

HEARTBIKER

Better. Not only do you feel better after talking with Dr. Michael Giudici, but you want to do better as well. He is one of those people that immediately rubs off on you, in a positive way. After learning more about Dr. Giudici, you feel like making a difference, no matter how big or small that difference may be.

The second of six children, Mike spent his childhood as a self-proclaimed “runt off the streets of Davenport.” Mike recalls that a big deal for his family would be sharing McDonald’s french fries for dinner on Sunday evenings. For dessert, his mother would buy two candy bars, cut them into thirds, and stick toothpicks in them for each of her children to have.

He rode his 24-inch, one-speed bike all over Davenport and became familiar with where the streets were and where they went. Mike believed his bike gave him “freedom.” He recalls scaring his mother when he was 12 years young, by telling her some of the places he was riding his bike, such as Bettendorf, LeClaire and Maysville in Iowa (he told his mother he rode to Maysville when, actually, he rode to Tipton, which is almost another 30 miles). He was one of the youngest members of the Quad City Bicycle Club at age 13.

With aspirations of being a math teacher and basketball coach, Mike went to Carleton College in Northfield, Minn. He performed very well in a chemistry course, which helped him decide to be a pre-med student. His first attempt at applying to med school was unsuccessful. Determined to make it work, he applied to the University of South Dakota. The school would only accept him if he was a South Dakota resident. The day after he graduated from Carleton College, Mike moved to Vermillion, South Dakota, acquired a driver's license and license plates, and opened a bank account. Mike worked several jobs, saving money, before he was accepted to the University of South Dakota. His educational journey took him to places like Philadelphia; San Francisco; Iowa City; Columbia, Mo.; and Rochester, NY. He was drafted into the Air Force and was stationed in Virginia and New Jersey. Mike believes his experience in South Dakota was the best professional experience that could have happened to him.

Now, Mike is a Heart Rhythm Specialist at Genesis Heart Institute in Davenport, Iowa. Some of his duties include screening people for heart conditions, performing surgeries, inserting pacemakers and teaching in the residency program. Mike, and the Heart Institute, have really made a name for Davenport in the cardiology field with the research conducted here and publications written. Mike says that the accomplishments the Heart Institute has achieved is better than 99% of the places in the world.

Mike says his professional influences have helped mold him into what he is doing today. Greg Flaker, at University of Missouri Hospitals, and Arnold Greenspan, at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, have been the two people that have given him the most support through the years.

Mike has a passion for music. In fact, his cell phone rings “More Than a Feeling” by Boston when someone calls. Although he doesn't have much time for it, he enjoys playing the guitar and writing music. During his college days in Philadelphia, Mike was in a band called “Back Seat.” His band submitted their cassette tape into a “Rock to Riches” contest, in which the regional winner moves on against the national competition for a recording contract. Feeling good about their chances, the band learned they finished second place in the regional competition to some hair band called “Bon Jovi.”

Another interesting musical tidbit about Mike is that he recorded a very popular song about the Quad Cities in 1979. For three weeks in 1980, Dr. Giudici's song was the most requested song on the radio waves in the Quad Cities. The song encompassed everything wonderful about being a part of, and living in, the Quad Cities area.

He enjoys the Quad Cities so much, that he wanted to make it a more beautiful place for everyone. In 1980, Mike observed that no matter which direction you drove in to Davenport, there wasn't a very attractive entrance. He noticed that a post office on West River Drive had tall weeds, old car batteries and mufflers in its yard. Mike asked the Postmaster if he could plant some trees. The Postmaster agreed and split the cost of the trees with Mike. On Easter Sunday, 1980, Mike and some friends drove to a local tree farm, purchased five locust trees, and planted them at the post office. The post office employees noticed how nice the trees looked, and so did the neighbors in the area. Everyone started cleaning up their yards and making the area look a little better, all because a few trees were planted. Everytime Mike would come home to the Quad Cities, from wherever he was attending school, he would buy a tree and ask to plant it in an area that he felt needed a tree.

In the winter of 1990, Mike assembled a group of people that were interested in making areas in Davenport look more beautiful. The group raised more than \$20,000 and planted 250 trees along Interstate 80 from Brady Street to Northwest Boulevard. That project gave the group the "planting bug." The group wasn't sure if they wanted to plant that many trees the following year but the next year, they raised \$40,000 and planted 400 trees. The project "grew" from there. The group, now known as "Greenway Habitat Project," has planted over 10,000 trees in and around the Davenport area.

Living by the philosophy of "If not me, who? If not now, when?", Dr. Giudici has certainly been a testament to hard work paying off. Mike says his work ethic and civic responsibility come from his parents. His mother, who helped start the Meals on Wheels program in the Quad Cities, volunteers her time to many community causes. His father, a former minor league baseball player, is still working full-time at age 79. Mike says his parents make him look lazy.

The advice that Mike would offer to the youth of today would be, "Anything is achievable." He says that choosing something you really want to do includes having a passion for it and believing you can make a difference. With the triumphs Dr. Giudici has made in his life, and in others, he certainly rocks this world.