



# LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES National Capital Area

"Everything that is done in the world is done by hope." M. Luther

Issue No. 3 2014

*Congregational Partnership Makes Resettlement Possible*

## LSS/NCA Welcomes Refugee Family from Congo to Baltimore

By: Amanda Olmstead

On July 9, LSS/NCA welcomed a family of seven from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Baltimore. Having escaped one of the worst armed conflicts in recent history, the family has been given new hope in America. When LSS/NCA staff picked them up at BWI airport, they were dressed in their finest attire, ready to begin their new lives.

Jean, the father, stated that he was incredibly happy to be in America so his children can attend school. The refugee camp in which they had been living for years provided primary school for free, but because of the family's financial limitations, the oldest children have been unable to continue their education past 6th grade which required tuition. The school-aged children eagerly awaited the beginning of school this fall so they could meet new friends.

Partnerships have helped make resettling this family possible. Housing has been provided for two years in Baltimore by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS). Christ Lutheran Church, Baltimore, generously provided each family member with most of the items needed for their new home, including beds, linens, toiletries, kitchen supplies, among other items the family will need to begin again. Volunteers from the church have been taking the family on outings to get groceries, clothing, and immunizations. One member of the church even gave the family a walking tour of Baltimore – in French!

Both parents are already taking English classes and are starting the process of job-hunting so they are able to provide for their family. We are grateful for our partnership with LIRS and Christ Lutheran Church – with their help and your support, we have been able to provide this large family with the guidance and basic needs they require to begin their hopeful new life in America.



Dressed in their finest attire to begin their new lives, a newly arrived family from Congo arrives at BWI.



Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area [www.lssnca.org](http://www.lssnca.org) United Way #8146 CFC #78343

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# AWild Adventure for our Refugee Children

By: Melissa Mahfouz

**T**he Refugee Kids Summer Program held its first event of the season July 26 with a visit to the Smithsonian National Zoological Park. For many recently arrived families, this was their first trip to Washington, DC, and the National Zoo. The Great Ape House and Reptile Discovery Center were among the children's favorites because they had never seen these animals prior to their visit.

In addition to interactive events and field trips, the Summer

Program began its English tutoring program in Northern Virginia for children ages 5-18. Currently, one-on-one tutoring is provided weekly at the Tysons-Pimmit Regional Library; efforts are underway to expand the program to Alexandria. Upcoming events include a NOVA-Annandale Community College Campus visit and back-to-school supply drive.



If you would like to help donate or collect school supplies for refugee youth, please contact Lily Habtu at [HabtuE@lssnca.org](mailto:HabtuE@lssnca.org). ■

## New Business Tembo Group Paves the Way for Refugee Artisans

By: Amanda Olmstead

**M**y name is Amanda Olmstead, and I'm a job developer for LSS/NCA. In Spring 2013, I met Deborah de la Reguera, the owner of the Tembo Group, who was in the process of starting her business. Tembo Group, LLC, is an innovative company that has provided colorful and unique opportunities for our newly arrived refugee neighbors. Its mission is to provide economic opportunities to refugee artisans and sell their work

at a store in downtown Baltimore (1706 Fleet Street, Baltimore, MD 21231; open 10am to 6pm Sun-Sat.)

In May of this year, Ms. de la Reguera began interviewing LSS/NCA refugees for open artisan positions. Within the last few months, she has hired five newcomer neighbors to work as painters, jewelry makers, and seamstresses in her store. Recently, Ms. de la Reguera invited me to be her guest at a luncheon for the National Association of Women Business

Owners-Baltimore Regional Chapter (NAWBO) where she was recognized for her work with Tembo Group and received the 2014 Rising Star Award. Ms. de la Reguera told the luncheon attendees, "I have a passion for providing opportunities for individuals who face overwhelming challenges. It's the story of the United States." ■



Deborah de la Reguera (Tembo Group) and Amanda Olmstead (LSS/NCA) following the Rising Star Award presentation.

