

An Interview with Kathleen Dunlevy Morin: Distinguished Award Winner from Teachers College, Columbia University

Monday, March 13, 2006

Michael F. Shaughnessy

Eastern New Mexico University

Portales, New Mexico 88130



Dr. Kathleen Dunlevy Morin
Columbia University 's Teachers College
2005 Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient

At a gala awards dinner at Columbia University on November 14, 2005, Arthur E. Levine, President of Teachers College, presented Dr. Kathleen Dunlevy Morin with the College's 2005 Distinguished Alumni Award citing her development, spanning several decades, of "insightful, creative, effective curricula" on a wide range of topics, for a diversity of populations, organizations, and educational venues.

Teachers College's 90,000 graduates include leading educators, psychologists, administrators, and other professionals. Each year, the Alumni Council honors the College's most extraordinary alumni with the Distinguished Alumni Award and the Early Career Award.

In presenting the Award to Dr. Morin, President Levine noted, "Your curriculum, A STUDY OF HEROES, is just one impressive example of your mastery of curriculum design and development. Developed as a living legacy to a hero of World War II, Raoul Wallenberg, A STUDY OF HEROES is grounded in the belief that a nation's heroes reflect the values of its people. A STUDY OF HEROES cites heroes of all ages and historical periods, ethnicities and areas of accomplishment to help students distinguish between heroism and celebrity. The program has been used in a wide variety of instructional settings, including public, parochial, independent and charter schools in 48 states and abroad; boys and girls clubs; teacher centers; and adult prisons in the New Jersey Correctional System."

1.) First of all, congratulations on receiving the 2005 Distinguished Alumni Award from Columbia University 's Teachers College. How did you feel when you first heard about this award?

When I received the letter informing me that I would be a recipient of the 2005 Distinguished Alumni Award from Columbia University's Teachers College, I felt a combination of feelings --- first amazement, then joy and, of course, both of these emotions were tempered with a strong dose of humility . especially when I saw who the other three individuals were with whom I was receiving this award . all of whom were noted professors. This humility was compounded when I saw who the talented and dedicated individuals who were recipients of the Teachers College 2005 Early Career Award.

In the days that followed the notification, I took time to reflect upon how grateful I am and fortunate I was to have attended Hollins College, Smith College, and Columbia University's Teachers College; to have been offered so many diverse, demanding, and interesting jobs over the years; and to have been given opportunities to learn and benefit from the wisdom of so many people in such diverse roles, locations, and settings. Early in my career, I realized that I could learn something from every person I met. How fortunate I was to learn this lesson at an early age. This realization guided my career path in many respects causing me to seek out a diversity of experiences working with people of all ages, levels of education, life experiences, and a range of ethnicities and cultures. I have been much blessed.

By the time I entered Teachers College, I had completed an exceptionally valuable year studying at Smith College , where I received a master's degree in Education and Child Study. The Smith experience coupled with my undergraduate studies in Math-Physics and Political Science at Hollins College (now Hollins University in Virginia) provided a strong academic and research base for my graduate studies at TC.

When I was a student, Research Associate, and Instructor at Teachers College, I was privileged to have studied under many of the "greats" in a variety of fields. For example, I learned from and benefited from the wisdom of Professors Karen Kepler Zumwalt (Curriculum, Preservice and Professional Development); A. Harry Passow (Urban Education); Diane S. Ravitch (History and Research); Lawrence A. Cremin (Philosophy and History of Education); Margaret Lindsey (Supervision); and E. Edmund Reutter, Jr. (Law). Upon receiving my doctorate, I was immediately given the additional opportunity to learn from and work with Professor Isobel Contento (Nutrition Education) when we co-authored a curricular manual for nutrition education for UNESCO designed to be used in a wide range of international settings.

In recalling my time at Teachers College, I was struck by the fact that it was not just the professors who influenced my professional development; it was also my fellow students, colleagues, and the TC support staff, such as the librarians and media specialists, who sharpened my skills, sensitivities, and inquisitiveness. It was and is natural at TC to become close friends with American and foreign students who not only had vast and differing experiences but also who shared their cultures and homelands. Again, I learned much from my friends and colleagues who came from locations near and far, internationally drawn primarily from Afghanistan, Kenya, Nigeria, India, China, the Philippines, the Middle East, and South America.

2) You are Director of Education at the Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the U.S. How did you first become involved in this activity?

Over the years, I have been very fortunate to have developed curricula and educational programs on a wide variety of subjects. (Please see the attached press release for a listing.) In each instance, I was hired to bring my expertise in curriculum development into a forum where I would work with experts in a specialized area. Such "partnerships" always allowed me to learn from leaders in a diversity of fields including but not limited to: nutrition education; environmental education and zoology; local history; housing, architecture, and urban planning; character education; women's history; and independent living skills for foster-care youth as well as a recently-homeless AIDS adult population in The South Bronx.

I recommend highly the field of "curriculum and educational program development" as a career choice for anyone who generally enjoys working with people of all ages in a diversity of educational settings; is willing to be routinely challenged; is eager to be a constant learner in new and different fields; and has a combination of curiosity, optimism, empathy, sound research skills, and healthy sense of adventure and good humor. It helps if one recognizes that curriculum development should inherently be both rigorous and joyous.

Looking back upon my career path, it appears that I have benefited from serendipity and have followed often the advice credited to Yogi Berra: " *When you come to a fork in the road, take it.*" I have had a very difficult time turning down any job or opportunity that would lead me into a field or area in which I was not currently familiar. Thus, over the decades, I have said "yes" to multiple and overlapping job offerings frequently resulting in my working anywhere from one to seven jobs simultaneously. During one such period sixteen years ago, coincidence and curiosity led me to The Raoul Wallenberg Committee of The United States.

