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In Memoriam

Madeleine Reynolds

St. John Fisher College

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In Memoriam

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"St. John Fisher College was the beneficiary of Mike Herzbrun's quiet manner and gentle humor for twenty three years. Always cold, he was often seen walking around campus in his green parka, even inside, even in warm weather. He met with many students over the years and was truly a counselor at heart. He listened, rarely advised, and allowed all of us, staff and student alike, to try and make our own mistakes. Mike understood that it was often only when we tried and were unsuccessful that we learned lessons. He understood that, had he just told us “no”, the learning would not have come so quickly."
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Even in his absence, every month or so a student will mention that Mike was a great influence in his or her life. Students talk of how he helped them to see a different perspective or helped them work through difficult times. Over twenty three years he helped many, many students.

A health center tradition is to give one another cards on our birthdays. Like most departments we all take time to write some message of good wishes on the birthday cards. Unfortunately none of us knew what Mike was writing to us because he consistently wrote in Hebrew! Not only did it point to our group education deficit but left us guessing as to what his message really was about. He challenged us to find out what the cards said and we will when time permits. He did not like attention drawn to his own birthdays and asked that we not celebrate with cake or gifts. During his time at Fisher, Mike worked with an all-female staff which was an issue that he managed with quiet humor. While Mike enjoyed a very healthy vegetarian diet, he maintained that it was important to always eat dessert first. Mike was diagnosed with cancer only weeks after his retirement. He did not get a chance to spend his time playing golf, reading or writing. It is the hope of his colleagues that he at least took the time to eat his dessert first in many aspects of his life.

Mike had several academic and faith filled accomplishments in his life, such as his doctorate from the University of Rochester and his ordination as a Rabbi. In our last conversation, Mike spoke to me of his good life and his sadness over losing his wife Pnina in the summer of 2014, but his eyes began to sparkle and his face broke into a joyous smile as he said “and I have a son”. His son, Yoni was the accomplishment of which he was most proud.

Mike did not like saying goodbye; when he left Fisher in 2013 he emptied his office in one weekend. We returned on Monday and after a few hours opened his door to find everything gone. The staff planned a time to get together to say goodbye but that was not to be. Why would we be surprised? Mike was always one to avoid attention of any type. We miss his gentle ways and his calming presence. May his memory be a blessing.

Madeleine Reynolds

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