

# About Our Honoree

## Ted Kirsch



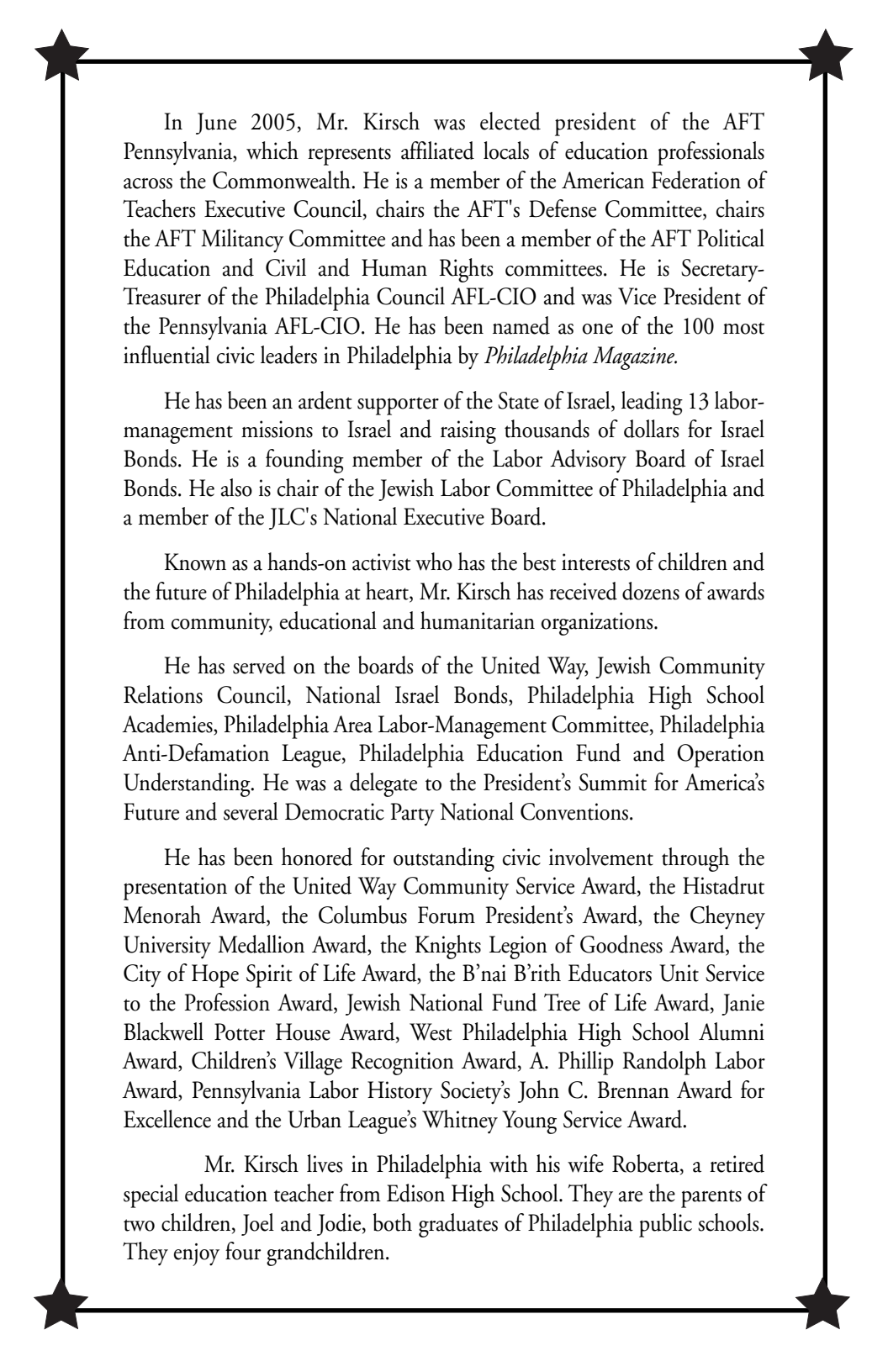
Born in South Philadelphia, educated in its public schools and raised by two active trade union members, Ted Kirsch has spent a lifetime advocating for equal education opportunities for all children and for the rights and dignity of working people.

He received a bachelor's in education from West Chester College in 1960 and earned a master's degree in education from Temple University in 1970.

Mr. Kirsch began his career in Philadelphia in 1960, teaching social studies at Thomas Junior High School and later at Overbrook High School. He also taught courses on labor history, collective bargaining and theory of the labor movement at Pennsylvania State University. He was the first teacher in the School District of Philadelphia to teach African-American history as a major credit course and took a leave of absence from his position as Social Studies Department Head at George Washington High School to work fulltime for the union.

Mr. Kirsch joined the PFT before it won collective bargaining rights in 1965 and was among the courageous teachers arrested on picket lines and jailed in the early years of the union. He has advocated for more than four decades for respect and fair treatment of teachers and education support staff. Throughout his union career, he has been at the forefront of calling for education reforms that are proven to raise student achievement, such as smaller class sizes, universal early childhood education programs, full-day kindergarten, safe schools and equal education funding for all public schools.

His PFT career began in 1965 when he was elected PFT Building Representative at Overbrook High School. Mr. Kirsch was elected to the PFT Executive Board in 1967 and appointed a PFT District Staff Representative in 1970. In 1983, he was elected Vice President and Director of Staff, where he served until his election as President in 1990. He was reelected to his sixth consecutive term in 2005.



In June 2005, Mr. Kirsch was elected president of the AFT Pennsylvania, which represents affiliated locals of education professionals across the Commonwealth. He is a member of the American Federation of Teachers Executive Council, chairs the AFT's Defense Committee, chairs the AFT Militancy Committee and has been a member of the AFT Political Education and Civil and Human Rights committees. He is Secretary-Treasurer of the Philadelphia Council AFL-CIO and was Vice President of the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO. He has been named as one of the 100 most influential civic leaders in Philadelphia by *Philadelphia Magazine*.

He has been an ardent supporter of the State of Israel, leading 13 labor-management missions to Israel and raising thousands of dollars for Israel Bonds. He is a founding member of the Labor Advisory Board of Israel Bonds. He also is chair of the Jewish Labor Committee of Philadelphia and a member of the JLC's National Executive Board.

Known as a hands-on activist who has the best interests of children and the future of Philadelphia at heart, Mr. Kirsch has received dozens of awards from community, educational and humanitarian organizations.

He has served on the boards of the United Way, Jewish Community Relations Council, National Israel Bonds, Philadelphia High School Academies, Philadelphia Area Labor-Management Committee, Philadelphia Anti-Defamation League, Philadelphia Education Fund and Operation Understanding. He was a delegate to the President's Summit for America's Future and several Democratic Party National Conventions.

He has been honored for outstanding civic involvement through the presentation of the United Way Community Service Award, the Histadrut Menorah Award, the Columbus Forum President's Award, the Cheyney University Medallion Award, the Knights Legion of Goodness Award, the City of Hope Spirit of Life Award, the B'nai B'rith Educators Unit Service to the Profession Award, Jewish National Fund Tree of Life Award, Janie Blackwell Potter House Award, West Philadelphia High School Alumni Award, Children's Village Recognition Award, A. Phillip Randolph Labor Award, Pennsylvania Labor History Society's John C. Brennan Award for Excellence and the Urban League's Whitney Young Service Award.

Mr. Kirsch lives in Philadelphia with his wife Roberta, a retired special education teacher from Edison High School. They are the parents of two children, Joel and Jodie, both graduates of Philadelphia public schools. They enjoy four grandchildren.