

Employee Caring Fund Meets Housing Need



At first, Emmanuel Nkiruka didn't want to move from Nigeria to America – it was his wife, Christianah, who had the idea. "My wife came to the United States in 2012 – we went through the process at the American embassy in Nigeria together for her to come," he explains. "But for me, at first I didn't want to go anywhere." Once Christianah got settled in Alexandria as a Certified Nursing Assistant, though, Emmanuel changed his mind. "I came here in 2015, and it was good but tough because it was just the two of us, no family, nobody."

They both worked hard to build a new life in America. "My wife wanted to become a nurse, so I said, 'Let me work more so you can go to school.'" Emmanuel held two full-time jobs as a security guard, getting about two hours sleep a night, for three years, then worked as an Uber driver until the pandemic hit. In May 2021, he joined the staff at Vinson Hall Retirement Community as a Grounds Porter. "I was so happy – I love this place!" he says. Meanwhile, Christianah had earned her registered nursing degree, and it was time to start their family.

By the fall of 2021, with their first baby on the way, the couple faced new challenges. Christianah had had to stop working at the end of her pregnancy for a few months. Emmanuel had a second job as a porter at Goodwin House, but money was tight – and so was their living space. In February after their daughter arrived, "We were living in a one-bedroom apartment, and my mother-in-law was coming from Nigeria to help with the baby so that my wife could go back to work," he explains. "I was trying to find a bigger place for all of us." They had found a small three-bedroom house, but without Christianah's income they couldn't make the down payment. "I even sold my car, but it still wasn't enough," he says. "I was almost giving up. I love Vinson Hall, but I thought I might have to quit to find a different job."

"When I got the Fund, I was really, really happy. The Fund came at just the right time."

Emmanuel heard about the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation's Employee Caring Fund, applied for support – and received a check for \$2,000. "When I got the Fund, I was really, really happy!" Emmanuel and his family were able to make the down payment and move, while Vinson Hall Retirement Community was able to hold on to a valued employee. Two months ago, Emmanuel was promoted to Housekeeping Supervisor.

"When you have a place like this, nobody wants to leave, the residents are so wonderful," said Emmanuel. "The Fund came at just the right time."

