

## Employee Caring Fund Offers a Helping Hand



When Ernest Sesay left Sierra Leone and moved to the United States in 2013 to build a better life for himself, he continued to care for his family back home. "When I came to America, I wanted to go into the medical field," says Ernest. "So first I got my CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) license, started working as a private duty CNA and went to school at the same time to get my LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse)" – all while sending money back to his mother, father, and three siblings.

One of his private duty clients in 2019 was Vinson Hall Retirement Community resident George Hall. "After I got my LPN license, Mrs. Florence Hall asked me, 'Would you like to work here?' I said yes. Then Mr. Hall went with me to Human Resources and said, 'This is Ernest. You guys should hire him!'"

Since then, Ernest has worked at VHRC as a Licensed Practical Nurse full time, before and then again after COVID hit. He also holds a second job as an LPN in Reston and drives back and forth from there to McLean to Annandale, where he lives alone. The schedule "was tough when I started, but you have to learn your routine. It's OK now."

Then disaster hit. "My dad had a stroke last year and was in the hospital for four months," says Ernest. "I had to pay all those hospital bills and also take care of my Mom and my siblings." The added financial hardship meant that for three months he couldn't afford to pay his monthly car payments. "They kept sending me letters to repossess the car. And if they did, I would have had no other means to get to work."

---

**"If not because of that check, to be honest with you, I don't know what would have happened."**

---

Ernest heard about the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation's Employee Caring Fund from his supervisor, The Sylvestery's Assistant Administrator Analisse Vasquez Soto, who encouraged him to apply. He did, and recently received a check from the Fund to cover the missed car payments. "If not because of that check, to be honest with you I don't know what would have happened. The last letter I got, they gave me a week before they would repossess the car."

Ernest's crisis has passed, his father, 78, is "still hanging in there," and he continues to send money back home every month. Because of the Employee Caring Fund, says Ernest, "I was able to save my car. Thank you for that."

