Gary Malkowski Receives Honourary Doctorate

Gary Malkowski, special advisor to the president, public affairs, at the Canadian Hearing Society (CHS), was bestowed the honorary degree of doctor of humane letters by Gallaudet University on May 13, 2011.

"Gary Malkowski is proof that a deaf person can achieve great things if he or she is granted adequate communication access," said Gallaudet President T. Alan Hurwitz. "Especially for young deaf men and women, his record as an elected parliamentarian and devoted advocate for the rights of deaf and hard of hearing people is a source of great pride and inspiration."

In making the announcement, Gallaudet President Hurwitz cited Malkowski's extensive work on issues of critical importance to the Deaf community, his devoted services in advancing student rights and his work in rehabilitation.

After completing his education at Gallaudet in 1984, Malkowski returned to Canada to work as a vocational rehabilitation counsellor with CHS, which since 1940 has provided services, products and information to culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing people.

Malkowski is tireless in the fight for accessible and equitable education for Deaf and hard of hearing students; his leadership in the Deaf Ontario Now Deaf education move-ment lead to American Sign Language and la langue des signes québécoise being rec-ognized as languages of instruction in schools for Deaf students.

In a departure from serving the community from positions in the Associations of the Deaf and in CHS, Malkowski became the first elected Deaf Member of Ontario's Provincial Parliament. Serving as parliamentary assistant and on many standing committees, he introduced a private member's bill that led to the introduction and implementation of what is now the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Supreme court rulings and decisions in support of accessibility rights of Deaf and hard of hearing Canadians are in large part due to the efforts of Malkowski.

In his current position at CHS – special advisor to the president, public affairs – Malkowski continues to work for the educational and vocational rights of deaf and hard of hearing people.

His awards for service include the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal in recognition of his community service, the Ontario Liberal Government Community Action Award, and the Ontario Federation of Community Mental Health and Addiction Program's Outstanding Contribution to Mental Health Communities Award.

As a further honour from Gallaudet University, Malkowski was invited to deliver what was an incredibly passionate and inspirational keynote address at the university's May 13th commencement.

In his address, Malkowski thanked the communities for their support of a body of work that "couldn't have been achieved without the communities whose rights we have fought together to defend."

Malkowski said, "I have had the opportunity and privilege to have been a part of making great strides in breaking down and removing communication barriers faced by culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing individuals, children and their families."

He congratulated Gallaudet University for the investment it makes in its students, many of whom have become public office holders – elected politicians and senior managers at all level of government – medical doctors, chiropractors, audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and leaders in senior management including Dr. Alan Hurwitz, Gallaudet University, Gerry Buckley, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Benjamin Soukup, Communication Services for the Deaf, and Chris Kenopic, The Canadian Hearing Society – all Presidents and CEOs.

Malkowski continued in his keynote to say that "Gallaudet University is truly a home, and is an engine for higher education that continues to be an integral tool in the building of thousands of bridges between Deaf and hard of hearing people who use signed languages and our general societies, including institutions of all levels of government."

"I am honoured to work alongside a tireless individual driven by his personal passion, exceptional pro-fessionalism, and integrity," says CHS President and CEO Chris Kenopic. "We are proud to have such a key person at CHS whose groundbreaking accomp-lishments continue to promote equity for people who are culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing."

Submitted by Kelly MacKenzie,
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