

PEABODY

WEEKLY NEWS

JULY 27, 2023

<https://peabody.weeklynews.net/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&pubid=41fac55b-dc3f-442c-b620-14e83c2f11c0>

Resident recognized for outstanding care and commitment to disabled adults

For The Weekly News

A resident of the city who works as a residential counselor at a group home in Watertown was honored by MAB Community Services, a social-service agency that assists those with disabilities, for his "extraordinary kindness and devotion in caring for participants."

Said Barko was named one of the recipients of the 2023 Maxo Joseph Excellence in Direct Care Awards, and was formally recognized at a ceremony at MAB's Brookline headquarters earlier this month. MAB supports over 1,500 individuals with visual impairments, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and acquired brain injuries across Massachusetts, including at the Watertown group home where Barko works.

The awards, established in 2021, honor direct-care staff in MAB's Adult Disability

Services division who "go above and beyond in their commitment to the participants they support." Their dedication reflects the legacy of Maxo Joseph, a caregiver who passed away in 2020. Totalling \$50,000 annually, the Maxo Joseph Awards provide individual recipients with awards ranging from \$2,000 to \$10,000.

Barko first came to MAB as a temporary staff member through an outside agency. The house manager believed he was such an exceptional employee that he convinced his supervisor to buy out Barko's contract with the agency and hire him as a permanent MAB employee.

Barko is known for giving participants personalized attention. When one participant was nearing the end of his life, Barko would spend time with him, make him laugh, and pray at the participant's bedside after he'd gone to sleep. When another participant moved into



PHOTO | MAB COMMUNITY SERVICES
Said Barko, a Peabody resident, was honored as one of the recipients of MAB's 2023 Maxo Joseph Excellence in Direct Care Awards.

a MAB home after living alone with his mother, Barko made sure to spend time with him one-on-one so he didn't feel like he had to compete with his four roommates for attention. A participant's family member noted that Barko provides participants the kind of care

that someone would offer to a loved one.

Barko consistently supports his fellow staff members, always offering to step in when others call out sick. He also regularly completes random acts of kindness, from changing his coworker's flat tire to shoveling the driveway of an elderly neighbor who lives near the group home. Barko received one of two \$10,000 Maxo Joseph Awards, which is the largest award given.

"I am so proud of Said for his dedication to the participants he serves," Barko's manager John Quintero said. "He is one of the most compassionate caregivers we have and naturally makes an impact with families — I am always hearing compliments from them about him."

"We're very grateful for the opportunity to celebrate our hardworking direct-care staff with much-deserved recognition through these

awards," CEO of MAB Community Services Barbara Salisbury said. "Many of this year's honorees were nominated by multiple people — colleagues, managers, and families of participants — which is a true testament to the impact they have on the individuals they support. It has been incredibly heartwarming to read their stories describing how they work to ensure that our participants are able to live full and satisfying lives."

Out of 28 nominees, 12 direct-care staff received awards this year, representing MAB group homes across Greater Boston and central Massachusetts. The length of service these individuals have dedicated to MAB ranges from two years to 18 years, with an average of six years. Honorees are chosen by a committee consisting of MAB staff, community supporters, and family members of the residents the nominees serve.