It was in 1990. Rachel Oestreicher Bernheim, Chairman/CEO of The Raoul Wallenberg Committee of The United States, determined that rather than honoring Wallenberg by building another monument " *on which pigeons could perch* ", the Committee should honor Wallenberg by creating a " *living monument* " in the form of an educational program. Rachel conceptualized A STUDY OF HEROES (HEROES) to pass on to current and future generations not only the Wallenberg story but also his humanitarian and nonviolent heroic values. Members of her Board suggested to Rachel that she contact Teachers College for referrals of curriculum developers. It was through such a phone conversation that: Rachel was given my name; I became the author and curricular designer of HEROES; and my 16-year collaborative relationship with Rachel began.

When I first met Rachel and Diane Blake, the Vice-President of the Board and now Director of Research, I had never heard the story of Raoul Wallenberg; however, we all agreed from the outset that the stories of true heroes are timeless and must be passed from generation to generation. They provide a legacy of hope, civility, and courage. Raoul Wallenberg, a Christian Swede and Third Honorary Citizen of The United States, is just such a hero. At the behest of the United States during World War II, Wallenberg went to Budapest , Hungary in 1944. He saved more than 100,000 Jewish lives in only six months time and never resorted to violence. For yet unknown reasons, he was arrested by the Soviets in 1945 and has never again been seen as a free man. The search for the truth continues and his fate, to this day, remains a mystery.

I had to ask myself why it was that Wallenberg was not a "household name." I wanted to join the effort to create a program through which young and old would learn about Wallenberg. We decided that we wanted such a program to be unique. We would not reinvent the wheel by creating another Holocaust program (there are already so many excellent ones); rather, we would design a program that revitalizes the "*tradition of heroes*", featuring Raoul Wallenberg and more than twenty other role-models drawn from diverse historical periods, ethnicities, and areas of accomplishment.

I knew from my past professional experiences that if I were to embark on this project, I wanted HEROES to reach the broadest range of audiences possible. For this reason, I began the curriculum development process by working *pro bono* for a year. That gave me a chance to saturate myself in the Wallenberg story, learning from the experts with whom I worked, while shadowing Rachel as she spoke before a diversity of audiences. I studied how people of all ages in a variety of rural, suburban and inner-city settings responded when they heard the Wallenberg story. Thus, what Rachel and I affectionately call our "Travels With Raoul" commenced. We visited audiences ranging from Kindergarteners to senior citizens; from small elementary school classrooms in North Carolina to packed junior high school auditoriums in The South Bronx; from public schools to parochial schools and Yeshivas. Our paths crisscrossed North Carolina and the New York Metropolitan area. Sixteen years later, we are still traveling the country telling the story of Raoul Wallenberg and sharing the resources of A STUDY OF HEROES. Today, more than one million students of all ages in forty-eight states have learned from HEROES and have recognized the real heroes in their own families, schools, and communities, and most importantly they have discovered "the potential hero within themselves."

No matter where or when we travel and no matter the related geographic, social, and economic demographics, we continue to witness the same phenomenon. The reactions of the audiences, young and old, are similar. At first, there is the expected age-appropriate restlessness of listeners awaiting a stranger to speak. Within minutes, a hush falls over the audience followed by a gripping absorption into a hero's tale. For many reasons, the commonality of such reactions made it clear to us that Americans "*hunger for*" and enjoy the stories of "*real heroes*."

We now generalize that the stories of *real heroes*, no matter who the person is, famous or not, are spellbinding and capture one's heart and mind. Heroes' stories change one's life. I say it is analogous to putting in a pair of contact lenses. You see the world differently. You suddenly recognize everyday opportunities to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around you. The stories of heroes have another common effect upon listeners of all ages and in all settings. They, like the heroes themselves, restore '*hope*.' In a time of crisis, *hope* is usually the last emotion that disappears before one is immobilized in despair. With the restoration of *hope*, comes *courage*. With *courage* comes *action*. It is those *actions* that allow one to improve one's own life and the lives of those around us. one person and one situation at a time.

Again, no matter the demographics, being an "*everyday hero*" is within the reach of everyone, young and old. Reflecting this belief, A STUDY OF HEROES has adopted as its theme *Be A H . I . T . , A H ero- I n- T raining: Making a Positive Difference Using Your H eart, Your I ntellect, and Your T alents* .

Today, the HEROES program offers educators thirty units: twenty-two hero units and eight companion units. Upon the advice of teachers in all of our pilot schools, we never define 'hero' but rather have the students wrestle with the concept and come up with their own definition. The HEROES units, written at three readability levels, include:

Y Getting Started: Who Is Your Hero?

• Heroic Character Traits from A to Z

- Raoul Wallenberg
- Harriet Tubman
- Mahatma Gandhi
- Eleanor Roosevelt
- Rosa Parks
- The Dalai Lama
- Anwar Sadat
- Abraham Lincoln
- Pope John XXIII
- Chai Ling: Student at Tiananmen Square
- Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Andrei Sakharov
- Mother Teresa
- Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan
- James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner
- Jacobo Timerman
- Cesar Chavez
- Roberto Clemente
- Albert Schweitzer

- Arthur Ashe
- Chief Wilma Mankiller
- Thomas Jefferson
- *A Hero of Your Choice*
- *A National Tradition: Heroes, Holidays & Hoopla*
- *Heroes: Generation to Generation*
- *The Hero Within Yourself*
- *Educators as Heroes*
- *Researching Heroes: Ethical Strategies, Tools & Technology*
- The Instructor's Guide

3) A Study of Heroes is your exemplary work on character education. Why do you think character education is important in the U.S. ?

"The great hope of society is in individual character," words spoken by W.E. Channing (b.1780-d.1842, a clergyman in Massachusetts) capture my basic view as to why character education is important in The United States. I believe that character education is best "taught" when it permeates all aspects of academic, community, and family life. A STUDY OF HEROES is grounded in our belief that .. *the heroes of a nation reflect the values of its peoples.*

In the field of education, which in my opinion is inherently one of the most optimistic of professions, we set our targets high. I believe that good character, much like heroism, is within the reach of everyone. It is not a function of IQ, socio-economic status, or even level of schooling. Good character comes from within.

