

Rick Beckerman

Why help?

BY BILL FALLON

bfallon@westfairinc.com

Twenty years ago, life handed Rick Beckerman a sack of lemons. Nothing glamorous - "Depression" - but it got him thinking and from such thoughts would flow the sweetest lemonade.

Life till then had been a successful trajectory that saw Beckerman flying, skiing, playing tennis and rooting for the Yankees as a season ticket holder. He was (and is) married to Helaine Suval Beckerman. He had a good job with the same company he still works for today, Fishkill- and White Plains-based Stephen Gould Corp. He and Helaine had two sons, Jonathan and Jay, and a third boy, Jay's best friend Adam Rolewicz, whom they informally adopted.

But in 1989, "I suffered a severe downturn," Beckerman said.

To meet Beckerman - robust, optimistic, a guy who has landed his plane in each of the lower 48 states - is to have a difficult time believing he might possess a personal nadir or that he arrived at an ascending staircase only after he decided, "I needed to act."

Act he did - in a way that today positively affects 300 disabled among us: sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors. It was a decision that rested and still rests on four truths that Beckerman figured out at the depth of what he classified as depression.

"I was blessed with four things," he said, and ticked them off: "I was born a human being, not a flower, a monkey or an ant; I enjoyed good health - not my fault and not my credit; I was born in the United States, which is like winning the lottery, the Land of Opportunity; and I had loving parents (Leonard and Jeanne Beckerman, both deceased)."

The four-prong homage to gratitude led to marching orders: "If I could be so blessed with what I couldn't control, I was obligated to do well with what I could control," he said. "Every time you're blessed, there's an obligation attached to it."

Beckerman via Stephen Gould had worked with several ARCs on packaging projects, which is Stephen Gould's bailiwick: packaging for the private sector for everything from medical products ("very intricate labeling") to cosmetics



to BMW transmissions. The company makes primary, secondary and tertiary packaging, which translates by example as the toothpaste tube (primary), the toothpaste box (secondary) and the toothpaste crate (tertiary).

Beckerman's ARC experiences, plus his love for Lauren, his now 24-year-old niece with Down syndrome, eventually surfaced in a conversation with disabled advocate and co-principal (along with wife Sue) of Bronxville-based Cole Communications, Bob Cole. "Bob mentioned Richmond Community Services and I jumped at it," he said.

Beckerman said of his beliefs, "I'm a lot more religious than I am observant. You don't have to be religious to help people. You have to be aware of who you are just to be here in this community and the good fortune we enjoy here. My wife and I have traveled in Africa where they often do not have a lot and we say, 'There but for the grace of God go I.' Nobody should take their good fortune for granted."

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