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## Legacy, for lack of a better word, is good

By Ron Kitchens  
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As a child, I spent many hours fascinated while watching my grandfather type away on his 1940s Underwood manual typewriter. Over the more than 60 years he used this typewriter, my grandfather wrote thousands of business and personal letters and even a few books.

This typewriter now sits in my home office as a reminder that he came before me and showed me the way.

With last week's announcement by MPI Research that they will create 3,300 new jobs in the region, I cannot look at that typewriter without thinking about legacy. I find it amazing that when MPI occupies the soon-to-be-former Pfizer Inc. buildings in downtown Kalamazoo, it will be more than a continuance of our 100-year-plus legacy of life sciences. It will signify the fourth generation of the Upjohn/Parfet family to operate a life-sciences company on this site.

What MPI has announced -- 3,300 jobs and \$330 million in new investment, along with keeping more than 500,000 square feet of life-sciences space from ending up the victim of a wrecking ball -- is more than amazing. What Bill Parfet and the team at MPI has and will achieve is the story of legend. To take a company that was defunct and, in 10 short years, turn it into one of the powerhouses in the industry with 1,600 employees today and nearly 5,000 by the end of 2015 is unheard of.

According to Impact Data Source, an Austin-based impact analysis consulting firm, MPI's investment will spur growth across the region. Along with the MPI jobs come thousands of spinoff or secondary jobs to the region.

All these jobs will result in 7,600 new residents in the region. One thousand eight hundred new children will enter schools in our region. And nearly \$500 million in new annual payroll will be injected into the local economy.

WOW .... I know that is not very eloquent, but WOW!

But you do not have to be descended from one of the nation's great business leaders or leave your typewriter to your grandchild to leave a legacy; people around us every day are doing so in seemingly small ways that will produce generational success.

I am reminded of Brad Black, the founder of HUMANeX. As I look around the community at all the companies that Brad is working with and how each of those companies has in just a couple years become the industry leader, not just locally but

nationally in their industry, I am convinced he is creating a legacy that will pay dividends for generations in this community.

Or Marilyn Schlack, the president of Kalamazoo Valley Community College, who not only fights every day to provide world-class educational opportunities but to do so at a cost that ensures access for all. And as if building the work force of the future was not enough, Dr. Schlack has also worked to ensure that downtown Kalamazoo will thrive in the future by creating, expanding and enriching the downtown KVCC campus.

The ability to sustain a downtown college campus is always in the top five things I am asked about when people come to study this region as one of the nation's best practices.

Or consider Chris Crowell, the owner of Gazelle Sports, who, instead of picking up and moving to a location in a mall or concentrating on Internet sales, recommitted his store to the downtown area by moving into newly revamped space on the Kalamazoo Mall. Not only committed to providing the very best in sporting equipment, Gazelle Sports is dedicated to the overall health and well-being of their customers through their sponsorship and direction of training clubs and programs.

They are a huge advocate of our regional Girls on the Run programs, encouraging the development of positive self-respect and well-being in our young women of tomorrow.

As I wrap this up, it just dawned on me that it is Earth Day, so you want an easy legacy? Plant and nurture a tree whose shade you will never enjoy. That's legacy.

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*Read "The Community Capitalist," the new blog from Ron Kitchens and Southwest Michigan First, at [www.mlive.com/businessreview/western](http://www.mlive.com/businessreview/western).*