

What Is It About David Scruggs?

Call it resiliency. Call it inner strength. There's just something about David Scruggs that has allowed him to excel; as a child in an abusive home, and as an adult fighting alcoholism and drug addiction.

By his own admission, Scruggs, a Findlay resident, has come full circle in his life and in his philosophy. "I've learned that you don't always look for what you can take. You learn to look for what you can give; what you can bring to make life better for everyone."

Like many people in recovery, Scruggs came from an abusive home. Still, he managed to earn high grades in school, although he admits he didn't pay much attention in class. He remembers being boarded out, shuffled from home to home, after his mother and father divorced. From grades 3-6, he lived with his father and stepmother in Columbus, Ohio. One evening, walking home from church, he was sexually assaulted. His stepmother didn't believe him. At age 12, he was sent to a children's home, where, once again, he made the honor roll, played sports and was popular with his schoolmates. He stayed until he was 15.

"I moved back to Columbus with my father," Scruggs recalled. "Dad lost several jobs, so at the end of the 10th grade, we moved to Toledo. Attending Waite High School for his junior and senior years, David became vice president of Student Council. "I had an identity in high school," he added.

While at Waite, Scruggs lead a double life. Because his family had little money, the popular honor roll student was eating just one meal a day, usually a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. He had three shirts and three pairs of pants, which he successfully alternated so even his teachers weren't aware of his financial situation.

It was at The University of Toledo where he had his first encounter with drugs.

"I lost my identity at UT," he said. "I went from being 'Big Man on Campus' in high school to being 'No Man on Campus' in college. I got recognition by being the best drug dealer on campus."

David sold and used MDA (Ecstasy) and LSD. He reached the point where he couldn't sleep and had psychotic episodes. The courts placed him in a state mental institution for a 90-day stay. He "escaped" one day through the X-ray Department.

"The police found me in Walbridge Park by the Toledo Zoo. I had on my state institution pajamas and I told them I was jogging," he laughed.

Released after 90 days, with no car and no money, he moved into a “treatment house” and went back to school. He started to put his life back together and moved out.

After an unsuccessful marriage and finding himself without a job (again) Scruggs went back to school, this time to learn computer skills. He snagged a job with a Toledo firm and rose to the position of data processing manager. Along with a good income, however, came cocaine use. In 1987, his employer told him to find another job. He did, in Findlay.

“Unfortunately, the job was with a company that had a real drinking culture, so, of course, I joined right in,” he remembered.

After being let go by the Findlay firm, he started his own computer consulting business, but drank up his profits. He got a DUI.

“Suicide looked good,” he said.

Maybe it was because he had hit bottom, that he knew he had to find a solution to his addiction problems. He joined AA and found that the 12-step program worked for him. March 5, 1994 is his “sobriety date.” He still attends meetings and sponsors and mentors others. He works with alcoholics and those addicted to narcotics and heroin and has served on the Hancock County ADAMHS Board for eight years.

“You have to find what works for each person. Treatment and recovery can be different for different people. I don’t pretend that my way is the only way and I listen a lot.”

Dave has also grown to realize that it’s important to be the “best you can be,” no matter how insignificant the job. With one group, he was asked to be in charge of the coffee. “In the past I would have been insulted that they asked me to do this, but I really worked hard at it and people started to rave about my coffee,” he laughed.

Dave began relating more and more to others in recovery. He discovered just how close these relationships were when his “recovery family” provided support after his 5-way bypass surgery in 1999. They transported him to and from St. Rita’s Hospital in Lima and gave constant encouragement.

“During my fear, physical therapy and the healing process I was surrounded by my mates in recovery,” Dave recalled.

A diabetic, Scruggs is careful to take care of himself and has remained healthy. He still keeps in touch with his two sisters and has travelled with one of them to Disney World four times. His favorite time to visit is during the Halloween Parade in October. Since his mother literally disappeared in the late 1970s, he appreciates the contact with his siblings.

As for the future, well, Dave has a five-year plan. He hopes to have enough saved by then to purchase an RV and drive around the country. Hey, Dave Scruggs, where do you plan to go first?

“I’m going to Disney Land,” he smiles.

(This interview was written by Barbara Lockard and presented here with express permission from David.)