



SCHOLARSHIP STORY

One Step at a Time

Upendo Ngowi takes one step at a time, from her struggles and joys growing up in Tanzania to her trials and triumphs as a new Canadian. Since landing on Canadian soil in 2005, Upendo has beaten all odds. She knew no English and had no parents. And yet, she slowly became comfortable at her school and joined the volunteer club. It was her 'idol' and teacher, Ms. Kurchak at James Fowler High, along with other supportive teachers, who encouraged her to apply for the Verna Hart Toole Legacy Award, which she received in 2009.

The Verna Hart Toole Legacy Award is a scholarship providing at-risk young

women with financial support and encouragement to pursue post-secondary education. Verna Hart was a woman who believed that education could transform lives. She would have been proud of Upendo, who is now studying Kinesiology at the University of Lethbridge. After graduating, Upendo wants to visit family in Tanzania. Her long term goal is to live in Canada, own her own home and car and start a family. And oh yes, she wants to become a teacher just like Ms. Kurchak; a step in the right direction for a young woman who's walked a long journey.

The following is an excerpt from Upendo's winning essay "As the World Turns":

"Eva is my best friend's daughter and she is learning to take her first steps. As I watch Eva, I feel I am much like her. I was born in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In my grade seven year I lost both my parents and moved to Kilimanjaro where my grandmother lived. I left family, friends and everything behind. It was extremely hard. Eventually my aunt and uncle adopted me and my siblings and we moved to Calgary in 2005. But the struggle started again. I started school just one week after arrival. I could not speak English and I thought my world was coming to an end. I cried for almost a month. I wanted to fly back to Tanzania but I had no wings. Soon I started to adopt the culture and lifestyle. I could not have done it without the courage and support of my new friends in Canada. Whenever I felt like giving up they told me 'a few more steps Upendo.' Just like Eva, I am putting one foot in front of the other. With each step I feel closer to success."

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