



17.5.23

Dear Kathleen, Rob, the Spitzer family, dear friends from across the Negev, and dear faculty,

It is an honor to open the Spitzer Ceremony Award for PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL WELFARE IN THE NEGEV of 2023.

This award, a long tradition of the department of SW at Ben Gurion University, is given once every 2 years, and is central to the connection between the social work department and its role models in the field that stand out and can be examples of how far reaching and beneficial SW practice can be in the Negev region of ISrael.

It is in these excellent professional exemplars that the values of SW profession, including person-centeredness, equality and well being, are expressed through actual practices with much vision, planning, determination the prize winners.

In its heart, SW practice is based on human rights and the right for dignity and freedom, and in light of these rights and values that the department and through the Spitzer award, commits to a democratic state with the Jewish spirit as appears in the declaration of independence of the State of Israel.

By continuing with this tradition, we strive to strengthen the peripheral south of Israel, seeding excellent work, despite the many challenges this region has. We hope this prize contributes to the sense of solidarity among the professional community in the south, enhancing connection between the field and the academia, strengthening ties and potential collaborations.

It is therefore an honor to present today the winners of the prize who represent exemplary initiatives.

These are:

Keren Ben-Shalom and Dana Haim – who initiated and developed integrated poverty-aware social work within a mental health service at the Avivim-Lev HaNegev organization – where Keren is the professional director of and Dana was manager of its residential services. This comprehensive service allows a holistic and attentive approach, joining the clients' perspective and addressing practical issues of poverty and mental health. Such a combination is force majeure if we are to provide proper support to individuals in such life and health states.

Thanks to their pilot of poverty-aware SW in mental health services, this project is now being considered as a best practice in the Ministry of Health under the mental health rehabilitation division, this may lead to its implementation in other rehabilitation services across the country.

Alongside Keren and Dana's successful pioneering work, we are also honored to award Ms. Sigal Price, who currently serves as Head of the National Assistance Program for families who have suffered sudden and traumatic losses, such as death of a loved one by suicide, murder, car accidents and so forth in the "Bishvil Hachaim" – the path of life program.

Sigal, a senior SW with much experience in the Jail system, bravely took on a personal vision from her experience of witnessing families who managed to develop resiliency and growth despite and as a result of their tragic losses and bereavement. , which made her determined to develop unique services to address the needs of families in grievance, to bring forth their stories and needs to other circles and services in the community.

She was so successful that this family support service "bishvil hachaim" expanded from the local to a national level. As a result she now directs 4 such centers. And she and her team continuously work to advance

awareness and include more groups, such as working with the Beouin communities.

Holding this ceremony against the extremely disconcerting political times- you- the prize winners bring much light and pride – demonstrating the power of civilians, who are SW professionals , putting their skills and proficiency with their hearts to identify those people who are often transparent in society, working together with them strengthening and developing a more resilient and humane society, no matter the sex, gender, religion or one's race.

With Much appreciation and acknowledgement - Keren, Dana and Sigal - for your dedication and hard work all these years

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Galia Moran', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Prof. Galia Moran,

on behalf of the Spitzer committee members:

MSW Gila Reshef Dr. Shani Pitcho and Dr. Yuval Saar-Heiman