



## BEN GOLUEKE FINDS SUCCESS

AT MT. AIRY LIQUORS AND AT THE MSLBA

BY TEDDY DURGIN

**B**en Golueke (pronounced Go-leck-e) started in the beverage business when he was just 15, working at his father's packaged goods store in Cockeysville Md. He worked there throughout high school and on breaks from college. After graduating from Radford University in 1996 with a degree in Business Management, he didn't have to wait long for the opportunity to run his own store.



"I've been owning and operating Mt. Airy Liquors since August 1997," he stated during a recent interview with the *Beverage Journal*. Back then, the store was a 3,200-square-foot operation. He and his staff moved the business within the same shopping center in 2011 to its current 5,400-square-foot space. But it's not the size of the store that matters. "Mt. Airy Liquors stands out because of our customer service," he remarked. "The Mt. Airy Liquors crew is like one big family, too, which helps with the morale of the store. When I hire good employees, I make sure to keep them. I have employees that have been here from six months to 17 years!"

Another thing that distinguishes Mt. Airy Liquors is the growler station Golueke put in three years ago. "Not every store has invested in this," he noted, "and

it does set us apart from others around the area. We also added a crowler machine this year, which allows people to fill our Mt. Airy Liquors-designed disposable 32-ounce can. It's great for when someone forgets to bring in their growler."

With two teenage daughters, Golueke has naturally kept up with the latest trends in technology. In recent years, for instance, he has built his store's following on social media. "Social media has enhanced the way we can interact with all of our customers," Golueke stated. "It's a great tool when we want people to know about monthly sales; events; tastings; odd and obscure beer, wine, and liquors that we receive; and, of course, all of the hard-to-get bourbons these days. We use e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Untappd."

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Mt. Airy Liquors also does event planning. In fact, this aspect of the business has really taken off in the last five years. "Weddings are big events in people's lives," Golueke noted, "and I enjoy helping make that day one they'll never forget. Our website has an events page that people can fill out and e-mail in directly to me. It has our policies for events on it and basic party/event guides to help with the decisions that must be made. We take great pride in these services."

For the most part, though, Golueke is there front and center for the day-in, day-out challenges and even drudgery of running a small business. He states, "I still enjoy the daily grind at Mt. Airy Liquors. Coming up with new ideas and new events is fun. We always try to keep it fresh and never let it become boring for our customers or employees. I enjoy the strategy of pricing, too. Maryland's quantity discounts have become frustrating and overwhelming at times, but it's still intriguing setting up our pricing to pass on the best deals possible to our customers and still remain profitable."

He also enjoys his affiliation with the Maryland State License Beverage Association (MSLBA), even serving as one of its directors for Carroll County. "The MSLBA has kept the playing field even for all of



us that own liquor stores in Maryland," he remarked. "MSLBA is always tracking everything that happens in our industry from county to county. I've been fortunate enough to meet many great people in the industry at MSLBA events, too, and I call many of them friends."

Golueke added, "Being a director in the MSLBA means I need to be present and aware of political issues in my county and the entire state. Every year, bills are presented to our legislators that could change the face of our industry. It's important that I stay involved with my senators and representatives [regarding] all of the industry issues and news."

And whenever times do get tough, he remembers the advice of his father, Steve Golueke. He concluded, "When I worked at his store, he always told me to get out from behind the counter and ask people if they need help. As a teenager, it bothered me because it was more work for me. Needless to say, I now know how important it is in what we do as a retail store. Talk to people, make them feel welcome. It's really simple, but so many just don't do it anymore. Something else I remember from those early days is always take product out to people's cars for them. Two things that are easy to do and SO important for being successful!" ■



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

*MSLBA—Representing Alcohol Beverage Licensees since 1950*

**One of Many Achievements - "MSLBA has kept the playing field even"** for independent alcohol beverage retailers by repeatedly defeating chain store legislation

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.

### Contact MSLBA for Membership Information:

**Phone:** (410) 871-1377 • **FAX:** (410) 871-2545 • **E-Mail:** [MSLBAmembers@msn.com](mailto:MSLBAmembers@msn.com)

Please provide the following:

Name of County or City Alcohol Licensing Board for Your Establishment: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (        ) \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Physical Address: \_\_\_\_\_