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"First & Foremost," December 20, 2007

Lessons learned, in economic development and in life

By Ron Kitchens
Chief Executive Officer, Southwest Michigan First

For more than 20 years I have used the last few weeks of the year to count my blessings, write thank-you notes to those who truly affected my life and to reflect on the lessons I learned over the past year.

Although I will never be able to thank each of you who read this column and take the time to write or share a kind word, please know that I appreciate your thoughts and prayers, and for them I am truly grateful.

2007 was an interesting year, and the diversity of the lessons learned shows a little glimpse of that.

When people show you who they are, believe them.

Be kind to everyone always. Every person -- rich, poor, white, black -- is carrying a heavy load.

Write down your grandfather's stories before it is too late.

Sincerely say "thank you" more.

Laugh more and worry less.

You really do look better in good suits.

Ask for copies of your mother's recipes.

You are blessed in this world if through your life, you find the love of one woman, two good friends and four good dogs.

It is more than great to laugh at yourself.

Vacations are more powerful than work to recharge your success.

Tell your friends that you love them before they are sick with cancer.

Good coffee, rum, luggage and barbeque are all worth the price charged.

Keep in touch with people from your youth. They will make you laugh and keep you humble. (Thanks, Cam, Karla and Susan.)

There are few experiences more touching than seeing your daughter dance with the child of a lifelong friend.

There is more joy in applauding for your child than 1,000 people applauding for you. The light of my candle is not diminished by lighting yours.

Some people are just mean. You cannot change or understand them.

It is hard to be a single mom. Show them an extraordinary amount of respect.

Never tolerate bullies at any level in your life. They dehumanize all who show cowardice by not stopping them.

It is OK to change your mind, even if you were passionate about your previous position.

Embrace God's perfect silence.

It is OK to cry every time you hear "Amazing Grace."

Accept life and people as they are, not how we wish they were.

Kindness is the most important of all human values.

I hope you enjoyed my lessons learned and will take the time to share with me some of the lessons you learned this year.

Ron Kitchens, www.RonKitchens.com, is CEO of Southwest Michigan First, the general partner of the Southwest Michigan First Life Science Venture Fund, a director of the Southwest Michigan Innovation Center and the co-author of the soon-to-be-released book, "Community Capitalism: Lessons From Kalamazoo and Beyond." To receive a daily e-mailed business quote, go to SouthwestMichiganFirst.com and click on the free subscription link.