

It's often the little things that really matter

Mark Pavilons

That best portion of a good man's life are his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love.?

William Wordsworth

Ain't it the truth?

We have it hammered into our heads to make remarkable inroads and to always have an eye on the 'big]



icture.?

That may be well and good, but how many of us are impressed at the big things accomplished in our relatively small circles? Nothing will ever come close to the Big Bang, wheel or manned flight, so we should try to make small advances each and every day.

I had the opportunity to interview a research scientist recently, one who specializes in molecular biology. Very tiny, very specific research into the fundamentals ??those minute, yet essential building blocks of life. The ultimate goal is to see and alter molecular interactions to prevent or mitigate major diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and even cancer.

I was fascinated during our 90-minute talk, but I'll be the first to admit that 90 minutes does not a scientist make. While I learned some valuable insights, I am by no means an up-and-coming biochemist.

What I did learn was that small steps and successes do lead to others in this never-ending search for the 'cure.' Those small accomplishments, and unacknowledged milestones, are vitally important and will impact us all.

Kudos to Derek Wilson and his team at York for their dedication in this consuming type of work.

When the cures are eventually discovered and presented to the world, will people like Wilson and his crew be remembered or singled out??Maybe not. But their work is significant nonetheless.

I think that in this day and age, there is no single genius, no one discovery that results from individual effort. It's a team effort, from a very large team of specialized scientists around the world, working for the common good of humankind.

Yes, it will likely be the multinational powerhouse that waltzes in and takes credit ? some massive pharmaceutical company or global manufacturing giant.

In medical research, it comes down to people. People create technology and people look through the microscopes. People make the discoveries. People rationalize, deduce, extrapolate and yes, guess.

I think many of us try to make a difference every day at our jobs and in front of our computers. This deep desire is part of our human makeup. It's a desire to contribute, to do good and to make the world, or at least a small part of it, a better place.

Granted, my work is a lot less complicated than addressing the metamorphosis in protein molecules. But I am in the people business and in some ways that is much more tricky than mathematics or engineering. We are talking about people, after all.

On the home front, molecules or council decisions may not matter much to our children or spouses. My young ones are more interested in day trips, dinners out at nice restaurants, movies and family time. They're interested in me being there and cracking some jokes, instead of my little daily accomplishments. Of course, they do sometimes read my columns and articles and I think they all appreciate what I do.

I think what we should all do is borrow from our daily expertise and take that home, in some form. We need to bring our passion for our work; our knowledge base and excitement home to the family room, where it just might influence our family members.

On a practical level, my talents have helped my kids with their homework. I am continually amazed at some of the mediocre marks I get on high school book reports LOL!

But I help and contribute in ways that I can. And I'm glad to do it.

Beyond these technical things, we can all help instill passion and excitement in our offspring.

I may not fully understand my daughter's penchant for drama class or mission trips around the globe, but I sure encourage her spunk. The world needs more dedicated and devoted individuals. Simply by attending their school plays and presentations, and cheering them on from the sidelines, we are pushing them even further. And that's a good thing.

I may not appreciate my youngest girl's zealotry when it comes to makeup or FaceTime, but I should pay her more compliments and recognize her achievements, big and small.

I'm not a big video game pro, but my son spends hours honing his sniper skills on his Xbox. I don't know if racing cars or leading a commando team will benefit him in the long run, but I guess a skill is a skill. If nothing else, he's exercising part of his brain and this may have some wonderful spinoff effects!

My wife's keen mothering instincts are extraordinary. I may approach things on a more practical level, but she sees into people's souls. She knows exactly how to hit the spot when it comes to nurturing our children.

If you add up all these little successes, they amount of a mountain of triumphs. It takes a long time to raise and equip our children for the world. It takes a long time to get husbands to change their behaviour.

Perhaps we don't have to yell "eureka" every day. Maybe a smile or grin every time we cross a hurdle is enough.