Character knows no boundaries. As adults, and as educators, we must keep in mind that young people learn by example. Education by example takes place "24/360" in all settings. We have a responsibility to set good examples for others if we want them to develop their own ' *good character* '. Good character empowers the individual to make a positive difference in the lives of others while discovering *the hero within themselves*. It manifests itself in both intrapersonal and interpersonal behaviors. Students with whom we have worked quickly realize that "good character" and "everyday heroism" are inherently rewarding and do not require external rewards.

Character is something that we innately take with us in all settings and at all times. At conferences and in social gatherings, I am occasionally asked to define "character." Perhaps one of the most provocative yet apt descriptions that I ever heard was " *Your "character" is how you behave even when no one is looking .*" This is not the definition that is often espoused by

educators, but it is useful in that it points out how personal and powerful "character" is in shaping one's actions. This description of "character" brings to mind the unforgettable and loveable character of "Eddie Haskell" on the ever popular classic television show *Leave It To Beaver*. Most of us have known the "Eddie Haskels" of the world . people who seemingly can flip an " *external character switch* " when a person of authority enters a room . transforming themselves from a person of somewhat dubious character into a person of obsequious "exemplary" character. Such protean forms of "character" only highlight how important it is to help young people act on principle and develop a consistency and internalization of "good character" traits grounded in sound personal values.

The Character Education Partnership (CEP), a national organization in the vanguard of character education, has developed *The Eleven Principles of Character Education* . These principles provide a comprehensive and excellent framework for developing character education programs in schools and communities. Quite coincidentally, the educational philosophy and psychology of A STUDY OF HEROES, which was developed independently and prior to CEP's formal set of guidelines, is congruent with " *The Eleven Principles* ."

Most heartening to me in terms of character education has been the response of students of all ages to A STUDY OF HEROES. In a fifth grade class in one of the Diocese of Evansville, Indiana schools, when students were asked by independent professional evaluators about the effects HEROES had upon them, they responded in their own words saying:

- " *Everybody was being a little nicer to people ."*
- " *People were trying to be role models and leaders. "*
- " *Everybody was in a better mood ."*
- " *People were being more open to other people's feelings. "*
- " *People started hanging out with people they didn't hang out with before ."*
- " *People were helping more ."*

Their teacher then added:

- " *The students have become gentler and they're willing to work together more ."*

Additional responses from adults in various roles in the schools included the following observations about the effects of HEROES:

- " *(HEROES) really has made the students see the POSITIVE in our world!*

THANKS! "

---- A Teacher

- *"I saw a couple of seventh graders this semester really turn around ..What was really inspiring to these students was that their grades improved. Their motivation improved."*

----- A Counselor

- *"HEROES . is very easy because everything is teacher friendly. The packets have been developed for very easy implementation and that's what I heard back from the teachers."*

---- A Principal

- *" No longer were only celebrities, fictional characters, and athletes named as heroes. Suddenly grandmothers, dads, aunts and uncles serving in the armed forces, policemen/women, custodians, and nurses were seen as the everyday heroes among us. .. Surprisingly, the students themselves started recognizing each other for heroic acts. They began wanting to be heroic, not for any reward, but just because it was the right thing to do."*

---- A District Director, K - 12 Schools

A STUDY OF HEROES is used in all fifteen of the adult prisons (from "boot camp" to maximum security) under the aegis of The New Jersey Department of Corrections. It has been implemented generally as a character education program and also as a literacy, language arts, and social studies component in GED-preparation classes. In data collected by independent professional evaluators, the prisoners', teachers', and administrators' own words reflect the impact of program:

Inmates Say :

- *"It (HEROES) can teach me positive things and maybe one day my son will call me his hero."*
- *"Being able to guide others in the right direction so that their life isn't wasted through incarceration is worth accomplishing."*
- *"(HEROES should be) available to the whole compound, not just for students."*

Correctional Teachers Say:

- *" This curriculum (HEROES) is ideal for the pre-GED classroom due to their reading level. "*
- *" Better reading, reasoning skills, and cultural awareness ."*

- " *We teach at a maximum security prison. Most men have not developed a philosophy to get them through. (HEROES) is a blessing. "*
- " *I have witnessed a definite improvement in students' attitudes toward other cultures and ethnic groups. "*
- " *Morale has improved. "*
- " *There has definitely been growth in student patience and cooperation with school teachers and administrators as a result of this project. "*
- " *Most students (inmates) involved in the HEROES Project have more confidence in their abilities to turn their lives around. There is more hope for the future. "*
- " *Greater cultural awareness, expanded view of history and geography and accepting divergent viewpoints. "*
- " *(The inmates) reluctantly realized that even behind bars they could be a positive influence on not only fellow convicts but amongst staff and civilians. "*
- " *The students at this prison have some of the longest sentences . Optimism is hard to induce. (HEROES) in difficult settings has much to say."*

Director of Educational Services Says:

- " *I would surely rally to have (HEROES) introduced to other corrections facilities nationwide and adult school programs. .The students/inmates have been receptive to it. Actually, they've used it in various ways in a multitude of different teaching styles and writing assignments. ..As far as the activities, the inmates have found it very educational and some of them have even said it was fun ."*

--- **Acting Director** , Office of Educational Services, A State Department of Corrections

Commissioner of Corrections Says:

- Commissioner Devon Brown of the New Jersey Department of Corrections . "said A Study of Heroes is one of the cornerstones of educational efforts in New Jersey prisons. ' *Character-building is at the core,* ' Brown said, adding, ' *Those who complete the program are less likely to commit infractions in and out of prison.'* "

---- **as quoted in the American Correctional Association online newsletter featuring A STUDY OF HEROES workshop at ACA Conference, Baltimore 2005**

The aforementioned observations from both children and adults in two highly diverse settings indicate how important character education is and how easily it can be infused into curricula through an interdisciplinary approach, such as found in A STUDY OF HEROES.

4.) Your program helps to distinguish between heroism and celebrity. Why is this distinction important?

