



Dr. Michael McCausland
Distinguished Lasallian-Educator
2009-2010

The job description of a Lasallian educator is formidable. It requires excellence in teaching, recognition and respect for the personhood of each individual and a commitment to peace and justice in the community. Dr. Michael McCausland, the distinguished Lasallian educator of 2009-2010 has filled this job description with distinction for the last 34 years.

Mike's commitment to teaching is absolute and he is meticulous in his preparation. His lessons are models of clarity, impeccably organized so that students at every level of ability can understand important concepts and follow the flow of ideas. He is a master of the art of storytelling, supplying unforgettable examples of the behavioral concepts he is teaching. And his engaging sense of humor lightens up the classroom and tickles the fancy of his students. Mike is also keenly attuned to the personhood of his students, that individual value and unique potential that characterizes each one of them. I believe that this very special quality emerges from two aspects of Mike's life. It reflects first his deep and abiding religious faith, which recognizes God's presence in each of us. And it has been fostered by his training as a psychotherapist to recognize and support an individual's striving for growth and self-actualization. Unsurprisingly, students very much appreciate this special quality in Mike's teaching. One recently told me about an occasion many years ago when she was taking a statistics class with Mike. She was very nervous as she sat for the final exam and could not answer the questions. She brought her bluebook to Mike and told him that she couldn't do the test and was giving up. He took the bluebook, checked it over very carefully and then looked her in the eye and said with great intensity, "You can do this. I know you can. Now take your blue book, go back to work and finish the exam." She went back to her seat, took a couple of deep breaths, calmed down and wrote. And she did really well on that exam. This same focus on the personhood of his students characterizes Mike's work mentoring internship students and writing letters of recommendation. Over the course of his career he has done a lot of both, far more than the average faculty member-- and always with a careful attention to and respect for the individual. When asked once why his letter writing process was so long and painstaking, he replied that he was dealing with a student's life and that each one was unique and required special thought and consideration.

I want to return for a moment to Mike's statistics class, the one that I mention a moment ago, because it brings me quite conveniently to the subject of his work for the community. The semester that Mike taught that statistics class, not one psychology faculty member whose specialization lay in the quantitative areas of psychology was available to teach it. Someone else was going to have to prep a really difficult and unpopular class. Mike stepped up to the plate. Nobody wanted to do it and it had to be done—so he did it. I can assure you that this was indeed a major contribution to peace in the community. As I look back on our years together, I remember that Mike has often been willing to do the really hard or challenging tasks that needed to be done to keep the educational community functioning smoothly. In the psychology department there was the stats class, searches, committees, responsibilities as chairperson. And he has worked equally hard for the larger community. One example is his leadership of the annual blood drive at the college, a responsibility, which he undertook for many years. But the most difficult job that he accepted was as Coordinator of the Cooperative Program. He undertook this responsibility as the cooperative program was drawing to a close, employing all of his tact, diplomacy and

considerable interpersonal skill to manage a difficult and deteriorating relationship. Faculty of the cooperative departments, especially, are really grateful for those efforts.

Well, I could go on at some length about Mike's special qualities as an educator. Rather than keep you here for another hour or so, something that I know Mike would not like at all, I will close with a quotation from St. John Baptist de la Salle. It is a succinct description of what it means to be a Lasallian educator.

“To touch the hearts of your students and inspire them with the Christian spirit is the greatest miracle that you can perform.”

Mike you have been doing just that for thirty-four years. Calmly, quietly, sustained by your own faith, you have sustained the faith of your students in their own meaning and personal value. We assembled here today and the students that you have taught, thank you for those 34 years of distinguished service, Dr. Michael McCausland, Lasallian Educator for 2009-2010.