*"It is an honor to work in partnership with the business community to help refugees rebuild their lives in Baltimore. I hope you will support Tembo and our refugee artisans."*

## FOSTER CARE

# A Precious Gift

**T**he phone rings. Every time she hears the shrill hum of the telephone, Lolita thinks “could it be?” A while ago, she contacted Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area (LSS/NCA) to become a foster parent. She felt something missing in her life, a mother without a baby, and every mother should have the opportunity to raise a child. LSS/NCA walked Lolita through the application process and helped her sign up for workshops and gain the certifications necessary to become a foster/adoptive parent.

The phone was still ringing. Lolita answered. It was the adoption agency that LSS/NCA partnered with, “...We have a young girl in our care who needs a home and who is available for adoption. Would you like to come meet her?”

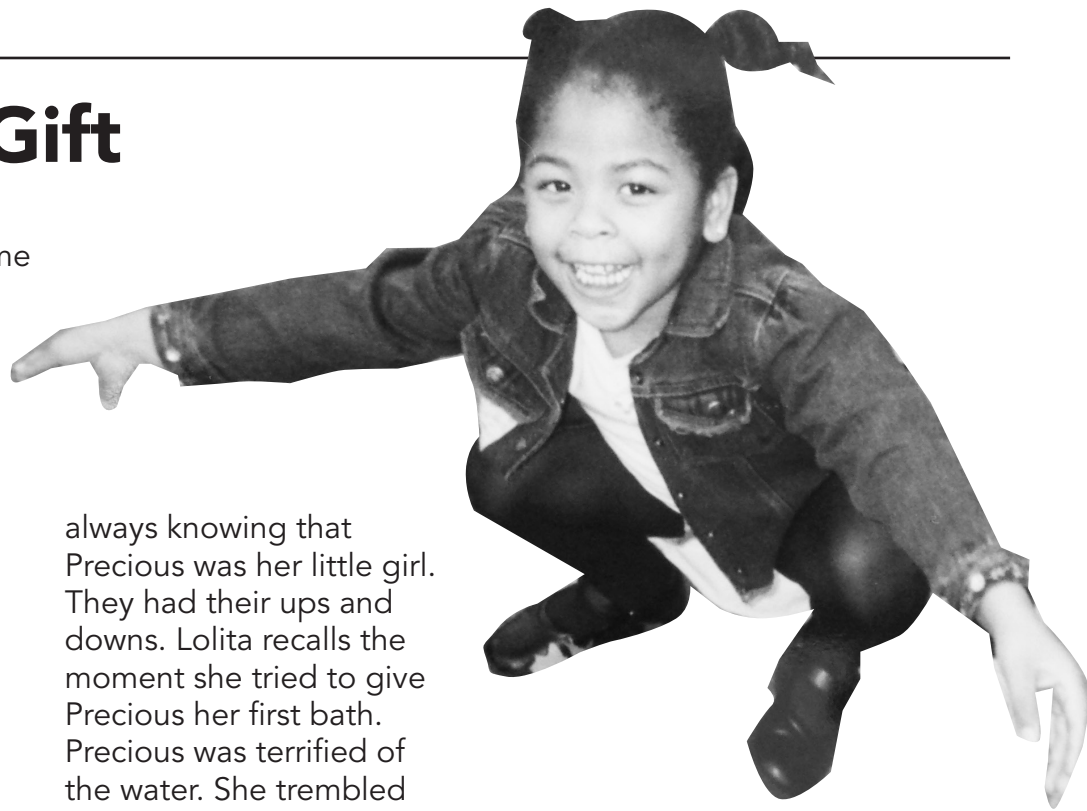
When Lolita arrived, she was introduced to 18-month old Precious. Lolita was very surprised to find out that Precious would be going home with her that day.

“They trust me. Am I ready? Does every mother feel like this when they take home their baby for the first time?”

