

# Iowa City nurse wins award after she fled violence in Burundi

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Yvonne Nampore is pictured at Briarwood Healthcare Center on Thursday, June 22, 2017. (Photo: David Scrivner/Iowa City Press-Citizen)Buy Photo

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When a bullet struck her in the shoulder, Yvonne Nampore thought she was dreaming.

But the bullet was real. She was injured at age 16 during an attack at Gatumba refugee camp in Burundi on a summer night in 2004.

Nampore, her mother and her sisters, members of the Banyamulenge ethnic group, fled to the camp from genocide and other violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She said she expected that her family would be safe there. But the attack on Aug. 13, 2004, killed more than 150 people at the camp, [according to the BBC](#).

"We stayed there only for two months, and we got attacked by enemies still," she said.

Nampore moved to Sioux Falls with her family in 2007 and now lives in Iowa City with her husband and two daughters. She said her past helped inform her decision to become a nurse. Her own memories of the care she received for the bullet wound, as well as memories of pregnant women who suffered without care in east Africa, encouraged her to pursue a career helping others.

"I really enjoy and love to work with people," she said.

The Johnson County Quality Long-Term Care Committee recently awarded Nampore with the Going the Extra Mile Award for her contributions as a certified nursing assistant at Briarwood Health Care Center in Iowa City.

Mercedes Bern-Klug, chairperson of the Extra Mile Award's committee, said the award aims to recognize skilled individuals for an underappreciated but vital job. She noted that the work of a certified nursing assistant involves tasks like helping people dress and bathe, and it requires patience and tact.

"When we have people who are doing that well, we really want to celebrate it," she said.

Nampore started working at Briarwood about five years ago. The residents, along with Nampore's colleagues and friends, said she is dependable, hard-working and a great team player.

One friend, Aime'e Nyamadorari, shares a common past with Nampore as well as a common dream. The [recent high school graduate](#) wants to become a nurse and said Nampore is an inspiration to her.

Nyamadorari's family met Nampore at Gatumba in 2004, and both families were living there during the attack, which killed Nyamadorari's parents. In Iowa City, Nampore and Nyamadorari reconnected through their church.

Nyamadorari said she believes Nampore's guidance will help her achieve her goal.

She said Nampore also shares cherished memories of her family.

"She always tells me about my parents, because I didn't have a chance to grow up with them," Nyamadorari said.

Brandi Maas, director of nursing at Briarwood, said the care center's staff nominated Nampore for the Extra Mile Award. She noted that Nampore received a similar award from the residents at Briarwood for the month of June.

Maas said Nampore helps spread optimism at Briarwood and makes positive connections with residents' families.

Briarwood has welcomed many residents from Africa who don't speak English, and Nampore helped translate on several occasions, Maas said.

“She is a very hard worker. She is somebody that cares very deeply about the residents here at Briarwood,” she said.

Ann Schwarting, a registered nurse at Briarwood, described Nampore as "bubbly and cheerful," saying "her willingness to help is just outstanding.”

Resident Millie Eggleston, 87, said Nampore is helpful and efficient. "She does a lot of smiling."

Nampore said her Extra Mile Award was a very meaningful “gift from God.”

She said she plans to continue her education at Kirkwood Community College so she can become a licensed practical nurse and wants to keep working in a nursing home setting like Briarwood, where she can connect with others and learn about different cultures.

“It’s like my family,” she said.

### **Extra Mile Award winners**

Yvonne Nampore is one of nine Extra Mile Award recipients from care centers in Johnson County. The other recipients are:

- Elizabeth Michael, Atrium Village
- Judy Curley, Crestview Specialty Care
- Amy Horrell, Iowa City Rehabilitation and Health Care
- Alexis Newberry, Lantern Park Specialty Care
- Steven Abdo, Oaknoll Retirement Residence
- Danielle Hillyer, Pioneer Park - Lone Tree Health
- Danni Slaymaker, Solon Nursing Care Center
- Jhenni Carrasco, Windmill Manor

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