Many Americans of all economic, ethnic, educational and social backgrounds, when asked to name their heroes, respond by citing sports and entertainment celebrities. The concepts of " *hero* " and " *celebrity* ", although not mutually exclusive, have very different attributes. A STUDY OF HEROES (a K- adult multicultural and interdisciplinary program) inspires and educates through the example of real heroes, individuals drawn from diverse periods of history, ethnicities, and areas of accomplishment. Additionally, students are encouraged to recognize the *real heroes* in their own families, schools, and communities while discovering the "hero within themselves." We approach this through: biographies written at three different readability levels and lengths thereby addressing not only reading but also attention-span variables; quotations from heroic figures; vocabulary; discussion and research questions; performing and fine arts activities; geography activities; problem-solving scenarios; role-plays; non-violent conflict resolution strategies; intergenerational sharing; and service learning.

After September 11 th , there was an immediate change in many young people's recognition of the *real heroes* in their lives. Rather than the common mention of " *celebrities* " as heroes, we heard with greater frequency the identification local firemen, policemen, rescue-squads, paramedics, 911-responders, medical personnel, those in military service, and family and community members who routinely make positive differences in the lives of others. As time has passed, we are again seeing some erosion in the term " *hero* " and its confusion with the term " *celebrity* ". As educators, we must remain vigilant when we see the concept of " *hero* " being eroded through media and advertising hype.

Occasionally, it is a healthy and informative exercise to ask oneself and others " *Who is your hero?* " The responses are often quite revealing. As Americans, it our nature to be very protective of our " *personal heroes* ", and we tend to defend them in casual conversation and sometimes even in heated debate. Interestingly, think about it .. when we talk about our " *heroes* ," we are in essence revealing our *values* and what is inherently significant and important to us.

In A STUDY OF HEROES, we suggest that teachers ask four sequential and simple questions to gather data and monitor students' changing knowledge and attitudes about the topic of *heroes* . These four questions must be asked in the sequence presented because the answer to one question, in all likelihood, will shape the answer to the next question. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to these questions. If employed in a timely manner, this set of sequential questions is useful for diagnostic, formative, and summative evaluation and feedback. The questions are:

1. *Who is your hero? Why?*
2. *What is a hero?;*
3. *Was there ever a time when you wished a hero were nearby? If yes, when?*

Why?; and

4. *Would you ever want to be a hero? Why? Why not?*

You may be very surprised by the answers that you hear from your students. You also will learn a lot about your students, perhaps more than you expected or ever wanted to know! The third question was far more "loaded" than we had thought and led us to involve counselors into the development of HEROES. We heard the answers that we expected, such as "I wish a hero had been nearby when I flunked an exam"; "struck out at a game"; or when "no one asked me to the prom." However, we also heard responses related to "bullying"; domestic violence; substance abuse; divorce; etc. Today, in some districts, counselors use HEROES as a strategy for conducting individual and group sessions.

Additionally, throughout HEROES, we offer an array of simple activities that help students quickly to see the differences between " *heroes* " and " *celebrities* ". One such activity is to employ Venn Diagrams depicting the traits of suggested heroes and celebrities. Through such a visual activity, comparing and contrasting the traits of two or more individuals can be readily enlightening. Students suddenly recognize and appreciate the difference between " *heroic* " character traits and " *celebrity* " traits. It is important to remind students that although the concepts of " *hero* " and " *celebrity* " are very different, they are not always mutually exclusive. In all instances, teachers and students should keep an open mind during such discussions and listen carefully to the reasoning and knowledge behind the opinions offered. Such Venn Diagram activities not only address *multiple intelligences* but also nurture higher-level and critical-thinking skills. These simple engaging activities invite exciting and enjoyable debate while nurturing tolerance and civility.

5.) Currently you also serve as consultant to The Independent Living Resource at the Hunter College of Social Work. What exactly do you do there and what is the Independent Living Resource?

I have been fortunate enough over the years to work with professionals in the fields of social work, foster care, and independent living skills. Originally, this work was done through The South Bronx Human Development Organization, under the direction of Karolyn R. Gould, which recently merged into The Hunter College School of Social Work's Independent Living Center, now known as the College's Adolescent Services Resource Network (Director of National Resource Center, Professor Gerald P. Mallon; Project Director Judy Blunt.)

In this venue, as a consultant, I have developed independent curricula, workshops, and resources for use with foster-care youth, their social workers and foster care parents. One such program, which is now offered as an interactive CD by the New York State Department of Social Services is " *Our Place: Instructional Resources for First-Time Apartment Hunters* ."

Additionally, I have had the opportunity to work on-site with a community-based organization to develop an independent living skills curriculum for a recently-homeless AIDS adult population in The South Bronx. Again, this was both a challenging and rewarding opportunity from which I learned much about the HIV/AIDS, its treatment, self-respect and respect for others, motivational and inspirational strategies, and the social, economic, and human strength and needs of the community.

My work in the field of independent living skills has always afforded me opportunities to work with experts in the field of social work and to learn much not only from them but also from their clients. In this capacity, I have had the privilege of working with noted experts in the field including Karolyn R. Gould, Michael Texeira, Cathy Welsh, and Joan Morse. I am most grateful for the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they have shared with me.

6.) You have taught in a number of different settings, from Appalachia to Spanish Harlem . Where exactly in Appalachia did you teach and what did you learn from that experiences, and where in Spanish Harlem did you teach and what lessons did you learn from that experience?

" *Timing is everything* " is an old adage which certainly held true in both my formal and informal education. By the time I began graduate school first at Smith College in Northampton , Massachusetts and then at Columbia University 's Teachers College, I had already taught in two diverse settings: a rural public school set in a Blue Ridge Mountain community and an inner-city parochial school in the heart of Spanish Harlem.

