



2019 Light of Dawnn Award Winners

Ketsy Caraballo

Health Care Without Walls

Ketsy Caraballo's work at Health Care Without Walls, as well as her own life experience, are examples of courage and conviction. Ketsy is one of a five-member bilingual team from Health Care Without Walls that works on the Bridges to Moms program, which serves women experiencing homelessness to address their housing, personal safety, transportation, and food security needs at all stages of pregnancy. Ketsy uses a holistic approach to supporting mothers in her care. She is skilled at helping mothers navigate complicated bureaucracies to secure public assistance and identifying signs of perinatal depression and other unsafe situations such as drug use, and intervening when necessary.

Ketsy's own life has several parallels to those of her clients, which makes her a knowledgeable advocate on behalf of their health and safety during pregnancy. When she was 15, Ketsy was pregnant and experienced homelessness, living in shelters until she was able to secure public housing. Ketsy recognizes the multiple issues associated with her clients' lives, including intimate partner violence, substance abuse, child custody battles, and the impact of extreme poverty. She provides women with an invaluable resource: a staunch advocate who is committed to the hard work and patience it takes to reach their personal goals. Ketsy is a shining example of what is possible for her clients to achieve with the help of someone in their corner. "I live in public housing in a community where I work. I see my clients walking on the street near my house," she says. "At a certain point, they're not just a client anymore. They're family. They all stick with me."

Alma Huerta Dominguez

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

When a survivor receives a call back from the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC) to connect with free and confidential services, it's likely that Alma Huerta Dominguez's voice will be on the other end of the line. As the Bilingual Client Services Coordinator, Alma is the nerve center, connecting survivors of sexual assault and their families to the programs and services at BARCC that can help them. She is an integral part of the team, connecting survivors and their loved ones with BARCC's counseling, case management, and legal advocacy programs. An equally important part of Alma's job is not just what she does, but how she does it: because of her consistently calm and kind attitude, survivors can feel safe with her on the other end of the phone. Despite her long list of day-to-day responsibilities, Alma goes above and beyond to support the organization and its clients: she comes in early to set up for organizational events, sits on an informal BARCC committee that advocates for immigrants' protection,

and translates communications materials into Spanish.

Her ability to move between English and Spanish-speaking worlds is an asset to BARCC. Born in Mexico and raised in a small Florida town, Alma can navigate the intersections of culture, language, and attitudes around sexual violence in order to best serve her clients. “I want to make sure that all things are communicated, to understand that people are more than just their experiences, but also their nuances,” she says. One client that Alma remembers drives this point home. She remembers working long hours to keep up with the deluge of calls that came in during the much-publicized Kavanaugh hearings. The client, a Spanish speaker, had seen the hearings on television and had decided to speak up about his own experience with sexual abuse. “This client saw Christine Blasey Ford’s testimony and said, ‘I recognized her pain,’” says Alma. “He said, ‘maybe I deserve to be heard, too.’”

Randy Wiskow

Cardinal Cushing Centers

Randy Wiskow teaches the most popular class at Cardinal Cushing Centers. As the Art Director, he develops the art curricula and provides instruction for all 115 students with intellectual disabilities and autism at Cardinal Cushing Centers’ Hanover school program. The studio he teaches in is always full of life and laughter. Students will ask if spending extra time in Randy’s art studio can be their reward for being well-behaved during the school day. Randy welcomes these and all students with infectious positive energy, in part because it helps him achieve an important goal: developing students’ confidence and expanding their abilities to express themselves through art. “In the studio, I create an environment that allows students to achieve their highest level of success through challenging, innovative art,” he says.

The students of Cardinal Cushing Centers were what drew Randy in. He began working at there as a volunteer after a job at an ad agency left him feeling unfulfilled. 33 years later, he still eats lunch with the students, goes to recess, and maintains a studio where he can see into his students’ inner lives in a way that many cannot. The story of one student characterizes this innate ability. Randy recalls that during the first time he met Nick, who is on the autism spectrum, “he just paced up and down the room.” Randy knew that what Nick needed was space, safety, and time, and patiently gave him just that. After several weeks, Nick slowly opened up and began sharing with Randy his art- and what he shared was astounding. “His work developed into the most unbelievable abstracts,” Randy said. Now, Nick is a professional artist and his work has garnered an impressive following. Of course, it doesn’t matter to Randy if his students achieve professional artistic success like Nick. He just feels lucky to help them along on their journeys of self-expression. “Everyday is a true joy and blessing,” he says.