



March 2022

March is Sponsorship Month for Shelter Them

Sponsor a Child – Change a Life!

The mission of Shelter Them is to rescue children in Rwanda from poverty and then empower them with the opportunity to have an independent, secure, and productive future. Every child deserves to have hope for that kind of future, and Shelter Them provides the tools to make that hope a reality. We provide children first with food, shelter, and medical care – the basics of life. But then we also provide them with education, the gift of empowerment to to break the cycle of poverty and achieve a happy and productive future. You can give them that gift!

Since Shelter Them was established in 2005, the program that is most beneficial to achieve our mission has been, and continues to be, our child sponsorship program. In the years since its inception, sponsorship has proven its success. In this newsletter, you will read about the lives of two children, now young adults, whose lives have been transformed through sponsorship. Then you can read about two of the many young children in Rwanda who are seeking sponsors to provide them too with hope and opportunities for their future. We hope you will consider becoming a Shelter Them sponsor, and so, finally, you will find information about how the program works, how rewarding it can be, and how you can begin the process to become a sponsor. By accepting the challenge, you can develop a relationship with a young child on the other side of the world and literally, you can change a life!

Meet Elie Itangishaka

Elie is the eldest of six children whose mom passed away while giving birth to her youngest child in May 2009. Elie was 12 years old at the time, and with no father, he was left with the responsibility of caring for his five siblings. (He is pictured in the back row on the right with three of his sisters.) They were doomed to a life of poverty and neglect until a neighbour, who had heard about Shelter Them, intervened, and Elie and his siblings became part of the Shelter Them family in 2009. By 2013, all of the children were enrolled on the child sponsorship program, living together in a home provided by Shelter Them, with a loving caregiver to look after them. Thanks to their sponsors, Elie and two of his sisters have graduated from high school and are now enrolled in college to pursue post-secondary education. Their younger siblings are coming right behind them.



Shakira Uwimana – A Young Woman with a Goal

Shakira was born in January 1998. She never met her father and her mom died when Shakira was 5 years old, so her extended family, fighting poverty themselves, had to decide who should look after Shakira. No one else would take her in, so she went to live with her elderly auntie, who was very poor herself, but at least Shakira could be of use to her. So, at 6 years of age, Shakira fetched firewood and water to help her auntie, and carried bricks on her head to earn a bit of money. Shakira longed to go to school and was eventually allowed to attend, but every morning before school and again after school, she had to continue to fetch wood and water. It was no life for a young girl.

In 2009, Shakira heard about some people at a local church who helped children like her, so she went to investigate. There she met Sumwiza Cesarie, the mother of Jocelyne and Josephine, the founders of Shelter Them. The next day Shakira moved into a house with 3 other girls rescued by Shelter Them



and a caretaker. As Shakira said herself, “That is when my life completely changed. I then felt I had everything I needed. I go to school, I am happy, I didn’t ask for anything more.” And Shakira knows who to thank: “Because of my sponsors, this has helped me to understand that if I am given an opportunity, that if I go to school, finish my education, and get a job. I want to help other kids like I have been helped.”

Through the generosity of her sponsors, Shakira has recently graduated from secondary school and has been accepted at the Kigali Polytechnic College, majoring in Culinary Arts. And that shows how Shakira’s sponsors’ generosity is a gift that keeps on giving. Just as her sponsors helped to feed Shakira, now she is learning how to feed others. (She is pictured here making lunch for our kids in the Early Childhood Development Centre in Gateko.) Just as sponsorship has given hope to Shakira, she is now giving hope, and sustenance, to others. As we can see through the experiences of Elie and Shakira, sponsorship works!