When I entered graduate studies, I had already come to see that teacher-produced curricula provide highly effective and essential contributions to the field. I learned from my two initial teaching positions that the best curricula is developed on-site in a " *reality-based* " setting representative of the populations, locally or nationally, who will eventually implement the programs. Such an environment affords opportunities throughout the curriculum development process to work closely with, and gain input from, teachers, administrators, counselors, librarians, specialists, custodians, parents, students, and other members of the whole school community. This constant and immediate input coupled with ongoing feedback, evaluation, and adjustment of the evolving curriculum not only makes my job exciting and rewarding but it also "builds community" while producing a field-tested curricular product or program that "works."

Serendipity took over my career path immediately after graduating from college, getting married, and preparing to begin an exciting federal government job working with computers and researching water pollution control strategies (in the late 1960s, both aspects of such work were considered to be new and 'cutting edge.'). *Reality* set in for me four months after graduation and three weeks after my marriage. My husband and I had moved to Virginia where he was entering his second year of law school and where the salary from my upcoming job was to help pay tuition. Life was grand until the government put a hiring 'freeze' on my job; thereby, severely delaying my earning a living wage. Off I went, hat in hand, to an employment agency where I was told that there were two current job openings for which I was qualified. One was working the night-shift at a nearby airport and the other was teaching in a mountain community forty-five minutes away. It was not an easy choice. Having just gotten married, I immediately ruled out the night-shift job. But, I never wanted to be a teacher; nor had I in any way professionally prepared for such employment.

Facing tuition bills, I set off to interview for the teaching job in the nearby rural county. Little did I know that once I accepted the position as a 'sixth grade' teacher, my life would never again be the same. Quickly, I was drawn into the fast-paced, never a dull-moment world of teaching. Every second of every day, I was reminded that: there never would be two minutes exactly the

same; challenges would come fast and furiously; non-stop decision-making would be the norm; I would work with colleagues of all ages and diverse opinions and backgrounds; I had to engage at all times a classroom full of students with highly diverse reading levels, knowledge, skills, and attitudes in creative and rigorous learning activities; I had the dire need and rich opportunity to develop academically challenging and motivational instructional resources; and I would have to think seriously always but be able to laugh both with my students and at myself. Who could ask for more? What a wonderful occupation! In many ways, I felt like I was the most fortunate person in the world and that I had always been meant to be " *a teacher* ." For me, at that stage of my life, this was a startling and delightful realization.

Teaching in the Blue Ridge Mountains, many of my students came from the low-lying rocky farmlands and scenic hollows which hugged the steeply wooded slopes leading up to Skyline Drive in Virginia. During the days that I taught in the county elementary school, the students in my sixth grade classroom ranged in age from nine to eighteen years and were drawn heavily from two mountain clans. Many had never been outside of the county. My native and relatively privileged "northern suburban" *Yankee* perspective was instantly challenged and turned *upside down* and *inside out* .. so was the admittedly " *know it all* " attitude that I brought with me when I first arrived in the mountain community. I am most grateful that my naïve veneer of life experiences, assumptions, and perspectives was "rattled" at a relatively young age. For me, this humbling and enlightening personal and professional phenomenon sparked an insatiable curiosity about people with different backgrounds than I; it heightened my empathy and determination; and it made me eager to seek out new people, places, and experiences.

Throughout the years I taught in the Blue Ridge community, I was exposed to and humbled by the mountain wisdom; "can do" attitude; and proudly independent and common-sense traditions of the local people with whom I worked and the students whom I grew to care deeply about and know so well. It was part of the mountain culture to be self-sufficient; preferring never to accept "something for nothing" but always ready and willing to help out a neighbor in need. Naturally, I was challenged by and questioned much of what I saw; however, routinely, the goodness and generosity of the community made my time in the county not only memorable but also shaped my personal and professional outlook in the years to come.

It was in this rural setting that I first developed an adult education program. I wanted to promote 'intergenerational sharing' and more parental involvement in my students' education. Many of the parents had not completed high school themselves, and it was not unusual for some of their generation to consider a grade-school education to be sufficient. People tended to live and work hard and many married young. I invited parents to come to the school in the evenings where I would teach them mathematics, how to apply it to their daily lifestyle, and how to help their children with their homework. Needless to say, these sessions became multi-purpose and the instruction and communication that they promoted were "mutually beneficial" for everyone .. myself very much included.

I recall the words of wisdom spoken by one of my young students after a national newspaper wrote an article citing the county as one of the worst pockets of poverty in the eastern United States . Puzzling over a photo in the newspaper which seemed to focus mostly on a pile of debris outside a simple wood-frame house located in one of the remote hollows, a teenage boy in my

class observed, "*Why do they call us poor? Why do they focus only on 'things'? Don't they see the beauty of the mountains that surround us? We are not poor . we have the mountains.*"

Those words framed how I would look at communities and neighborhoods in all of the locations where I later worked. No matter how bleak, needy or deteriorated a situation may appear to 'outsiders', and no matter how determined you are to improve the situation, it is important to see the positives and negatives through the perspective of the local people and respect the fact that to them, where they live is not just a 'house, neighborhood, or community' .. it is also ' *home.* '

After teaching in the Blue Ridge Mountains , I realized I had learned so much not only about the lives of my students and their environment but also about myself. When I moved back to the New York Metropolitan Area, I requested positions teaching in either Spanish Harlem or Chinatown . I wanted to be exposed to populations and settings differing from my own past experience. I wanted to learn. Immediately, I was offered a job teaching in a parochial school (K-8) in the heart of Spanish Harlem. The tenements of the inner-city contrasted sharply with the mountains of the Blue Ridge community that I had just left. What I quickly learned was that despite the environmental and cultural differences, the populations had more in common than not. They both wanted the best for their children; they wanted to improve their lives; they worked hard; for the most part, despite serious adversities, they were able to remain individually overtly resilient and optimistic; and they were among the most generous people on the face of the earth.

