



Angel of the Month: Sonia Tibekyinga

We are deeply honored to award Sonia Tibekyinga Angel of the Month for May 2020. She began working with Visiting Angels Newton/Canton in June of 2009. She was described as “lovely, educated, and caring” in her interview notes. Sonia had to take a medical leave in 2015. When she was interviewed again in 2017 for re-hire, the case managers noted that she was “calm, highly experienced with dementia patients, and personable.”

Sonia has five siblings. She and one of her brothers were born in Belgium, and later on, the whole family moved back to Uganda when she was five years old. Her father was a diplomat before moving back home and quickly settled in as a civil servant. Sonia has two brothers and one sister. The one born in Belgium (last born), passed away in 2003 after a car accident.

Sonia moved to Massachusetts in 2008. Her mother and sister were here and eager for her to join them in the United States. Sonia received a degree in Social Sciences majoring in Social Administration and Literature at Makerere University in Uganda, before coming to the U.S.

Sonia became a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) in 2009. She worked with dementia patients at a facility as well as a facilitator at a group home for older people living with brain injuries. She still picks up shifts on her days off when she is needed at the group home. Sonia’s mother was a Caregiver for Visiting Angels Newton/Canton and recommended she apply to work with us.

Sonia has two daughters; one is eight years old, and the other is 18 months old. Sonia and her family are members of Grace Chapel in Lexington. One morning, when her daughter was two, Sonia wasn’t feeling well as she prepared her daughter and herself to attend services. Shortly after arriving at church, Sonia suffered a massive stroke. In retrospect, she is grateful that it did not happen when she was home alone with her two-year-old daughter. She received tremendous support from her family, church, and the staff at Visiting Angels Newton/Canton.

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Sonia had to relearn to read, talk, and regain mobility. This time of rehabilitation helped Sonia to gain great insight and understanding into the challenges her Clients with dementia and brain injuries deal with on a day to day basis. Her experience has only strengthened her skills and ability to provide outstanding care to her Clients.

Sonia re-interviewed with Visiting Angels Newton/Canton in July of 2017 and was immediately and warmly welcomed back to the team. When she is not providing incredible care to her Client(s), she enjoys watching movies, long walks with her daughters, and attending church services. Her mother has been “staying at home” with her and her daughters during the quarantine. They are all looking forward to getting back to their regular routines.

Sonia has had twenty-four Clients with Visiting Angels Newton/Canton and has worked with many of our Case Managers. Our Office Manager, Joanne Minichino, was so thrilled to learn that she had been chosen as Angel of the Month for May 2020, “Sonia is a very sweet, kind, and dependable person. Plus, she always punches! She has an excellent work ethic.” Our RN Case Manager, Katherine Jennings, shared, “When Sonia worked with me for my Client, she was patient, caring, kind, reliable, and so tolerant. I could not have given the Client anyone better. I appreciated her showing up every day!”

Case Manager, Naté Paige, expressed, “My admiration for Sonia stemmed from a day when she was on her way to work with a Client and was informed that this particular Client had suspended services. Sonia was thankfully recommended to me as an emergency fill-in. She immediately accepted back-to-back overnight shifts with my Client and made a seamless switch and saved the day. My Client has advanced dementia and lives in the memory care unit at a facility. Sonia displayed great skill, calmness, and professionalism from day one. I was immediately impressed with how well she handled all of the intricacies and requirements of this case. Not only has Sonia been a model Caregiver, but there have been many times where she has sacrificed her personal time and needs to be available. Our Client is restless, active, and has very short sleep cycles. Sonia has used her knowledge and calm composure to find ways to appease and redirect our Client. She updates me without prompting, at the end of each shift, and will provide recommendations based on our Client’s behavior and mannerisms that I can then relay to the other Caregivers and staff at the facility. Sonia is clear and concise; she has a great sense of humor and never complains. Sonia has provided a feeling of reassurance and structure to the team of Caregivers that work on this case with her.”

Sonia, you truly define what it is to be an angel, with your calm demeanor, compassion, intellect, professionalism, and natural desire to help others. We are so grateful to know you and have you as part of the Visiting Angels Newton/Canton team. It is a great honor to award you, Angel of the Month, for May 2020.

We look forward to working with you for years to come.