Family Support Makes All The Difference

When speaking to our grantees, we find a familiar thread in their stories—the impact of a supportive and encouraging family. Our grantees talk a great deal about this combination of family, along with financial help, as critical ingredients in their success. We want to acknowledge these amazing grantees and their amazing families.

NAA AKU ADDO

Naa is originally from Ghana. After graduating from South Burlington High School in 2009, she received her undergraduate degree in 2013 from Emmanuel College in Boston with a dual major in Global Studies and International Affairs and Sociology with a Concentration in Social Justice, and her graduate degree in Public Administration in 2016 from the University of Vermont. Currently Naa works in Burlington with the Vermont Department of Health as a grant manager with the tobacco control and prevention program.

About her family Naa says, “I was blessed that I was born into a family that had the social capital to allow me to think outside of the box. I was able to envision a future where I would be exposed to different schools of thought, cultures, people, and experiences. My grandparents, who were both professors in the school system in Ghana, always made sure that I knew about the different options that were available for me. My parents also supported my goals and dreams no matter how difficult the road seemed. I am the first of my parents’ children to receive a bachelor’s and master’s degree. And, I always am thankful for the supportive family that allowed me to dream big.”

“ My parents have always been supportive of my dreams and pushed me to be better. They always said that having an education was priceless. My parents and grandparents supported my goals and dreams no matter how difficult the road seemed."

Receiving a grant from The Curtis Fund was also very important to Naa and her family in quite a different way. “My parents were very glad to hear that I received this award. They both received their education in Ghana and they always said the idea of receiving an award in Ghana was always a big deal. The semester I was notified of The Curtis Fund grant, they were both proud and happy to know that I would have a relatively easier and reduced amount of loans in the upcoming years.”

Naa points specifically to her grandparents as motivators and inspirations. “My grandmother and my grandfather of blessed memory never stopped feeding my mind with all the knowledge they had acquired. They made family trips and summer vacations ones to remember. They allowed me to experience new things and always made sure to continue teaching me to not be afraid to reach farther than I could imagine.”

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Savannah graduated from Otter Valley Union High School in 2014 and is now attending the University of Rochester. She is studying American Sign Language with a minor in Spanish. Although she is a full-time student, Savannah finds time to volunteer as a tutor at the Rochester School for the Deaf. After graduation in 2019, she hopes to mentor with a professional interpreter and then return to school for a master’s degree in American Sign Language Interpreting.

Savannah has been inspired by her family to pursue her educational dreams. “While I was in middle school my mother decided to go back to college. She graduated summa cum laude from Castleton College with a degree in English. She is a hard worker, dedicated to our family, and one of the nicest, most sincere people I know. Whenever I think that I will fail a test, or my homework will never get finished, I remind myself that my mom was able to do that with four kids to watch and support. She motivates me to do my best and have faith that everything will fall into place.”

“My father also inspired me to dream big. He supports me in all my academic decisions. He is sure to be involved with anything that pushes me in the right direction for my career. He was my mother’s support system when she was in school and I hope I can be just as supportive to my own future children.”

“*My mother motivates me to do my best, ask for help, and have faith that everything will fall into place. My father also inspires me to dream big and pushes me in the right direction for my career.*”

The family has been helped with financial assistance from The Curtis Fund. “Being involved in the Deaf community and learning its language, culture, points of view, and dreams for the future, has changed how I view the world. Thanks to the Curtis scholarship helping pay for college, I am able to experience all of this.” Savannah’s brother also received support. “My older brother received the Curtis scholarship when he went to UVM. Without this Fund to support my college payments, I would not be able to go to school. It is a large sum of money that my family heavily relies on.”

Savannah finished by saying, “My family has a lot of involvement with the Curtis Fund and VSAC. We are thankful for the opportunities and hope that scholarships such as The Curtis will continue to support college students no matter what career, where they decide to study, and no matter what age they begin school. From the Williams Lynch family, thank you to the The Curtis Fund and VSAC!”

Donations to The Curtis Fund

With your donation to The Curtis Fund, you can make a positive impact on the lives of Vermont students like Naa and Savannah. Every gift—large or small—is tax deductible and helps Vermonters achieve their dreams for education and a better life. All contributions to The Curtis Fund are tax deductible to the limit of the law.
High School was not the best learning experience for me, or so I thought at the time. Classes like Latin, Calculus, Biology, etc. were all crammed into a seven-hour day. My creative spirit and dreamy mind yearned for more, but I managed to get acceptable grades, which kept me in the private school my parents chose for me eighteen miles from home. I always thought I would have been happier with my friends at the local high school.  

There were a few exceptions. In my last two years of school, I was placed in Brother Flavian’s class. It was a design/art class. We were taught the rudimentary use of mechanical drawing tools and the exacting skills required to build complex structures. During those drafting classes, I learned to draw. One of my sketches even won a prize in a school competition!  

A second competition during my senior year involved designing a concept car. Then, as now, I was a sports car enthusiast. I envisioned a small, two-seat car that the average person could afford to own. With some design elements of the Chevy Corvette and the small size of the British Austin Healey Sprite, my car had a four-cylinder engine. I didn’t win the competition—my car looked too much like a Corvette. This was back in 1965.  

I went on to college in the fall and never thought much about my car design until 25 years later when Mazda introduced the Miata—a concept car similar in design to the mid-1960 Corvettes, but smaller, with a four-cylinder engine and priced for the average citizen. Go figure!  

I wonder where my career would have taken me had there been a path during those formative years to further develop my creative skills. Not all of us are interested in a traditional post-secondary education, but the path to a successful future in a technical field is not as clear for many young people today.  

That is about to change. There is a movement in the state, and throughout the country, to create certifiable programs in various fields that create pathways to good-paying, skills-based jobs. The Curtis Fund is part of this effort. We are about to launch a fundraising campaign to support grants for those who need financial assistance to earn those certificates.  

There are veterans, new Americans, single parents, unemployed and under-employed Americans, and high school students, who have the hands and minds to do productive work, and we’d like to help them get started. Our founder Emma Eliza Curtis would have liked that.  

**Joseph Boutin,**  
*Chair, Curtis Fund Board of Trustees*
The Curtis Fund wants to help more students pursue a post-secondary education. Please consider making a donation in whatever amount feels right to you. Every contribution—large or small—matters and you will be helping a student when help is needed most. Thank you so much!

Welcome to all of our new and former CURTIS FUND GRANTEES, FRIENDS & FAMILY!

We Want to Do More!

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Your Gift Will Make a Difference!

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Thank you!

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For more information, please contact Joyce Cellars, Director of Advancement, at joyce@thecurtisfund.org or (408) 500-5304.