In both the Blue Ridge Mountains and in Spanish Harlem (and later in The South Bronx), I witnessed an immediacy and virtual " *hunger* " within the community to take action and accept personal responsibility to improve one's life and the life of one's family. No one expected things to come *easily* or in some cases *to come at all* . They knew that if good things were *to happen* , they would have to make them happen. In sum, if personal or community *quality of life* were to improve, ultimately individual character and effort, coupled with spirited teamwork, would be responsible for the changes. Such honest and open determination and ambition, even among the very young, was most refreshing and admirable. Similar to my time in the Blue Ridge , I was learning continuously while working in my second teaching placement. Even at the time, I knew how fortunate I was to have the opportunity to have such a job.

The first faculty meeting in Spanish Harlem, prior to the arrival of our students, was held in the basement lunchroom/gymnasium of the aged school, which was rumored once to have been a 'Civil War hospital" .. no matter its origins, when I was there the building housed Saint Cecilia's School. Opening the meeting, a young but wise-beyond-his-years Irish Christian Brother who was the Principal addressed the faculty, " *If any of you, as teachers, are here to teach in Spanish Harlem with expectations for your students that are lower than they would be if you were teaching in an affluent suburb or in a highly-equipped independent school, then I want you to leave now.* " No one left. I knew then that not only I was in exactly the school that I had hoped for but also I was surrounded by probably one of the best faculty groups ever assembled.

The principal then posted his personal and professional motto " *My Best At All Times* " on the bulletin board just inside the front door where all of the students would pass. I knew that advice

was meant not only for the students but also for everyone who worked in and entered the school. To this day, those words still echo loudly, challenge, and motivate.

The standards for the school in Spanish Harlem were set high, and the administration and faculty were dedicated to meeting those goals through the development of energetic, academically challenging, and creative curricular experiences. That was our mission and we worked in a collegial spirited way to fulfill it. One example was a project that I spearheaded but could never have realized without the active involvement and support of my colleagues, students, parents, and the community itself. Together we developed an inner-city neighborhood environmental study and improvement program including: planting an urban garden; painting a two-story mural; raising funds to purchase and plant a Gallery Pear tree in front of the school; recycling all the paper considered to be a 'waste product' in the school; painting and sprucing up the ancient school facilities; holding an environmental fair and awards assembly; inviting speakers to address classes; and hosting a community celebration and block party!!! At the time, in the early 1970s, such a project was quite 'cutting edge' and very exciting!! If we were not necessarily "*the talk of the town*", the project was definitely "*the talk of Spanish Harlem*"!!!!

The memories of and lessons learned from my teaching days in the Blue Ridge Mountains and in Spanish Harlem have stayed with me for decades. *In sum*, the years that I taught in those two settings were filled with hard work, rigorous standards, collegiality, and most importantly with learning, love, and laughter. just the way *education* was be.

7.) I also spent two years teaching in the South Bronx . Why do teachers nowadays need to be aware of students in poverty situations?

I think it is important for educators, and others, to seize professional opportunities that broaden their range of perceptions and experiences. I have never sought out a position or job location solely because of the socio-economic status of the client or student population; moreover, as I learned from my first two teaching positions, although a job may be in an economically depressed area, its "riches," tangible and intangible, may far surpass those in other more economically flourishing areas. I found that diversity should definitely be celebrated. However, we must be vigilant in recognizing and appreciating our "commonalities" such as the shared importance of family; meeting basic needs; opening and seizing employment and educational opportunities; addressing emotional concerns and health issues; improving the quality of our lives; and fulfilling our hopes and dreams. When exploring our national motto, *E Pluribus Unum*, I think the trend in education today is to focus heavily upon the '*Pluribus*' to the extent that we often lose sight and appreciation of the '*Unum*'. Over the course of history, this weighting has shifted from one extreme to the other. Now we need to strike a productive and common balance.

I have frequently worked in areas where teaching conditions were confronted by such challenges as limited resources; community health, housing, and nutrition problems; antiquated instructional facilities; and high unemployment and low educational levels. However, no matter the location and the resources, I have been blessed with working in communities where people openly shared their traditions, cultures, wisdom, generosity, and spirit. Interestingly, in this respect, I always

have felt my work to be "enriching", no matter the location, on many fronts and certainly it was never routine or lonely.

8.) Your curriculum on Women Making History is also well known and well received. Why should Americans be aware of the contributions of women to history?

The "Women Making History" curriculum upon which I worked was created in the 1980s and was developed in conjunction with a book edited by Maxine Gold, an expert in women's issues at the NYC Commission on the Status of Women. At the time, it was a very uniquely New York City-based, positive, academically challenging and interdisciplinary program. It featured fifteen contemporary local women drawn from diverse age groups, backgrounds, ethnicities, and areas of accomplishment. Each one, a role-model, considered to be "making history" in New York City .

In general, Americans, like others throughout the world, naturally benefit from a broad knowledge of collective and individual contributions to history .. whether the individuals are men, women, children or adults. A knowledge of history is to me very much like a vast and unending jigsaw puzzle where the "big picture" becomes clearer and more valuable with each new piece we find and add and each "gap" we fill. If there is a deficit in any area of knowledge and teaching, then it is important to fill that void. The more "pieces" you have and share, the more historical "evidence" is collected, valued, and applied. The "big picture" of this ever-challenging and changing puzzle becomes increasingly fleshed out; however, it will never be complete. Historical research will always be answering, in a somewhat similar fashion as scientific inquiry, "the next question." For many years in standard curricula, the contributions of women and minorities and the perspectives of a diversity of cultures had been overlooked or, at best, given short shrift. There was a concerted and effective effort to fill this void and much has been accomplished. More remains to be done.

Of course, I believe that young people need role-models of all sorts. The strides that have been made in women's history in recent years have generated many such role-models. Yet, I believe that the spark of such inspiration and motivation is not necessarily always or solely gender-related. For example, I have seen routinely that a "true hero's" story, regardless of the hero's gender, can inspire one and all, male and female, and young and old.

9.) Here is a question to you: Who is the Woman That YOU admire most ?

