

Working with Ularum

by Mary Campbell



THE YOUNG MAN, Ularum, is 23; and recently here from Nigeria. He has a wife and baby boy. Everything is so new to them—the language, customs, food, everything.

The Arlington/Alexandria Coalition for the Homeless (AACH) is currently providing them with a place to live at Sullivan House. There, either Carol Mournighan or myself, meets one-on-one or with small groups of residents once each week to work on basic computer skills, as well as to search and apply online for jobs. Ularum has come to the class most weeks; he is quiet, hesitant with speaking English, but is a quick learner. Despite the fact that he has applied for many jobs, he has not yet been contacted by potential employers for an interview. Nevertheless, he faithfully comes to the computer class and is not giving up on finding a job.

Through AACH, Ularum was able to attend English language classes at the Clarendon Education Center, Arlington County Public Schools, and he received glowing comments from his instructor about his excellent attendance and persistence in learning.

Recently, I was delighted to see another Sullivan House resident working behind the fish counter at Giant; though he also came to the computer class,

it was not how he found the job. But it just goes to show, for the Ularum's of the world, if you keep trying and do not give up, you will learn, work, and live as a productive member of the community.

Update!

Ularum recently found a job! He had redone his resume, sent it in response to so many job ads, had some interviews, and had been turned down so often. Now, however, with the ongoing assistance of his caseworker at AACH, he has gotten a full-time job working in a cafeteria at a hospital. Not only that, but, since he is now earning an income, he and his wife qualified for the Adopt-A-Family Program, in which they receive financial assistance for rent through Arlington County, as well as ongoing casework support from AACH, for up to two years. Also, a local church or non-profit sponsors each family. Ularum and his wife and son are now getting settled in their very own apartment.

Each year in June, AACH sponsors a graduation ceremony for the families who have completed the Adopt-A-Family Program—an inspirational event for graduates, sponsors, staff, and volunteers—a time to celebrate!