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Interfaith Partnership for Refugee Resettlement

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[www.iprefugeer.org](http://www.iprefugeer.org)

To sign up for goods & clothing needed:

<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090c4baead28abfa7-inter>

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## Greetings all IPRR Volunteers!

An exciting buzz fills the air as we're in the final days before our Congolese family arrives on Thursday, November 17! Two nights ago, a few of our crew met with IRIS to learn more specifics about our family and final orientation on the first days after arrival. We are thrilled to finally introduce them to you! You'll also find some helpful and informative details from our most recent IPRR Committee Chair meeting. Many people have been hard at work behind the scenes making preparations for our family's arrival, and for others that need is about to start! Let's roll up our sleeves and make this happen! To one and all we express our sincere gratitude for your willing and generous offering of time, resources and talent. Goodwill truly does abound.

Peace, Your friends from IPRR



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## Upcoming Events

### November 17

Our Congolese family of 6 arrives!

### November 29

Training for all volunteers on Congolese culture and how to deal with trauma (see details below)

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## Upcoming Training Meeting:

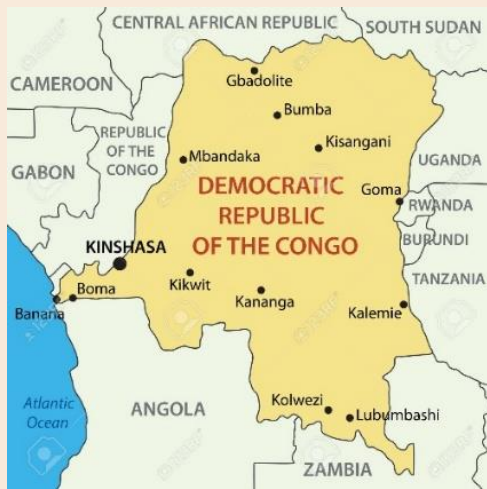
Please mark your calendars for an informative and important overview on Congolese culture and how to interface with individuals facing trauma.

Tuesday, Nov. 29, 7 pm

Newtown Congregational Church

14 West St, Newtown, CT





## MEET THE FAMILY!

Didasi (father) and Ekyoci (mother) are the parents of 4 children, and are originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo. They have been in a refugee camp in neighboring Tanzania for over 16 years, where all 4 of their children were born. The family is Christian (denomination unknown), and speaks a variety of languages: Kiswahili, Kibembe and French. Only the eldest son speaks “some” English. In our debriefing from IRIS, they shared that folks from the DRC are usually mellow-natured people. Further, they shared that generally there are not the same gender concerns which you might find in middle-eastern families (i.e. women being alone with men), although we will follow their lead and check to be sure.

Didasi is from Kalemie, a town in the southwestern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. He speaks Kiswahili and French, and has worked as a farmer since 1999, at which time he presumably entered a refugee camp in neighboring Tanzania. Didasi has a high school diploma.

Ekyoci is from the territory of Fizi, which is part of the Fizu province that neighbors Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania. She speaks Kiswahili and Kibembe and has no formal education.

All children speak Kiswahili, although the eldest son speaks other languages as well. Malisawa (15) is the eldest son, and he speaks Kiswahili, Kibembe & French; he knows “some” English. Faila (13) is the eldest daughter. She has attended primary school and speaks Kiswahili. Amida (10) has had primary school education and speaks Kiswahili. Miriam (6) is the youngest daughter, and has no formal schooling, and speaks Kiswahili.

## A Warm Welcome (with lots to do!!)

Thanks to our Housing team, we signed a lease on a lovely, spacious apartment on Park Avenue in Danbury-close to bus routes and an elementary school! Fantastic job to our Housing crew!

Upon arrival to their new apartment, our Furnishings Committee has ensured a cozy welcome. In addition to a fully furnished and stocked apartment, each child will find new pajamas on their beds and an array of special touches: anxiety-relieving coloring books and pencils (intended for teens/adults), plush animal for the teen girls, new dolls for the younger girls, a soccer ball, and an array of flash cards, learning materials and games.

On their first night upon arrival, the Welcome Committee will provide a warm Congolese meal for their first night and a fridge stocked to make typical Congolese meals, and will teach them about their home and neighborhood surroundings.

After arrival, the first tasks required by IRIS includes completing required health and employment assessments & receiving important documentation. This requires many appointments and help with drivers and interpreters! Additionally, they will begin receiving English lessons and cultural support (introducing the family to resources available in the community). We will rely heavily on interpreters and drivers for all of this.

A few updates from our most recent IPRR committee chair meeting:

- We're fine tuning our planned method of communication amongst volunteers. We have set up a Google Calendar to keep track of all appointments with the family, drivers and interpreters needed for appointments, and any other interactions with the family.
- To help the family get to know volunteers and feel secure with new faces, we have made volunteer photo badges to wear when visiting. We also have a photo reference board of all volunteers to hang in the family's apartment.
- One of our wonderful volunteers met with a former Congolese refugee who is also the owner of African Market in Bridgeport. Through these efforts, we've learned very helpful information about what a typical diet/meal includes in the Congo. The main Congo food staple is Fufu flour, either made from cocoyam or plantains. Couscous can be a substitute. Other staples include goat meat, sardines, Thompson fish, mackerel, melon seed for soup seasoning, black-eyed beans, smoked/dried catfish, smoked chicken, spinach, kale, cassava leaf, and okra; also nuts, plantain/banana chips. Milk or soda for beverages. This will be a great help going forward, thank you Sharon!
- SAFETY FIRST: We have established the "2 deep" guideline when interfacing with our family: During interactions with the family, we'd like there to be 2 volunteers present at all times. To the extent possible, parents should be home when interacting with the children. If only one volunteer can fulfill a need, we ask that this be communicated to a committee chair. We've discussed possible scenarios at length and are deeply committed to maintaining respect and safety for all involved. Please contact your committee chair with any further questions.



MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

Special thanks to the many people devotedly working to fill the needs of our soon-to-arrive family. In addition to the housing, furnishings and warm welcome teams already referenced, this includes people serving on an array of committees: overseeing healthcare needs and safeguarding their home, arranging regular ESL lessons, coordinating the regular use of translators, helping the adults find employment, facilitating the children's educational needs and providing continued support there, introducing the resources available in the community, assisting the family in learning to manage and budget their finances. To all of you who help in one way or another, whether large or small, whether through time, talent or substance...we sincerely thank you.