



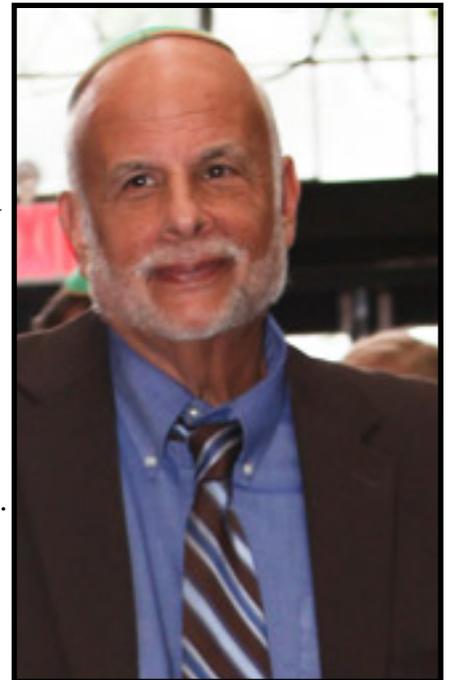
The Heart of Social Work Winner: Michael Herskovitz

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The Heart of Social Work Award, presented annually by the North American Network of Field Educators and Directors, is the ultimate award that can be given to a field instructor for excellence in field education. There is no one more deserving of this award than Michael Herskovitz. Mike, as he is affectionately called, is a dedicated educator who has committed a good portion of his professional career to educating future social workers, serving as a field instructor for over 30 years for Adelphi University social work students.

Mike began his social work career in 1971 as a youth group worker in juvenile detention in Nassau County; he then worked for family courts with juvenile delinquents and their families and later with the Sex Offender Unit of the Probation Department. In the mid-1980's, while employed primarily in the public sector for the Nassau County Department of Drug & Alcohol Addiction, Mike became a field instructor and then faculty liaison for the Adelphi University School of Social Work. After retiring from full-time employment as Director of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse a few years ago, Mike has continued to voluntarily serve as a field instructor for undergraduate students at three different agencies in the community. Serving as an adjunct field liaison for 28 years, and most recently as a part-time employee of the field education office, Mike is truly dedicated to the signature pedagogy of social work education.



Throughout his career, Mike has demonstrated skill in educating students at all academic levels. His flexibility and willingness to learn from his students has made him a sought-after field instructor. He is well known and respected by his community, colleagues and students. Students often come looking for him in the field department and seem disappointed if he's not in. Mike skillfully infuses humor and humility into his practice and his work with students. His ability to break down the core

competencies and practice behaviors so that students are able to comprehend them is outstanding. He uses practical “real world” examples with which students can identify, enabling them to connect the theory they are learning in the classroom to their practice experience with clients.

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Mike has worked with some very challenging students throughout the years and shows exceptional patience with them. He is able to identify their strengths and work with them to improve in the areas where they are under-performing. Mike provides a safe, supportive and nurturing environment for students, ensuring that they are comfortable and able to bring any issue to the forefront in supervision. He has a relaxed style of teaching, so that many times students may not even realize that they are learning as they interact with him.

Mike has demonstrated understanding and flexibility in the face of the changing nature of the student population. He has a special interest in working with students with disabilities. When Mike first began as a field instructor, most students were enrolled full-time; now the majority work full-time. He has adjusted well to working with students who are balancing multiple responsibilities, including work, school, family and internships. Mike is able to assist them in organizing and prioritizing their responsibilities to find a healthy balance. He is also always available to them, whether in person, on the phone, or via e-mail. While Mike comes across as friendly and easygoing, he is also firm and demanding. He is empathetic to students balancing multiple demands but expects the same work from them as he does all of his students.

One focus of his supervisory sessions is advocacy and empowerment. He teaches students how to suggest and make changes to organizational structure and policy, how to advocate in the school of social work and other venues. Mike is always eager to teach and brings a lot of energy and enthusiasm to his work. He continually encourages students to step outside of their comfort zone and is by their sides every step of the way.

Mike's commitment to the profession doesn't end with being a field instructor; he has also been a faculty field liaison for students for over 28 years. Just as he excels as a field instructor, Mike's work as a liaison is exceptional. His practice goes above and beyond what is required, and both field instructors and students are appreciative of his efforts. He is in constant communication with both field instructors and students and will often make more than the required one visit per semester to the agency. Students will often request to have Mike as their faculty liaison and are disappointed if they are not assigned to him.

Each year, Mike attends the field education orientations, even though this is not required. Everyone can see how much he enjoys working with students, as demonstrated by his constant enthusiasm and passion for social work education. During orientation, he will share his experiences with the students, and there is always a positive response from them.

When the field office was looking for support for the summer months, Mike's name was the first to come to mind. His jovial demeanor and knowledge of agencies and field instructors has been a true asset to the field department. He is always one of the first employees into the field office at the start of the day, and he will often stop in when he is not scheduled to work. He has become one of the main faces of the field office and always has a smile on his face. His positive energy and attitude is infectious not only throughout the department, but also throughout the school.

Mike is a tremendous role model for others, whether as a field instructor, faculty field liaison, or part-time employee in the field department. Regardless of the task at hand, Mike excels. His commitment to the profession is praiseworthy. Congratulations to Mike on being named the 2012 recipient of the Heart of Social Work Award!