

### **11/3/2007 - RWANDAN REFUGEES CHOSEN FOR HABITAT'S NEXT HOUSE**

A family of Rwandan refugees who fled genocide in their homeland will soon be joining volunteers from Habitat for Humanity of Peconic in building a home for themselves in their newly adopted country.

Faustin Nsabumukunzi, his wife Agnes, and their three sons were among scores of area residents who applied for the Habitat house, which will be built in Bridgehampton. It will be the 10th project of the local Habitat affiliate, which builds affordable housing in partnership with qualifying low-income families.

Nsabumukunzi and his family are eager to put down permanent roots on the East End, where they have lived for the past two years.

They escaped the genocide in their homeland in 1994 by fleeing to Burundi after losing 132 members of their extended family. Three months later, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees moved them to the Ivory Coast.

After eight years of a settled life there, civil war in the north forced them to move to a United Nations refugee camp, where they remained for two years -- until September 2004, when they were brought to the United States by the International Organization for Migration.

Initially the family settled in Houston. But after a year, Nsabumukunzi, a beekeeper by profession, moved to Water Mill to work for the Hamptons Honey Company. Within a few months his family joined him. Subsequently, he took a job with a landscaping company. He currently is a caretaker on an estate in Water Mill and a local shop. He also does handyman work for local families.

Nsabumukunzi has two degrees in apiculture (bee-keeping) and one in home construction. In his youth he was a member of Rwanda's cycling team. Of his family's future, he says, "I hope we will have some security as we get older. I would like to see my sons develop as our family becomes integrated into American life."

Here is a brief introduction to the rest of the family. Their surnames may be confusing because it is customary in Rwanda to honor family members by having them name a child.

Agnes Mujawayezu, wife and mother, has been working part-time as a babysitter and housekeeper and is now looking for a full-time job. She spends her free time working on improving her English. Along with the rest of her family, she speaks Rwandan, Swahili, other African dialects and French.

Fabrice Twagirumukuza, the oldest son at 23, works at the American Hotel and will be attending Suffolk Community College, studying communications and

computer programming.

Thierry Baliuta, 19, graduated this year from the Ross School, where he was a scholarship student, and is working in construction until he begins college at the University of Maine in January.

Didier Irabizi, 15, is a junior at Southampton High School, where he enjoys learning about American history and playing soccer.

Anyone interested in helping the family build their new home should contact Habitat about joining its volunteer work force. The number is 631-537-1981.