Honoring achievement and service to social work regulation

The 2013 award recipients stand tall as role models of dedication to the principles of public protection

Each year, ASWB recognizes people who have risen to achieve greatness and longevity. Such people are the winners of this year’s Sunny Andrews Award, Kenneth Middlebrooks (MN), and the Board Administrator’s Award, Richard Hazel (SK). The winners were recognized at the Annual Meeting of the Delegate Assembly in Nashville, Tenn., November 7-9.

Sunny Andrews Award
Kenneth Middlebrooks (MN)

After he was introduced with glowing praise by Kate Zacher-Pate, administrator of the Minnesota Board of Social Work (MNBOSW), at the Annual Meeting, Kenneth Middlebrooks said, “I almost don’t recognize myself in those comments.” The association, however, certainly recognized his accumulated achievements as the Minnesota board’s public member.

In her letter nominating Middlebrooks for this esteemed award, Zacher-Pate wrote: “Mr. Middlebrooks embodies genuine volunteerism performed with commitment, integrity, and intelligence at both a state and national level.” His nomination came with the full support of the board, due to his tenure of leadership as a public board member, board officer, and member of the Legislative Task Force, Complaint Resolution Compliance Committee and four other committees.

Middlebrooks was praised for his understanding of the complexities of board regulation and how seriously he takes his responsibility to ensure that licensed professionals meet standards and are qualified, ethical, and accountable. Also noted were the many hours Middlebrooks volunteered to provide the excellent narration “in his James Earl Jones voice” for the MNBOSW online compliance process video in 2008, as well as his active leadership role as the longstanding MNBOSW delegate to ASWB. Middlebrooks has served on the ASWB Bylaws and Resolutions Committee since 2012 and was its chair in 2013.

Board Administrator Award
Richard Hazel (SK)

In his remarks at the Annual Meeting, Richard Hazel, newly retired executive director of the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers (SASW), told the tale of how he discovered he had won the award.
There was a sole letter in the mailbox from ASWB President Patricia Heard. He slid his finger under the envelope’s flap and opened it. “I stood there with my jaw on my chest…I was stunned.”

Hazel was nominated by Carole Bryant, past president of the SASW and ASWB treasurer, on the eve of his retirement as a professional who exemplifies the high standards of this award. Bryant credits Hazel with ensuring that the SASW flourished under his leadership from September 2002 to May 2013. More high praise came from Morel Caissie, president of the Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) Federation: “The CASW Federation has benefitted from your knowledge, expertise, and leadership during your tenure as SASW ED….Your leadership, within the Province of Saskatchewan and across the country, has influenced in a very positive manner the public profile and the reputation of the social work profession.”

Hazel was also lauded for his instrumental role in the creation and development of the Canadian Council of Social Work Regulators (CCSWR), as well as his greatly valued and appreciated “mediation” skills in dealing with interest groups who took issue with the furthering of regulation. “He is the quintessential professional,” said Bryant.