



FRIENDSHIP WINE AND LIQUOR'S SCHEUERMAN ON SUCCESS...

"We're pretty hard core!"

BY TEDDY DURGIN

Those are the words Mike Scheuerman used to describe his and his staff's dedication to their customers. Scheuerman is the owner of Friendship Wine and Liquor in Abingdon, Md. Of course, being a fan of the old "Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson," this journalist couldn't help but ask, "How ... hard core ... are you?"

His reply? "We're so hard core, we're open 365 days a year! That's right. We've been at this location for 13 years, and we have never closed a single day. And that includes blizzards and Christmas. Our customers don't ever have to think about, 'Are they open today?' We're open every day!"

That kind of dedication clearly flows from a man who loves the beverage business and loves his store. Scheuerman makes no apologies. "I live and breathe this!" he exclaimed. "Even when I'm on vacation, I go into liquor stores at the beach. Or if my wife and I are heading up the Jersey Turnpike, I'll say, 'Let's go check this place out! Let's see if there's something we don't carry that we can inquire about.'"

Scheuerman was born and raised in Baltimore, graduated from Loch Raven High School, and earned his undergraduate degree from Towson University. The beverage biz bug bit him throughout his college years during which he worked as a bartender. Upon graduation in 1985, he went to work for the Kronheim & Co. Inc. for four years before deciding he wanted



Mike Scheuerman pictured here with his wife Sheila, his 25-year-old son, Zach; and his 21-year-old daughter, Sara; all contribute to Friendship Wine and Liquor's success.

to be his own boss.

He opened Friendship Wine and Liquor at a former Harford County location in March 1989, then moved the store to its current address in 2006. Over the

years, the business has become a family affair. His wife, Sheila, works at the store full-time as does his 25-year-old son, Zach. His 21-year-old daughter, Sara, is also an employee.

Then, there are those employees who are like family. "My wine director, Blair Halsey, I've known longer than anyone in my family," Scheuerman declared. "He got hired at Kronheim three weeks before I did. We have a tremendous amount in common. Same age, graduated college the same year. He virtually runs the fine wine department here."

In addition to wine, Friendship also caters to craft beer and bourbon aficionados. "Service is No. 1," Scheuerman stated. "We have competitive prices, lots of community involvement, and lots of promotions. We do everything under the sun -- Military Day, Seniors Day, Wine Day, Craft Beer Day. We try to cover it all."

But it's being open on Christmas and Thanksgiving and the 4th of July and every other day of the year that Friendship Wine and Liquor has become known for locally and countywide. So, how does this work from a staffing standpoint? "We pay all of our employees handsomely with regards to holidays," Scheuerman said. "It's basically overtime. But say you want to sign up for Christmas Day. You are then guaranteed off Christmas Eve and the day after Christmas. We're open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Christmas. So, it's not really that hard to get people to pull that shift."

Scheuerman says another reason for his and his store's success is membership in the Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA). "MSLBA certainly keeps us abreast of the goings-on on both the state and national level," he remarked. "Even if something doesn't look good in the forecast, we're the first to know about it so we can prepare. And when there are conventions and things like that, it's great to meet other retailers within Maryland that aren't your competition. It's great to know other owners in Annapolis and Anne Arundel County and Carroll County. You don't have to be guarded. They're like your comrades. It's not the guy across the street."



When asked what his advice was to anyone reading this who used to be like him -- a bartender, a manager, a wholesaler -- and now dreams of opening his/her own business, Scheuerman was quick to reply. "Be ready for the hours. When you're starting out, you had better be there. I knew when I opened that I certainly wanted to be here all the time. Blair and I, we're here Friday and Saturday nights unfailingly every weekend night of the year. Me working the floor Monday morning is not going to get me off the hook for not being here the previous Friday night. If you're going to be the boss, you'd better be there when the store is busy!" ■



Is Your Establishment a Member of the Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA)?

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"... another reason for his and his store's success is membership in the Maryland State Licensed Beverage Association (MSLBA)."

MSLBA is the multicultural, go-to organization for Maryland retail alcohol beverage industry issues. No matter how proficient you are at the operations and management of your business, many factors influencing your success are outside your direct control. Your best chance for competently and successfully dealing with external forces such as legislation, regulation, suppliers, enforcement agencies and prohibition efforts, is by joining with other retailers for reputable representation through MSLBA.

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