Dreams Come True for New Citizens
Immigration & Refugee Services

When a gunman appeared at Eugide Kamonika’s electronics repair shop in Kinshasa threatening to kill him, Kamonika fled his native Democratic Republic of Congo.

“I am not a violent man,” Kamonika says, referring to the brutal civil wars - nicknamed “Africa’s world war” - that have killed millions and continue to rage in his country. So began a 12-year journey to Belgium, then Manchester, N.H., that ended Oct. 27 when he became a U.S. citizen.

“This is my dream,” Kamonika, 46, said.

His dream came true thanks to people like you, who support Catholic Charities New Hampshire’s wide array of programs that move lives forward.

In Kamonika’s case, he received legal services from CCNH’s Office of Immigration and Refugee Services. In addition to helping bring his two teenaged daughters here from the Congo last year, CCNH staff also assisted Kamonika in applying for and preparing for citizenship.

“Catholic Charities makes a difference because they are working so hard for me. So I say thank you to Catholic Charities,” the Manchester resident said.
Kamonika was one of three CCNH clients to become citizens at the Oct. 27 naturalization ceremony. The office helps an average 84 clients a year become citizens and assists many more to obtain green cards, which is the first step to naturalization, said Cathy Chesley, director of CCNH’s Office of Immigration and Refugee Services.

“We know that attaining citizenship brings along with it so many other positive outcomes for New Americans, their families and their communities - better jobs, higher wages, a sense of belonging. Overall, New Americans are healthier and happier when they reach this pinnacle—something they’ve dreamed about for years, often even for a lifetime,” Chesley added.

Berlin Native Gets a Boost
Parish & Community Services

A native daughter of this rugged mill town, Lizz Thagouras has big dreams and the can-do attitude to make them come true thanks, in part, to help from donors like you.

The tenacious 22-year-old expects to graduate from Plymouth State University this May with two bachelor’s degrees - one in criminal justice, the other in sociology and anthropology. Her dream is to become a victim-witness advocate or to work at a law firm.

This may not seem like a huge feat for many students whose parents help pay their tuition, living expenses and even a car.

But Lizz, who is the youngest daughter among 11 siblings, has been paying her way since she was 14. She works year round to support herself and relies on student loans to help pay college tuition.

Last winter, mounting student debt overwhelmed her. She feared her dream could slip away.

She found help at Catholic Charities New Hampshire’s Berlin district office where outreach coordinator, Nicole Plourde, helped her apply for and receive a federally-subsidized educational assistance grant, known as an Individual Development Account.

For every $1 Lizz saved, the IDA matched it by $8, Plourde said. Lizz successfully completed two rounds of the grants, turning $1,000 in savings into $8,000 to cover two semesters of tuition.

This meant Lizz could turn down $10,000 in student loans that she otherwise would have used to pay for her senior year.

“Catholic Charities literally changed my future,” Lizz said.

“I would have had to give up on my dream,” she said, referring to the additional years it would have taken her to pay back the extra $10,000 in loans.

Lizz, whose mother died when she was eight years old, is “incredibly motivated,” Plourde stated.

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Providing Winter Relief

The winter season sparkles bright and warm for many. For countless others, it can be a time of anxiety – even depression.

Cold weather takes a particularly cruel bite out of family budgets. Parents worry if hand-me-down winter coats and hats will fit their children. Seniors on fixed incomes may need a warm sweater, coat or slippers. Heating bills skyrocket at this time of year. All these can contribute to depression and anxiety, which can exact a harsher toll during the winter season.

“We want to lessen their anxiety. We want to look at the greater needs of the families and sustain them, not only through the holidays, but through January and February,” said Marc Cousineau, CCNH’s Director of Parish and Community Services.

Thanks to you, Catholic Charities serves 1 in 13 people statewide. Your support brings a warm welcome, dignity and moves a life forward.

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“When you get to journey with someone who is doing everything they can to get ahead…and you’re able to help them to move their life forward, that is an honor and a privilege."

- Nicole Plourde

Lizz said graduating from college will be her way of commemorating her mother.

“I didn’t have her very long in life, but that doesn’t mean I can’t do all these things to show her what a wonderful mom she was,” Lizz said.

Your donations to Catholic Charities move lives forward. Learn how you can make a difference in a neighbor’s life at www.cc-nh.org/outreach.