For a year and a half, Lolita served as Precious’ foster mother while she waited for the adoption to be finalized—

always knowing that Precious was her little girl. They had their ups and downs. Lolita recalls the moment she tried to give Precious her first bath. Precious was terrified of the water. She trembled when she saw the tub and wouldn’t let go of Lolita. Her counselor and doctor thought that little Precious had probably associated the bath with past trauma. However, Lolita was patient and understanding of her baby girl’s past. After a few weeks of reintroducing Precious to water, they made many happy bath time memories.

Today, Lolita and Precious (photo above) are inseparable. Precious is 11-years-old and graduated 6th grade on the honor roll.



She loves to dance and draw, and she sings in the church choir. Precious dreams of going into cosmetology or teaching just like her mother.

*Your support helps us create families each and every day. Thank you for giving Precious and many other children a place to call home. If you are interested in becoming licensed as a foster parent/caregiver and joining LSS/NCA in the effort of Rebuilding Lives, please contact Tiffany Oscar at (202) 723-3000 x150 ■*

## SUMMER ADOPTIONS:

**Ms. Richards:** Adopted a sibling group of 2 sisters

**Ms. Davis:** Adopted a young boy

**Mr. McDougal:** Adopted a young boy

## FOSTER PARENT APPRECIATION:

**Mrs. Farley:** Foster Parent of the Year

**Mr. and Mrs. Ricks:** Family Engagement Award

**Ms. Marbury:** Angel Parent Award

**Ms. Delabar:** Rookie Parent of the Year



# Blessed to Be a Blessing

By: Kati Miller-Holland

**M**et Youth Haven's Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Alison Walker. She brings hope and encouragement to families affected by HIV/AIDS. While every bit the professional, you won't find her spending much time in a comfortable office. This counselor takes her skills to Camp, to the basketball court, and to the streets of DC between Camp sessions.

Alison does "one-on-one basketball" counseling sessions with Youth Haven teens and facilitates camper group discussions to address anger and grief. Throughout the year, she helps Youth Haven



parents/guardians meet together on a monthly basis and fields emergency issues such as finding clothing for the newborn infant of a young HIV-positive mother.

DC-native Alison joined the leadership team in 2011 for our very first Youth Haven Family Mini-Camp. But, we learned that her roots with Lutheran Social Services run deep—all the way back to her own adoption as an infant in 1985! Her mother calls Alison's service

with Youth Haven "a small way to express our gratitude for LSS/NCA's assistance in creating our family."

Growing up to be a specialist in counseling with the HIV community "was never what I thought I would be doing, but everything just kind of aligned for me," Alison reflects.

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*"I love that we at LSS do things that few others do. We're more than just occasional camps—HIV is with them every single day and our relationship is, too." –Alison*

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In the overnight camp setting, "we can have conversations that just don't happen in other places." In our follow-up through mentors and family activities, "we expose kids to things that can give them a new way to see their future. We're defying some of the odds that are stacked against them." ■

## "I Might Be a Caregiver If..."

Many people think that a caregiver is only someone who lives with and gives daily hands-on physical care to another. However, many persons go to great lengths to help keep a family member living independently, sharing the responsibility for their loved-one's well-being. In doing so, you expend a great deal of emotional and possibly financial support.

Could a family member need your help and support in the near

future? Some situations are predictable, and others just happen when you least expect it.

