

Employee Caring Fund Supports Fire Victim



Guy Ninkeu began his remarkable life journey in a small village in Cameroon. “My family was very poor, and I moved from the village to the city when I was 16 to look for a job,” said Guy, who eventually ended up in Gabon working as a cab driver. There, he met an older American woman from Washington D.C. The two kept in touch, and in January 2000, she helped Guy apply for and receive his immigration visa. At age 20, Guy arrived in New York City not speaking a word of English – and with no jacket. “I remember when I got out of the plane, it was freezing! I’d never seen snow before, the cold just knocked me down.”

Guy worked hard to build his new life in the U.S. after the couple married. “My first job was at McDonalds on M Street, they needed someone strong to unload trucks,” said Guy, who moved on to become a limo driver. He picked up English by practicing with his wife and by watching TV. But life was lonely, especially after she became ill and died. “Besides her, I knew nobody – no family, no friends, nobody from my village.”

Things took a turn for the better one day, when he was introduced to his second wife, Armelle Lelika. “She was from Gabon, and I’d never met someone here from Gabon! We just connected and talked and talked.” Marriage in 2007 and four children followed, and after many years of putting in 70-hour weeks as a commercial truck driver, Guy was able to buy his first house in Hyattsville four years ago. “I knew houses were expensive, so I never thought I would have one,” said Guy, who did all the renovation work on it himself.

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In 2025, Guy joined Vinson Hall’s Facilities team as a Maintenance Technician. Months later, tragedy struck. It was Sunday and Guy was just returning home alone from church. “As I got closer to my house, I heard the fire trucks. By the time the firefighters got there, everything was gone,” said Guy, of the fire that one of his youngest children had started when playing with a candle. Fortunately, his family all made it out safely. But Guy was distraught. “I was thinking, How am I going to build this house again?” said Guy, not realizing that his mortgage included insurance, which isn’t the case in Africa. “I thought I’d lost everything.”

The Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation immediately stepped in through the Employee Caring Fund with a check for \$2,000. The Foundation then partnered with the Vinson Hall Residents’ Association, which matched the gift to Guy and held a drive on campus to provide the Ninkeus with clothing and gift cards. Six months later, Guy and his family are back on their feet and their house is nearly rebuilt. “The moment you came into my life, I was just completely down,” said Guy, voice cracking. “There are no words to describe this. It was a blessing.”