Interesting question! I could name many women all of whom would be highly recognizable. However, I have actually given this and similar questions much thought over the years due to my work with the NYC Commission on the Status of Women; the AARP's " *Who is the Woman You Admire Most?* " survey and exhibit; and now the HEROES Program for The Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the United States.

Actually, I would have to say that the women whom I admire most are collectively members of my family, friends, and colleagues. The reason I say this is simple. It is rooted in familiarity. I have personally witnessed, admired, and been touched by the character and achievements of the women whom I have had the privilege of knowing personally. In many respects, they constitute

my "local heroes". I think if we all thought carefully about the question " *Who do you admire most?*" we would discover many of those most worthy of such recognition have been within arms-reach throughout our own lives.

Years ago, when I was developing the AARP's " *Who Is The Woman You Admire Most?* " survey and exhibit; I was struck by how many members of a generation of women cited Eleanor Roosevelt as their "hero". She had inspired a whole generation of women in so many personal yet universal ways. Today, for my generation, I do not think there would be such a uniform or consistent response in naming one particular woman. This is, perhaps, due in part to the fact that our traditional heroes and heroines are subjected to frequent "assault" through revisionist history, "gotcha" journalism, and by contemporary media hype. It has become a "sport" to scrutinize and even conjecture about the lives and character of public figures, both past and present. Some of this is healthy analysis and some is not. Such analysis needs to consider the context of the times in which the 'hero or heroine' lived. Also, as we have clearly learned " *one person's 'hero' is often someone else's adversary* "; moreover, our *heroes* are human, therefore are not *heroic* twenty-four hours per day and often have to some extent "clay feet". All of these characteristics make them fascinating to study and learn from .. great subjects for social studies, career education, ethics, citizenship and character education.

In our HEROES Program, we always caution that to truly understand and appreciate the life and character of any individual, you must first understand a framework of at least six somewhat overlapping contexts in which the person lived. This set of contexts include: the historical; the cultural; the technological; the geo-political; the socio-economic; and the inter- and intra-personal. When reflecting upon the question " *Who is the Woman Whom You Admire Most?* ", it is most appropriate to apply such a contextual framework. Perhaps it is my personal and contemporary familiarity with the contexts in which my family, friends, and colleagues have lived that makes it quite easy for me to appreciate the challenges that they faced as well as their character, actions, decision-making, achievements, priorities and *use of time* . Quite naturally, it follows that they remain among the women (and men) whom I admire the most.

10.) You are working, currently with recently homeless adults AIDS population in the South Bronx . How bad is the situation there?

Actually, the program with which I worked in The South Bronx with the recently-homeless adult AIDS population spanned several years in the late 1990s. It was a very positive, powerful, and educational experience. The program, created within the administrative structure of a community-based organization, provided independent living knowledge and skills; created a network of resources; and restored hope. Clients and staff brought such a diversity of experiences and collegial strength of character to the program. The program flourished in the community, and clients and staff used both office space and a 'practice apartment' to conduct workshops, seminars, and hands-on learning experiences. The very real and frequent achievements of all were celebrated; moreover, we became and functioned effectively as a '*community within a community*'. All who were involved were positively touched by this unique program which later served as a prototype for replication in other parts of the city.

11.) You help teenagers with a summer program called " Friends of the Zoo" what are you trying to accomplish with that program?

The summer program that I developed with a close friend and colleague, Pat Jenkins, for " *The Friends of the Zoo* ", a volunteer educational group of The New York Zoological Society, evolved during the 1970s. It was originally designed for "teenagers", but my corps of initial "teenage" volunteers ranged from approximately 10-years-old to senior citizens. We researched, trained, and led tours for the public on such topics as endangered species, mammals, and adaptations. The group offered related art activities; puppet shows; presentations of snakes, hawks, iguanas, kinkajous, hedgehogs, and other small mammals and reptiles; moreover, we provided educational information, services, and resources from a small central kiosk.

Additionally, the *Friends of the Zoo* program reached out and took educational services to schools, community centers, hospital wards and classrooms. Needless to say, we all benefited greatly from the expertise shared in both in formal and informal training sessions offered by the staff of The Bronx Zoo.

12.) Is there a web site or 800 number for readers to learn more about the Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the U.S.

The Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the United States is a not-for-profit organization based in Manhattan . The mission of The Raoul Wallenberg Committee of The United States is:

To perpetuate, through *A STUDY OF HEROES*, the humanitarian ideals and nonviolent courage of Raoul Wallenberg, a 31 year-old Christian Swede, who at the behest of the United States government at the end of World War II went to Budapest , Hungary and without resorting to violence saved from the Nazis more than 100,000 Jews in six months time. For still unknown reasons, Wallenberg was arrested by the Soviets in 1945; was imprisoned and thrown into their Gulag; and has never been seen as a free man again. By a Joint Act of Congress in 1981, Wallenberg was made the Third Honorary Citizen of the United States.

- To seek the truth surrounding the mystery of the fate of Raoul Wallenberg;
- To maintain archives and to provide information and expert services to researchers, the media, individuals, organizations, and governments inquiring about the story of Raoul Wallenberg; and
- To bestow *The Raoul Wallenberg Award* on individuals, organizations, and communities reflecting the values, spirit and courage of Raoul Wallenberg.

For more information, please visit : <http://www.raoulwallenberg.org> ; call the Committee at (212) 499-2695 or e-mail betty@raoulwallenberg.org

My colleagues Rachel Oestreicher Bernheim (CEO & President) and Diane Blake (Director of Research) are world experts on the story of Raoul Wallenberg. They share the Wallenberg story in many venues through speaking engagements, consultations, writings and ongoing research.

I would encourage anyone who is interested in the Committee's mission, resources, and programs to contact Betty McGuinness, Executive Administrative Assistant, for more information.

