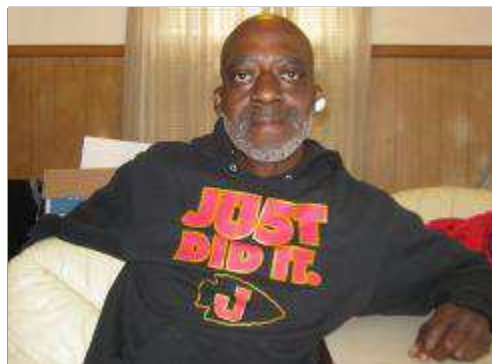


Workday remodels bathroom for cancer survivor

By Debra Loveless –Workday Administrative Director

When Greg Thornton stepped into the bathroom, he could feel the floor giving way. It felt like the buckling surface was going to collapse and the bathtub was going to crash through the tiles. “The floor was caving in,” said Thornton. “The bathtub was going to fall into the basement!”

Over time leaky pipes had soaked the wood underneath the tub, causing the boards to deteriorate and weaken. Workday staff and volunteers averted a near cave-in by remodeling Thornton’s faltering facilities. They tore out the waterlogged wood and replaced it with new flooring and tiles. Workers removed the traditional bathtub and put a walk-in shower in its



“The bathtub was going to fall into the basement.”

Greg Thornton

place. They installed new fixtures, including a toilet, a better-fitting sink, and a mirrored cabinet. Crews also replaced the leaky pipes that had wrecked the bathroom floor.

“They did a great job,” exclaimed Thornton, who lives with his wife and daughter in North County.

The new walk-in shower will be easier for Thornton to use. “It will be better for me. I won’t have to step over the tub,” said Thornton, who is recovering from cancer. “As we get older, it will be better for us,” he said.

Workday also rebuilt Thornton’s front porch, whose rickety railings had pulled away

from their moorings, leading him to stumble, fall and land in the hospital for three days. “God gave me the best blessing in the world,” Thornton says of his restored bathroom and porch.

The Arkansas native also enjoyed getting to know the students who worked on the projects. A former food industry worker, Thornton served them meals and recounted stories about his life. The father of five is grateful that his cancer is “gone,” and that his lawn care business is “booming.”

Workday is a ministry that seeks to demonstrate the love of Christ through practical deeds of justice and mercy, such as bathroom modifications for families like the Thorntons.



Workday installed a walk-in shower.



The bath redo included new fixtures.

The beauty of the diverse kingdom of God

By Marissa Irakoze

Growing up, I never considered myself to be “culturally aware.” I never saw a need to interact with people of different backgrounds. I never would have thought God would impact me so deeply through other cultures around me, and I never would have thought I would need a translator to understand my own wedding reception! God is so gracious in teaching his children how to love others.

Originally, I came to St. Louis with a church for a week-long mission trip, and as we were leaving I knew I would be back for the summer. When I returned for a Workday internship, I instantly fell in love with the communities at New City Fellowship and at a specific apartment complex on Hodiamont. After a week, I knew I would eventually pack up and move to St. Louis from Colorado.

One of the things God was constantly putting on my heart was how beau-

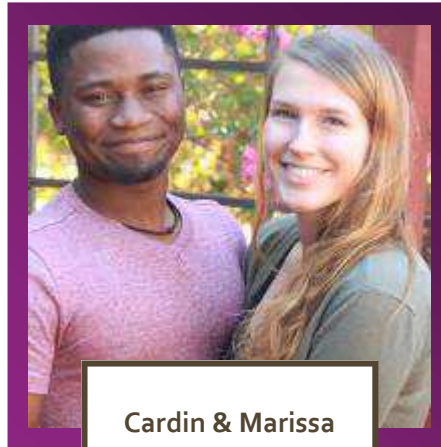
tiful it is when two cultures learn from each other. Each culture has a different viewpoint of God and His greatness, and everyone has a different way of worshipping Him. It’s such a blessing when we are able to connect deeply with other cultures and to see His grace from their point of view.

In particular, I connected with several families from Burundi. I loved how they took care of each other and

supported one another. It was such a contrast to my independent American nature.

During my second St. Louis summer experience, God introduced me to a Burundian man named Cardin. To shorten the story, we got married (We celebrated our first anniversary in early April!) and moved into the apartments on Hodiamont.

I am so thankful to be here and be surrounded by these great communities. Yes, there are hard parts at times, but my neighbors from Congo, Burundi, Syria, Somalia, and many other countries are such a blessing to me. Whenever I come home there are at least three people asking us to come to dinner. I know there will never be a day I will have to worry about food; my neighbors really know how to cook and are so generous! It is such a blessing to be a part of such a diverse Kingdom of God.



Cardin & Marissa



The wedding party

Tax ministry: filing taxes doesn't have to cost you

By Ned Crocker



We are very blessed to have a team with great commitment and continuity. The average experience of our team members is over 8 years! We really are a family, who love each other as well as our clients!