### "You Might Become a Caregiver If..."

- ... your spouse has surgery
- ... your parent takes a fall
- ... your aunt needs help managing finances
- ... your grandfather loses his driving privileges

... your child becomes disabled in an accident

... your sister develops memory loss

Equip yourself and other family members to respond. Be ready to take care of yourself as well as the person who needs your help. LSS/NCA's Caregiver Support program is sponsoring workshops for both current and future caregivers this fall and winter throughout the DC-Metro region. Check our calendar for dates and locations: [lssnca.org/calendar](http://lssnca.org/calendar)

# Volunteer Partnership with MJ Morgan Group

By: Mardea James

**T**his summer, the LSS/NCA Baltimore office welcomed Charles Nolan Wietcher from MJ Morgan Group as an employment services volunteer. MJ Morgan Group has been a very strong employment partner since 2011 and has decided to send a volunteer twice per month to our Baltimore location to be more involved with LSS/NCA efforts. These semi-monthly volunteers will be contacting clients about available jobs throughout our community, speaking to other potential employers about job retention and the benefits of hiring a

refugee, and conducting mock interviews to help refugees prepare for the American workforce.

Vice president of MJ Morgan Group Bryan Nizer said, "MJ Morgan Group is extremely proud and honored to be a partner with LSS. Since 2011, we have hired hundreds, if not thousands of LSS clients.

More importantly, we have had the privilege to watch these dedicated and passionate people rebuild their lives in the United States. ■



Mr. Charles Nolan Wietcher volunteers with Refugee employment services in Baltimore.

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*"Knowing that we play an integral part in helping [refugees] and knowing that they are now out of harm's way is truly indescribable. Thank you LSS for choosing us to be a valued partner!" –VP, MJ Morgan Group, Bryan Nizer*

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## Volunteer Shout Out: Ruth Manchester

**W**e would like to give a special shout out to one of our most dedicated volunteers Ruth Manchester. Ruth began volunteering for LSS/NCA nearly 20 years ago when she served as an on-site nurse for Youth Haven Kids Camp. For several years, she stood by the children day and night every summer during Camp, ensuring that each received the individualized attention and care they required.

Today, Ruth volunteers with the Compassion Crew, travelling

around the DC-Metro Area sharing her story and camp experience with our community so more people can learn about Youth Haven and the difference it makes in the lives of youth and families affected by HIV/AIDS.

A big THANK YOU to Ruth and all our volunteers at LSS/NCA for their continued commitment to the neighbors they serve each and every day!

If you would like to get involved, visit our "Get Involved" page at [lssnca.org](http://lssnca.org) and find a volunteer opportunity right for you. ■



Ruth Manchester and her family.

# 1917

## SOCIETY

There are several ways you can make an estate gift that supports LSS/NCA's mission, some will even provide tax benefits and income to you when you need it most. Below is just one example.

*Brenda S., age 55, is a human resources specialist for the government who believes strongly in LSS/NCA's mission of walking with those in need. She earns a comfortable salary, but when she retires in 10 years her income will be about half of what it is now. She decided to create a charitable gift annuity to support LSS/NCA and herself in the future. By deferring her first payment until her retirement, she will receive income at the rate of 4.7% instead of 4%. In addition, Brenda will be paying taxes on that income at a much lower rate, since her total income after retirement will be lower than it is now. Brenda is delighted to make a \$10,000 gift to LSS/NCA. She receives a charitable deduction for it this year of approximately \$2466, and starting 10 years from now, she will receive \$470 every year for the rest of her life, some of which will be tax free.*

If you've made arrangements for LSS/NCA to be in your will or a part of your estate, please let us know so we can recognize you as a member of the 1917 Society. Summer Parrish in LSS/NCA's Office of Development is happy to talk with you about more planned giving ideas (ParrishS@lssnca.org or (703) 698-5026 x.138). We also recommend you speak with your family and your financial advisor.

## DEVELOPMENT

## What's new with Vann?

When little JD was born, his mother, Ms. D., was in a difficult situation. Lying in the delivery room, she realized she had no home for her son and no family to ask for help. She knew that she wouldn't be able to give JD what he needed and deserved, so she made a difficult decision. At just three days of age, JD was placed into foster care. As the LSS/NCA Compassion Vann, I was honored to pick up the smiling little baby and deliver him into the arms of a welcoming and loving foster family.



