

# Creating New Lives

Refugees taking steps to retain their culture while following their dreams through education and a college student finding her path through her volunteer work with refugees are signs of the miracles God continues to work in our midst.

While one family is celebrating their children's advancing in education, a Xavier student who has helped with ESL and Children's Liturgy of the Word this past year will be continuing her work with refugees after graduation.

## **From Refugee Camps to UC**

Renovat Ndabanikdye was in the 5th grade when his family fled Burundi to escape war. His wife Anastasie got only as far as the 3rd grade. But both of them always valued education and encouraged their children to learn.



Imagine their delight when their oldest daughter Ernestine graduated from Cincinnati State this spring with an associate's degree in business. During her time there she earned top grades, one time getting a straight A average—quite an accomplishment for someone who had never spoken English before coming to the United States in 2007. She will continue her studies in Finance and International business and finance at the

University of Cincinnati. After graduation she plans to work for a company to earn money so she can open a business with her father showcasing his tailoring skills. "Family is very important," she says. "God has been there for me through my education and also my everyday life. I believe in God because every time I am facing a problem I always share it with God and he answers me. Not matter what you have done whether is bad or good, when you talk to him, he listen, God doesn't get angry to his children."

Son Alexandre, who graduated from Withrow in May has been accepted into the highly competitive electronic media program at UC's College Conservatory of Music where he'll be a freshman next fall. Asked how he got accepted, he said "It was God."

He has always been interested in making movies and taught himself the basics using Windows movie program. When he came to St. Leo's parish volunteer Bob Englert introduced him to some of the more advanced film

techniques. Alexandre went to Salt Lake City two summers ago to help refugees there film their life stories. Last summer he was part of a local group that went to Washington as one of the winners of a Red Cross sponsored contest for student film makers. Their entry focused on the lives of child soldiers. That film and another about refugees' lives in Burundi can be found on our web page, [www.saintleo.org/WorksofMercy/BurundiRefugeeMinistry](http://www.saintleo.org/WorksofMercy/BurundiRefugeeMinistry)



After graduation, Alexandre hopes to travel and use his skills to help people in poor countries living in refugee camps. "When you help people," he said, "you get close to God." His faith is an important part of his life and his recent preparation and reception of the sacrament of Confirmation has deepened it, "I hope to keep the same mind set I have right now," he said.

## **From College to Refugee Resettlement**

Becky Seipel, a Xavier history and peace studies major, who got hooked on working with refugees as the result of a summer internship at Catholic Charities, will be going to Johannesburg, South Africa this summer for a six week internship with the Jesuit Refugee Service to work with refugees from a number of countries in Africa. Next fall she will be working with Catholic Charities in Cleveland as refugee housing coordinator as part of a program through Americorps and the Sisters of the Humility of Mary. Americorps handles the job aspect



while the Sisters provide the spiritual part of the placement. Volunteers live in community and share spiritual reflection weekly.

## **Moving from Grade School to High School**

Two parishioners are graduating from grade school this year. Nick Schaffield is graduating from St. Ursula Villa and will attend St. Xavier High School. He's a genius according to his dad! Nick has helped on occasion with the Food Pantry and other miscellaneous tasks around St. Leo. He loves to read, is a big time chess player, plays flute, and his sport is Ultimate Frisbee. Sandra Usanase graduates from St. Boniface and is very excited to have the opportunity go to Mother of Mercy High School.

- Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate

(Photos from various photographers)