



## *Meet the Nsika Family*

The first time Aldy and Mulasi Nsika met, neither could have imagined that eight years later they would be working toward owning a home of their own.

It was 2009 in Dillon, South Carolina. Mulasi, now 27, and her family had just moved there from Boise, Idaho, looking for work. That same year, Aldy, now 31, left his family in Greensboro and also traveled to Dillon. It was there at a chicken processing plant that Aldy met Mulasi's father and gave him a ride home. And it was at the end of that ride that Aldy and Mulasi first met.

"I didn't like him at first," Mulasi said. "He was annoying."

But over time, he managed to win her affections and when her family moved up to Goldsboro in 2010, he followed not long after in 2011.

"I liked her," Aldy said. "And then we became friends."

But they not only had to bridge all the normal differences that most couples find between each other, Aldy and Mulasi also had to overcome cultural barriers and perhaps some deeply ingrained distrust.

See, while he is from the Republic of Congo, she is from the Democratic Republic of Congo – countries that can often be dangerous for people visiting from the other, even as the capitals face off across the Congo River. But, they said, they didn't let those potential differences stop them.

"We need to change. It's not about where you're from. It doesn't matter where we're from," Aldy said. "That's not us."



So in 2011, the couple married, and in 2012, moved into the Goldsboro Housing Authority's West Haven complex as their family filled out – two girls, Alycia, 6, and Ashley, 3.

Since then, they said, it has been a good community. But they still worry about safety. Their car has been broken into. They can't put their girls' bikes or toys outside because they'll be stolen.

And so they thought about the future – not sure it would ever come.

"We always talked about buying a house," Mulasi said.

It was something they wanted to do for their family.

"We grew up in places where we had to keep moving around," Aldy said. "We don't want our girls to have to live like that, moving from place to place. We want to give them what we couldn't have growing up."

And that's what Habitat does – it gives families like the Nsikas the opportunity to become homeowners and to build a stronger, more stable and more independent foundation for themselves.

"If we have our own place it's going to be really good for them," Aldy said.

Fortunately, one day Aldy remembered that he had helped some fellow African immigrants build their Habitat houses while in Greensboro, and so he decided to look to see if the same opportunity existed in Goldsboro. But when he found Habitat Goldsboro-Wayne's website, it seemed too good to be true to Mulasi.

"I thought maybe it was just a joke. I thought it would be too much," she said.

But Aldy kept on and finally they decided to just turn in an application.

Then, when they got the call they had been accepted into the program, it was a moment they will not soon forget.

"Aldy almost cried, he was so happy," Mulasi said.

The children are excited, too. The oldest, Alycia, has some understanding about what's happening. Her sister, Ashley, just knows to be excited.

"[Alycia] just knows we're going to get a house, so now she's planning her bedroom and she wants everything pink," Mulasi said. "Every evening she asks us if the house is ready."

Not yet, they tell her, knowing they still have a long way to go. But they know it will be worth it, and despite some nervousness about this upcoming change to their lives, they are eagerly putting in sweat equity hours – Mulasi at the ReStore and Aldy on the construction sites. For Aldy this often means arriving for the morning shifts after working the late shifts at Butterball in Mount Olive – a schedule that worries Mulasi, but one that has Aldy too excited slow down.

"I tell her I will get rest when I can sleep in my own house," he said.