By God's Grace, the Tax Team recently completed its 13th season of free tax service to folks living in the Hamilton Heights neighborhood and beyond. We assisted 425 clients, not only in timely e-filing of their tax refunds, but in saving each of them \$200, \$300, \$400 or more in preparation fees.

I have had the pleasure of partnering with my co-leader Nova Felton in directing the team. Catherine Nkonge, also a dear Sister in Christ, has very ably overseen our Client Intake function. We have a group of 22 volunteers who utilize their particular gifting to express God's love and compassion in a very practical way – this is the general thrust of all Workday ministries.

I personally have been involved with Workday for more than 17 years, and from the very beginning I have grown in my understanding of the Scriptural call for Christians to use their unique gifts to

serve the poor, the elderly, the widow, the alien, and others with challenging circumstances. In doing so, we not only express God's concern for them, but we grow in our faith and understanding of Grace – given and received.

As I always remind our volunteers, our interaction with our clients touches many of the most sensitive life issues going on with them – financial stress, health issues, family or marital strife, aging, unemployment, etc. This opens many opportunities for compassion or prayer as we sit with them and discuss their circumstances.

Although our emphasis is on preparing federal and state income taxes, we also serve seniors or disabled clients with completion of their Missouri "circuit breaker" returns. This can result in an extra several hundred dollars or more for these folks.

We also help clients who receive confusing correspondence from the IRS or Mis-

souri Dept. of Revenue. These letters can be intimidating, and thereby allow us to reassure the recipients by helping to resolve the issue. In complicated situations, we sit with the client in calling the IRS or Missouri DOR so that we can speak on their behalf. Other forms of assistance include amended returns, prior year tax returns, checking on refund status, or sometimes just assuring a client that they do not have to file taxes at all.

It is important to note that almost a third of our volunteers make up our Intake team. They perform the critical functions of greeting our clients, checking them in, maintaining order, explaining instructions, and assisting the preparers by copying key tax forms.

If you are potentially interested in either tax preparation or intake, please call Ned Crocker at [636-532-1866](tel:636-532-1866) or Nova Felton at [314-993-0876](tel:314-993-0876).



God heals *and* forgives through Jesus Christ

By Andrew Stern, Director, Workday

Have you ever had an object fall on your head? Having done work projects over the years, I have received the worst bruises on my head—even more so now that I’ve lost so much hair!

The Apostle Mark’s gospel is full of surprising, action-packed stories, but one of the most extreme is the account of four friends who break through a roof to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus. The packed crowd in the house below must have been struck by falling debris as the men lowered their friend through the busted roof to see our Savior. Christ actually commends their faith, and then tells the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven!”



Unfortunately, the religious teachers were upset because Jesus had said the man’s sins were forgiven. The rulers missed the point. Jesus said, “which is easier: to say to the lame man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take up your mat and walk?’ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...” he said to the paralytic, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” Jesus *both* heals the man *and* forgives his sin. The agenda of Jesus is to care for the poor and set us free from the oppressive reign of sin.

Jesus says the link between the oppressive nature of sin and its impact on our physical state is *inseparable*. The religious teachers separated the impact of sin from its oppressive result. Therefore, they believed that if you

were “blessed,” you would not suffer physically.

Jesus cannot “merely” forgive our sins without impacting the very world around us. The forgiveness of sin is always accompanied by overturning of oppression in our physical world. Where do you need forgiveness? Where do you see oppression racking our world? God is actively seeking to overturn oppression and bring forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

When the roof is falling, look to the oppression-fighting power of God to bring about healing. Jesus calls us to break through the roof to usher in his forgiveness, see him break the oppressive power of sin and unleash his healing power.

The challenges of coming to America

By Thomas Havyarimana, Rafiki Team Leader

Since I arrived in the United States from Africa, I have struggled to adjust to a new country and culture. Even though I have faced social and economic hardships, I am grateful for God’s provision for my family.

In this new community, it was very hard for me to communicate with other people because of language barriers. No one could speak the language I know, and English was very difficult for me to understand. As a result, I could not do the things I was supposed to do. It was so difficult to go to the store by myself because I didn’t know how to ask the price of the vari-

ous groceries. Also, it was very hard to know how much money to give the cashier because I was unfamiliar with pennies, dimes and quarters. Not only that, it was a tough to get to places like hospitals, clinics and various offices.



The issue of finances was also very challenging for me. It took me six months to find work. Everywhere I went to apply for employment, I didn’t get the job because of language complications.

Although life has been difficult, I thank God for what he has done for me and my family. We saw the hand of God, especially as people came to help us in so many ways. They showed us how to live and interact in this community. They taught us English, and they helped us by providing what we needed. Now that our English is better, we are doing fine.