Elie and Shakira are two of the many young adults who have overcome their hardships with the help of their sponsors in Canada and around the world. Many have not only graduated from secondary school but have gone on to success in college and university, and on to success and independence in the working world. Many others are on that same path, learning skills in elementary and secondary that will give them the same opportunities. Sponsorship works! But there are many, many others who are still waiting for their opportunity, especially in Gateko village, in Bugesera District, a particularly disadvantaged part of Rwanda. Below, you will meet two of over 30 children, most of preschool age in Gateko, who are waiting for their chance to achieve their potential. Poverty is the obstacle denying that potential. Sponsorship is the solution. Sponsorship is empowerment!

Elio Ganza has a Dream

Meet 4-year-old Elio Ganza. Elio's teachers in the Early Childhood Development Centre (ECDC) in Gateko suggest that Elio spends a little too much time drawing, but this young man has a big dream – he wants to build things. Without Shelter Them, Elio could not dare to dream. He lives in Gateko village with his mother and two older brothers. His father abandoned the family before Elio was born. The family lives in extreme poverty. His mother does her best to provide for the family doing odd jobs, but she still must rely on ECDC to provide Elio with two nutritious meals each school day. A sponsorship would enable Elio to continue in school after ECDC and one day have a chance to realize his dream. Without assistance, he would have to give up on school to help bring in money for the family. Sponsorship can break this cycle of poverty. Elio doesn't spend too much time drawing; he's just dreaming of all the things he will one day build. Elio deserves a chance to realize his dream. Sponsorship can give him that chance.



Debora Uwase Wants to be a Doctor

Debora lives in Gateko village with her parents and three siblings. Her family is among the poorest in Gateko because they do not own any land of their own. Instead, they must rent from others in order to grow their few crops and must share their harvest in payment for using the land. Debora's parents also do odd jobs around the village to try to provide for their children. At 4 years of age, Debora attends the Early Childhood Development Centre built by Shelter Them, so she receives two nutritious meals there each school day, but when there is no school, she often goes hungry. Debora enjoys learning her alphabet, she likes football, and her favourite colour is blue. She too has a dream – to become a doctor. She does not know yet that her dream is beyond her reach. That is, without the financial assistance and personal support that a sponsor can provide. A sponsor for Debora could help to feed her body and feed her dream too.



Be a Sponsor – Change a Life!

Can you imagine yourself sponsoring a child like one of these two youngsters? The process is easy. Sponsorship provides for the total care of the sponsored child, including shelter, food, education, and medical care. To provide this level of care, sponsors commit to pay \$40 per month. Most of our children need only one sponsor, but for others, their needs exceed the funds provided by one sponsor, and they require two sponsors to meet all their needs. Over 90% of all sponsorship contributions goes directly to the shelter, nutrition, education, and health care of our children.

To learn more, all you need to do is go to our website, at www.shelterthem.com, and click on Child Sponsorship at the top of the page. From there you can learn just about everything there is to know about the program. You will learn the history of the sponsorship program and how it operates. You will learn what to expect when you enrol in the program, and you can receive tips on how to establish and build a personal relationship with your sponsored child. There are also answers to many frequently asked questions, but if you still need more information, you can email David Jenkins, our Sponsorship Coordinator, at davidjenkins@shelterthem.com. There is a simple form to fill out to begin the sponsorship process.

In this special newsletter, we have shown that sponsorship can transform the life of a child in Rwanda, and this is true, but it is only half the story, because every one of our current sponsors will tell you that their lives have been changed too, through their relationship with their sponsored child. Sponsorship is a rewarding experience that will enrich your life. So, sign up to be a sponsor today. You will change two lives!



We leave you with just one more image, of Elie Itangishaka today (back right), and his five siblings who have all been supported through the Shelter Them child sponsorship program. They are happy and healthy. They are together. And they are confident, because their sponsors have provided them with the support and skills they need to create a productive, independent future for themselves. They have been empowered to live the life they could never have dreamed of without the gift of sponsorship. To their sponsors, and to the over 200 current sponsors in our program, thank you for your kindness and generosity and faith in the work that our staff in Rwanda is doing on your behalf. All of us together are transforming lives, one child at a time. Murakoze! Thank you!