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# Our Towns



KEVIN R. WEXLER/Herald News

Ardine Barden helps Beddie Pasquariello put on a necklace Friday. Barden has been named Home Health Aide of the Year by Home Care Options, where she has worked for 19 years. "The more I do for people," Barden says, "the better I feel."

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## Health aide of the year loves her job

By **HEATHER KAYS**  
Herald News

**PATERSON** – At one time, Ardine Barden, a home health aide, waited 20 years before taking a real vacation because she couldn't bear the thought of leaving her patients for more than a few days at a time.

One patient in particular concerned her, an elderly bedridden Paterson resident who suffered from multiple sclerosis. Barden, who lives in Paterson, said recently, "I could tell that she needed help real bad. I couldn't see myself seven or 10 days away from her."

It's that dedication that led Home Care Options – the organization for which Barden works – to name her its Home Health Aide of the Year.

On Nov. 12, Barden will be presented with an award at a reception at the PNC Arts Center in Roseland, Essex County. The Home Care Association of New Jersey and the Home Care Coun-

cil of New Jersey are sponsoring the reception.

Nov. 12 is also the 16th annual Certified Home Health Aide Day.

"Our home health aide of the year is chosen to represent what all Home Care Option aides should be," said Dixie Stokem, the company's director of services. "She loves people, she loves her job, and she goes above and beyond in the care she gives."

Home Care Options is a non-profit home health-care agency that was founded in 1954. Barden, 58, has been an employee for 19 years. She also works part time driving a school bus for Hillsdale Public Schools.

She said she tries to treat her clients as if they were members of her own family. "I don't want my mother or father to end up in a nursing home," she said. "I want to do for people what I would want them to do for me when I get older."

For 16 years, Barden took care of Rosetta Powell, who suffered from other ailments in addition to her multiple sclerosis. Unable to use her muscles, the elderly patient depended on Barden to feed her, give her medicine and

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

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**DIXIE STOKEM,**  
director of services  
for Home Care Options

dress her.

"She would never ask for anything," said Barden. "If you didn't know her, you wouldn't know when to give her water, or feed her, or turn her over, because she would never tell you."

But over the years, Barden said, she got to know instinctively what Powell needed. Barden would visit the 83-year-old twice a day, seven days a week. She started spending four hours instead of two with her patient when Powell's health took a turn for the worse.

"One time Ardine even gave up her vacation because she knew her patient needed her," Stokem said. "She gives so much more than she has to, and she has, as long as she's been here."

Barden finally took a vacation in 2002 when she visited her parents in South Carolina, where she was born.

"I told Mrs. Powell that I needed a little vacation, and she said 'go ahead and have yourself a good time,'" Barden said.

"When I got back, she was happy to see me and I was happy to see her."

The next day, Powell was in the hospital and she died shortly after, Barden said.

"It was like my own mother had passed," she said. "I'm grateful for every day the good Lord gave me to take care of her, and I still miss her."

Barden said that she could not take on other patients immediately, but she is now caring for another 83-year-old Paterson resident.

Eventually, she plans to retire and move back to South Carolina. But for now, she wants to continue as a home health aide.

"When you have a smile on your face, it's like a dose of medicine. When you make someone laugh, that's worth more than all the money in the world," she said. "The more I do for people, the better I feel."

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