The HEROES Program to date has been used in a wide range of settings and for a broad diversity of populations. HEROES has been used by well over a million students in public, parochial and independent schools (K -12+) in 48 states and in three foreign countries; in all 15 adult prisons of the New Jersey State Department of Corrections (ranging from 'Boot Camp' to 'Maximum Security' settings); in after-school programs such as the Boys & Girls Clubs; in teacher centers for professional development; in adult education settings; in camps and religious-based settings; in schools and programs for juvenile offenders; in classroom instructional settings ranging from the traditional to the progressive and constructivist; in programs for the gifted, for special education, character education, for ESL instruction, and for service learning; in community-based organizations; for individual and group counseling and advisory sessions; and by social workers working with foster-care youth to develop independent living skills programs. It has been used by charter schools such as the Harlem Day Charter School (K-4) and the Derita School in Charlotte , North Carolina which works with secondary school students in a comprehensive preventative program for an at-risk and juvenile offender population. HEROES has been used in Catholic Schools (K-12) in ten counties in southern Indiana that comprise the Diocese of Evansville, Indiana. The program has been used in the Midland Independent School District , Midland , Texas , with exceptionally gifted elementary school students as part of their enrichment program. For many years, HEROES has been used throughout the Sate of New Jersey in many K-12 public schools; the New Jersey Department of Education designated A STUDY OF HEROES as an *Exemplary Character Education Program*. HEROES has been used in The Western Pennsylvania School For The Deaf, located in Pittsburgh , where a school-wide implementation is planned for the academic year 2006-2007.

13.) While many have seen the mini series about Raoul Wallenberg starring Richard Chamberlain, what other facts should the general public be aware of?

The search for "The Truth" about Raoul Wallenberg's fate continues. The Government of Sweden and The Raoul Wallenberg Committee of The United States have refused officially to close the books on the case. To date, there has been no conclusive evidence of his death furnished by representatives of Russia and the former Soviet Union . Moreover, there have been sightings of Wallenberg reported by individuals who were in The Gulag, the prisons, and the hospitals up through 1990.

As stated before through the HEROES Program, The Raoul Wallenberg Committee of The United States educates young and old about Wallenberg, his humanitarianism, and his nonviolent heroism. It is through the Committee's STONES (*Leave No Stone Unturned*) Program, under the direction of Diane Blake, that the search for the truth about the mystery surrounding Wallenberg continues.

14.) What question have I neglected to ask about you and your accomplishments?

Your interview questions are excellent, sparking what you have seen is a flood of memories. I have really enjoyed reflecting and responding to them.

There are two other programs with which I had the privilege of working and that we have not yet addressed. My work with them began more than twenty-five years ago. In each, I was able to work with and learn from experts. These jobs came early in my consulting career, while I was still a graduate student and instructor at Teachers College, and my affiliation with each of them has been long-lived.

Over the course of more than two decades, I have been fortunate enough to serve as a consultant to a most remarkable organization, Teachers Network (formerly IMPACT II). In this capacity, I have assisted educators in professional and curriculum development (including in recent years) assisting classroom teachers with the creation of web-based curricula for international publication. Teachers Network grew from a local to a national and now global organization. Since its inception in 1980, at its helm have been Ellen Dempsey (President & CEO) and Ellen Meyers (Senior Vice President) along with long-time adviser (and now "Life Trustee" and Member of The Board) Charlotte K. Frank, the Senior Vice-President of Research & Development at McGraw-Hill Companies. It has been a distinct pleasure to have worked with and benefited from the knowledge and skills of not only expert classroom teachers but also experts in the field of educational technology such as Carla Huck, Sandy Scragg, and Sheila Gersh. The innate relationship between curriculum and technology is historic and was a topic recognized by the likes of John Dewey in his research and writings. I have been blessed with working with "the best" in the field. Through their creative insight, and given ongoing the advances in technology, I now foresee the limitless possibilities that lie ahead in the areas of curriculum and professional development.

Another long-term affiliation that I have enjoyed (since the program's inception in 1980) is with a program called *House Sense*. Its development began in 1980 within The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). Today, it is still alive and undergoing a revival. The concept for *House Sense* was the dream of Judge Bruce J. Gould, a well-known attorney and tenant advocate, who served in the role of an HPD Deputy Commissioner. For nearly two decades Dr. James C. Story served as *House Sense*'s Director. Jim and I worked closely over the years bringing the program to new and expanding educational venues and populations. As the program "went citywide", The McDonald's Corporation enthusiastically and most generously sponsored its continued development and outreach. In my work as the author, designer, and curriculum developer of *House Sense*, I worked collegially with experts not only from HPD but also from eleven other city agencies to develop a program to teach students (K-9+) about such issues as housing and neighborhoods; tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities; urban architecture; city planning; energy conservation; fire, elevator, gas and electrical safety; plumbing, heating and hot water systems; security; noise pollution; pest control; vandalism prevention; abandonment of buildings; sanitation; housing inspection; housing programs; tenant organizations; window-falls prevention; housing court; lead-poisoning prevention; how to complain effectively; housing economics; and making a "house" into a "home." The content and cartoons (most of which I crafted) of *House Sense* were lauded on the editorial page of *The New York Times*. I remain very proud of this curriculum, its challenging academic content, and its uniquely collaborative relationship with a network of city agencies.

15.) What is next on the horizon for you?

Based upon the serendipity and good fortune that has to date shaped much of my career path, I always chuckle when I am asked what I plan to do next. As I mentioned to you in one of our e-mail communications, one of my favorite sayings is " *If you want to make God laugh, tell him what your plans are.* "

Nonetheless, a number of things are on my immediate horizon. A STUDY OF HEROES continues to reach new audiences and has many features upon which we want to expand. We envision not only adding more "heroes" to our program, but also new resources to the range of products that we offer.

Additionally, with the promise of unending advances in technology, it is a very exciting time to be active in the fields of curriculum, instruction, and professional development. The one thing that I have learned over my career is that " *dreams can be realized.* " With this kept in both the mind and heart, I hope to create and find opportunities to work with past and present colleagues in the development of many innovative future educational services, programs and products. There are just too many exciting challenges and possibilities to ignore.