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By Lena Serpa



This year's Allston-Brighton Unsung Heroes include, left to right, Isaiah Moore, Jack Dolan, Harry Choharis, Beverly Ross, Jenny Brooks and Bob Webber. The heroes were honored on May 26.

Allston-Brighton honors six Unsung Heroes

Mentors, caregivers, volunteers, advocates — these words describe the people we rely on every day, often without even realizing it, to make our communities better and stronger. On May 26, proud family members and grateful friends gathered at Boston College's Heights Room to be reminded how six remarkable people quietly give of themselves every day to make Allston-Brighton a better place to live and work.

Jenny Brooks, Harry Choharis, Jack Dolan, Isaiah Moore, Beverly Ross and Bob Webber were honored at the 16th annual Unsung Heroes Awards Dinner, which was created to give the community an opportunity to thank the people whose work too often goes unrecognized and remind them that it is never unappreciated.

Bill Margolin, co-chairman of the Unsung Heroes Awards committee and master of ceremonies for the event, introduced each honoree, describing their dedication to the organizations they serve and revealing the extensive contributions to the community each makes, despite the daily demands we all face.

Jenny Brooks, resident of Brighton, devotes herself to several community organizations, including the Pine Street Inn, the Allston-Brighton Community Development Corp. and the Allston-Brighton Heritage Museum, among others.

A native of Honduras, Brooks decided to make her home in Brighton, where she has put into practice what her mother taught her as a child.

“Her belief concerning life was that we should always graciously care for others — to love, to care, and also to serve, no matter where life leads,” said Brooks of her mother.

After his wife, Sophie, passed away, Harry Choharis found he still had much to offer the residents at the Wingate Healthcare Center in Allston, where his wife received care. He continues to volunteer at the center, helping in the dining hall with tasks as simple as setting the tables to those more challenging, such as providing moral support to reluctant eaters.

Choharis is now a long time fixture at Wingate, volunteering four or five times a week. He’s appreciated by staff and residents and missed if he doesn’t appear. Known for his meticulously kept yard and home, Choharis is a longtime resident of Allston.

“I should have got this about 60 years ago,” Choharis joked while accepting his award. “But I appreciate it even though it took so long.”

Jack Dolan has been coaching the kids of Allston-Brighton since his son was a Little League baseball player 20 years ago. He’s coached squirt hockey, softball, girls hockey and continues to coach Little League. Going above and beyond his duties as coach, he often takes time out to help individual kids looking to try out for competitive teams, giving them the guidance and attention they need to succeed.

Judging by his ovation at the awards dinner, his impact is profound, yet Dolan remains humble.

“I feel that by nominating me, you’re nominating the kids that I’ve coached because those are the real heroes of Allston and Brighton,” said Dolan. “It’s the kids that make this possible, not me.”

At 15, Isaiah Moore was the youngest honoree. Moore is a peer leader at **West End House Boys and Girls Club**, and kids of all ages, even those older than he is, seem to listen when he speaks.

A natural leader, Moore recognized his mother, his mentor at the **West End House**, Stern Chamberlain and the **West End House** itself for being responsible for helping him blossom.

“It feels great because when I first started going to the club, I didn’t think I was going to be the person that I am today,” he said. “I feel like a role model and a lot of kids there, they look up to me so I try to be on my best behavior.”

Moore has been vice president of the Torch Club and is now a member of the Keystone Club, both national Boys and Girls Club programs that encourage kids to explore their goals and become community leaders.

“The people at the **West End House** have given me a lot,” said Moore.

For the past decade, Beverly Ross has devoted herself to the Brighton-Allston Congregational Church and the community it serves. She is volunteer director for the church's Wednesday Night Community Dinner, and one of the members of the board of directors for the Allston Brighton Food Pantry, which distributes more than 2,000 food baskets throughout the year.

Additionally, she runs the church's thrift store and serves on several church committees. Ross's spirit of service and dedication came through as she accepted her award.

"I am humbled and privileged to serve this church and the community I live in," she said.

Also honored was Bob Webber, president of the Allston Board of Trade and owner of the Model ACE Hardware Store on Harvard Avenue in Allston. Webber's family has owned and operated the store for over 50 years and he is truly invested in the community.

"I really believe in Allston's resources, it's creative people and it's resiliency," said Webber, and he sees the need for advocacy to keep the neighborhood strong. "Allston is sometimes overlooked by the city because we have a small voter base and a strong and united board of trade is an effective means to get attention."

Although this is Webber's last year as president of the Allston Board of Trade, he will continue to serve on the board of directors and he will remain active in the community.

"My father told me a long time ago, try to leave the world a little better than you found it," said Webber.

According to Margolin, there were more than 20 people who were nominated for this year's Unsung Heroes Awards, and each year he is surprised by how many residents of Allston Brighton are out there working for their community.

"About a hundred people have received this recognition, and you sometimes think you've exhausted the crop," said Margolin.

The awards were created in 1994 by the Healthy Boston Coalition. Though the organization is no longer operating, as long as Allston-Brighton's unsung heroes are out there, Margolin and the Unsung Heroes Committee expect to continue to receive nominations.

"There is no shortage of people out there," Margolin said. "It's like this every year."

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