With the help of LSS/NCA, Ms. D sought out mental health assistance, parenting skill classes and job training so she could take care of her son and provide for his needs.

For three years, Ms. D worked hard and never missed a visit with her baby. This past week, I was able to drive JD back into his mother's arms, right where he belongs.

Share your story at [lssnca.org](http://lssnca.org) ■

## We are STRONGER TOGETHER

Mothers and children like Ms. D and JD need extra support and guidance. We have been asked to serve more children and families in Foster Care, but simply cannot do it at our current capacity.

Through STRONGER TOGETHER, our goal is to expand Foster Care services to 30 additional children, most of whom have suffered extreme trauma. Your support of this campaign will help make it possible for us to

serve more children in our community who need a safe, nurturing place to call home.

We have raised over \$1M towards our \$2.5M goal. Make a difference, learn more, and support our campaign today at [lssnca.org/stronger\\_together/](http://lssnca.org/stronger_together/). ■

**Stronger Together**

**We have a new website! Have you seen its new interactive features? Check out [lssnca.org](http://lssnca.org) and click "Get Involved."**



# Message from Melissa, CEO

As the fiscal year comes to a close, I am humbled by the number of lives that have been touched, families created, and futures that have been restored in 12 short months. Because of our incredible staff and the support of community partners and donors like you, we have:



- Resettled over 600 refugees (150% of the number we prepared for and expected at the beginning of 2014). Our staff secured housing and furnishings, and offer cultural guidance, and employment services so each refugee can rebuild a life and achieve self-sufficiency in America. (One family's story on front cover.)
- Nearly tripled the number of unaccompanied refugee children we serve who have lost their families due to war and who are fleeing violence and persecution. Nearly four dozen of these youth will need homes through LSS/NCA by 2015.
- Deepened our partnerships with local businesses and congregations to be able to serve more children and families. We celebrate our new partnership with the Montgomery College Nursing Program that encourages students to serve as volunteer medical staff at Youth Haven Camp; with MJ Morgan Group who sends staff each month to volunteer with our resettlement program (page 4), and Tembo Group, LLC who has employed a half dozen of our refugees as community artisans over the past few months (page 2).

Thank you for believing in our mission and more importantly, thank you for believing in the neighbors we serve. We have come a long way, but there is so much more we can do together. If you have not already, please look at our plan for the future and help us make an even bigger difference through our comprehensive campaign STRONGER TOGETHER. There are still many gaps we are unable to fill and our staffing needs are continually growing as more children and families are reaching out for help. To learn more, visit our website [lssnca.org/stronger\\_together/](http://lssnca.org/stronger_together/)

In Peace,

Melissa K. Graves, CEO

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Melissa K. Graves, CEO

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## Blessed to Be Blessed...

A story of a once adoptee now a  
Youth Haven Social Worker

*Read Alison's story on page 4*

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## Congolese Family Arrives in Baltimore

*Read the family's hopeful tale  
on the front cover.*

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**VOLUNTEER  
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**A LEGACY  
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## Save the Dates

- Oct 4 "I Might Be a Caregiver"  
Workshop (VA)
- Oct 5 "I Might Be a Caregiver"  
Workshop (MD/DC)
- Oct 11-13 Youth Haven Fall Teen  
Retreat
- Oct 18 Support U "Crash Course"  
Seminar
- Oct 23 Compassion in Action (VA)
- Oct 25 Compassion in Action (MD)
- Oct 25 Support U "Crash Course"  
Seminar
- Nov 1 Support U "Crash Course"  
Seminar
- Nov 11 Compassion in Action (VA)
- Nov 22 National Adoption Day
- Nov 27 Compassion in Action (VA)
- Dec 13 Youth Haven Holiday  
Reunion Party
- Dec 13 Compassion in Action (MD)
- Dec 18 Compassion in Action (VA)

For more information, visit [LSSNCA.org](http://LSSNCA.org).