

Faces of Long Island

"Back in 2009, when the country was in an economic recession, I was let go from my job. I was with that company for 10 years. A few months later, my father died of cancer. We knew it was coming, but we just didn't expect him to go as soon as he did. It was a very difficult time, especially for my mother. There are still parts of the house she won't touch, like the baseball and basketball trophies. My father would have my back no matter what I was doing. My father was always supportive of me and the best coach I had in life and in baseball. He coached me through Little League baseball. He would put his arm around me, pat me on the back and give me a hug. We even played together on the same softball team for a few years. He was very athletic and youthful for his age. He was 63 years old when he passed away, and up until the time of his diagnosis, he was playing basketball three nights a week with local guys in their 30s. He was actually diagnosed with cancer through a basketball injury. He got elbowed in the ribs and didn't think much of it. After 10 days, the pain still wasn't going away, so he went to the doctor. He thought it was just a bruise. They took an X-ray and found a mass on his lung. The doctor told him to thank the guy who elbowed him because he extended my father's life by about two years. If he never got it checked out, he would have only lived about another three months. A

few months before my father passed away, Tom — my cousin through marriage — and I launched our business, Hoopla Doopla, together. Tom and I are the tech gurus in the family. I was building and managing websites for a living. My cousin was a programmer. I've always had an entrepreneurial passion, and so we put our ideas together to create a bargain-hunting website. In honor of my father, I launched a program within the business to raise money for cancer. We donated part of our profits to the American Cancer Society in my father's name. We had this going for over three years and raised tens of thousands of dollars. When I told my mother about the fundraising, she started getting choked up. She told me that my father would be so proud of me."