

Outstanding DSP Award Nomination

Nominee: Fatuma Ochanda
Organization: Big Lakes Developmental Center, Inc.

Nomination Narrative:

Big Lakes is proud to nominate Fatuma Ochanda for the Outstanding DSP Award. Fatuma is employed as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) by Big Lakes but this title does not adequately describe the work she does for Big Lakes, clients and staff. Fatuma began her career at Big Lakes as a direct support professional in 1998. After furthering her education and becoming an LPN, Fatuma transferred into the Health Services Department. Fatuma is more than a nurse. She is a warm and caring individual who provides consistent care and support for both clients and staff. Fatuma exemplifies Big Lakes' STRIVE values of Support, Teamwork, Respect, Integrity, Valor and Enthusiasm.

Not only is Fatuma a nurse during normal business hours, she regularly volunteers to work nights, evenings and weekends as a DSP at one particular group home that has been very difficult to staff. Over the past four years, she has AVERAGED 4,964 hours of work each year. She basically holds two full time jobs and one part time job at Big Lakes; one as a nurse and one and a half as a DSP.

She takes the shortage of direct support professionals personally and truly wants to help the clients by making sure they are taken care of and have the support they need. During the pandemic and group homes were quarantined, she would frequently grocery shop late in the evening after everyone was settled down for the night to ensure homes that were short staffed had food and other necessary supplies. Then she would return to a group home to take the night shift and returning to her LPN duties the next morning.

Fatuma will play music and dance with clients and coworkers in their homes and down the admin hallway on the way out the door at the end of the business day, on the way to her next shift in residential; with a big smile on her face and love in her heart.

She demonstrates her affection and support for our employees however she can. She bought boxes and boxes of Girl Scout cookies for her coworkers or her coworker's children. They will just show up at your office door and you know they are from Fatuma. She always makes the time to stop and talk with staff, whether it is direct support staff or management, to ask about them and their families and how they are coping during the pandemic. She wants to hear if things are not going well and will explore ways to help on the spot. She cooks and makes lunch for our day staff. She gathers produce and gives to staff. With our international employees, she will find out what they like and make food from where they are from.

She is the most appreciative person you will ever meet. She watches what people do and thanks them and is very specific on why she is thankful for what you are doing. Big Lakes is very thankful to have Fatuma at Big Lakes.

Name of Person Making This Nomination: Lori Feldkamp, CEO

Organization: Big Lakes Developmental Center

Telephone: 785-776-9201

E-Mail: lfeldkamp@biglakes.org