

Life lessons from a Baltimore icon

I feel extremely fortunate to have ever been introduced to Patrick “Scunny” McCusker. A gregarious, fun-loving man with a huge heart, his life was sadly cut short at the age of 49. There is definitely a palpable sadness in the air in Canton – a real feeling of loss. But I like to try to think of the positive as well, so I compiled a list of life lessons we might learn from this Baltimore icon.

Live life to the fullest. One thing you could tell as you looked at a video of Scunny’s life, is that he embraced it all. His family, his work, his friends, his community He threw himself into every aspect of life, whether it was dressing as Santa, or a pumpkin or Elvis, putting in flowers at his restaurant, Mama’s on the Half Shell, or supporting the Believe in Tomorrow Foundation. Whether he was spending time with his family or goofing around with friends, this man looked genuinely happy.

Be good to people. The line to get in the Mitchell-Wiedefeld Funeral Home on the first day of viewings was lengthy, and inside, it was packed. Scunny made so many friends and was so generous, that people wanted to come pay their respects. As one of his friends said, “Nobody has a bad word to say about him.” After Scunny died, people from a Target store in White Marsh to bars and restaurants throughout Ocean City and Delaware stopped to talk about Scunny and what he meant to them and the community. It is truly amazing the number of lives he touched. Try to live your life in such a way that people will have good things to say about you.

Laugh. The first day I met Scunny, he was cracking jokes. His smile is contagious, and when it came to being silly or goofy, it seemed he was always up to the task. Someone commented on a family photo, “You could practically hear the laughter.”

Be generous. To say Scunny supported charities seems to be an understatement.

Scunny seemed to do exceptional things when it came to helping others. If he promised a sick child he would get them on the Raven's Field before a game, well then he would call in every favor he had to make it happen. I mentioned I was interested in volunteering with Believe in Tomorrow, and he took 30 minutes of his time to talk about it. His eyes lit up and he was clearly passionate about the organization. He said he used to be quiet about it, but now he tells everyone about it. He has even involved his children in the volunteer work. What a great spirit of giving back. We should all strive to help others and to give back to our communities.

Love your family. One thing that struck me at the viewing were all the portraits and snapshots of Scunny, his wife, Jackie, and their kids. As you looked at all the hugging and giggling in photos, his love for his family is clear. Show the same love for your family.

Love your work. Scunny was a regular fixture at the Canton establishments he owned. He always took the time to smile, laugh and chat with patrons. He was devoted to running successful restaurants with happy customers. I have befriended a few of his employees, and they have nothing but love for their former boss. He loved what he did, and it showed.

I am grateful to have known such a fun-loving, generous person, and hopefully I can incorporate some of these lessons as well ... beginning with filling out the volunteer form for Believe in Tomorrow. RIP Scunny.

Support Scunny and Believe in Tomorrow this Wednesday, Aug. 29 by having dinner in Canton or in Fells Point.

