitously (rather than obligatory). And even the slightest act of kindness can spur this feeling. A 1995 study found that restaurant patrons left bigger tips when their servers simply wrote “Thank you” on the checks. Just something to chew on the next time you dine out.

But feelings of gratitude can lead to much more than just healthier paychecks for those in the food service industry. It can lead to healthier lives for everybody in any industry. Now, while anyone could, and should, experience and express it, there are those of us who tend to do so more than others. Those people who do are more likely to be happier, more helpful and forgiving, and less depressed than their less grateful counterparts. That, in and of itself, is something for which to be grateful. In other words, the next time someone doesn’t show gratitude for something you did, just be thankful you’re not him or her.

So there you have it. Gratitude. It’s a very good thing. Now, aren’t you grateful you read this? You’re welcome.
LOTS TO BE THANKFUL FOR

This time of year, we always spend a few moments here at Geotechnics thinking about all the things we’re grateful for. Turns out, the page isn’t big enough to list them all, but here’s a start. Feel free to give us a call to add your two cents worth of gratitude. We’ll be thankful to hear from you.

Sliced bread, dental floss, Pittsburgh’s North Shore Connector project, sunny days, pre-Thanksgiving football games, post-Thanksgiving naps, landfills, Gina Lollobrigida, Oreos, Double-stuff Oreos, cool feats of engineering, a cold drink on a hot day, a hot drink on a cold day, power tools, geosynthetic clay liners, microwave ovens, televised poker, Atterberg Limits, online shopping, online poker, nuclear gauge safety, girls in white dresses with blue satin sashes, microwave popcorn, happy endings, fine dam projects, GPS systems, the cool breeze in our hair, hair, poker night, highway renovations, instant replay, pencil sharpeners, reduced-fat Twinkies, Buffalo, Buffalo wings, being in the field, coming home from being in the field, big tall stacks with lots of concrete samples, friday, the wind for lots and lots of windmills, big bags to hold large grain size samples, bubblegum, slurry walls, galvanized tubes, galvanized tanks, horsepower, galvanization, various waste generating industries, odor eaters, light weight concrete, forklifts, fermentation, automated fax machines, spell check, caller ID, four wheel drive, insulated lunch buckets, #75 Sun screen, ionization nebulizers, Auto-Tron administrators, doughnut day, memos, Mentos, understanding heavy equipment operators, understanding family members, nuclear safety classes, driving schools, You, our loyal GeoSampler readers. Thank you.