



December, 2024

## Preparing for the Future

Before the school year began in September, Shelter Them conducted a retreat for our students who were preparing for their university or college year. Guided by experienced facilitators, our students participated in activities such as study and life skills, entrepreneurship, faith teachings and sports sessions. The event was filled with learning, growth, support and, of course, lots of fun.

Events such as this one are what make Shelter Them so successful in enabling our students to achieve to the full level of their ability. Our mission is to support underprivileged children from earliest ages all the way to post-secondary education. And we stay with them until the job is finished, and they are fully prepared for a life of self-sufficiency, independence and sustainability.



Our education program is entirely in keeping with the Rwandan government's Vision 2050. The country's goal is to produce a healthy, well-educated workforce that will make Rwanda competitive, not just in Africa but on the world stage. These young men and women will be among the leaders who can carry that vision forward, and they are ready for the challenge. This retreat has helped to make these students prepared, motivated and inspired. And this could not be done without the continuing and generous support from you, our readers. Together, we are shaping the future!

## Paying It Forward



Let us introduce you to one of the students who participated in that retreat, Josiane Mukeshimana. Josiane came under the care of Shelter Them in 2009. She was six years old at the time when she and her five siblings were orphaned when their mother died giving birth to her youngest child. Shelter Them took them in, rented a house for the family to live in, and paid a caregiver to look after them.

Josiane also became sponsored through the Shelter Them sponsorship program, and she is very aware of the impact that sponsorship has had on her life. In fact, she wrote a letter to her sponsors in November "to express my heartfelt gratitude for your support in funding my education." She goes on to say that she is currently studying Software Engineering at the African Leadership University, which she describes as "a dream come true, and I'm so thankful to have such caring and supportive parents. I love you and truly appreciate everything you have done for me."

Josiane goes on to say that she is “giving back to Shelter Them in my own way. Along with a few friends, I’ve been teaching some basic computer skills to the younger children at Shelter Them. It feels wonderful to contribute to such a great cause, just as you have supported me.”

So, Josiane is paying it forward. Because of the generous support of her sponsors, she is going on to change the lives of other underprivileged children. She ends her letter by saying that “I promise to work hard and make the most of this opportunity you have given me.” Well, that is already a promise kept! Josiane’s story demonstrates that Shelter Them is not only producing skilled people, but also good people. People like those who sponsored her on her journey. Would you like to take a similar journey? Then go to our website [www.shelterthem.com](http://www.shelterthem.com) and become a sponsor. You will change lives!

## Congratulations to Our Graduates!

Our kids keep on achieving! Four of our high school students have just passed their National Exams and now will be prepared to attend college or university and continue to pursue their chosen careers. And we now have **five** university graduates. Earlier this year, Aline Uwatese graduated from Mount Kenya University Rwanda in Business Management, and Daniel Kalamuzi completed a diploma course in Cyber Security and Networking at ISBAT University in Kampala Uganda. And now Jean D’Amour Iradukunda (pictured) has become our fifth university graduate! Jean D’Amour was attending the University of Rwanda studying Business and Information Technology. He is now ready to embark on his own independent future! Congratulations to all our graduates and congratulations to their sponsors who have helped them to succeed!



## Making It All Happen



You might have noticed, reading about the success of Josiane and our graduates, that technology plays a big part of their future careers. And technology has also played a big part in enabling them to achieve their goal. That is why Shelter Them has been busy providing all our students with the tools they need. Readers might remember that in our newsletter last December, we announced an agreement with the Electronic Recycling Association (ERA) which provides computers and other electronic equipment to registered charities like Shelter Them. Well, that partnership continues, and Golou Naderi, a member of the Shelter Them Board of Trustees, recently picked up 12 more computers from ERA. They will be delivered in March during the second trip to Rwanda of high school students from Brampton, Ontario. They will see firsthand the impact that technology can have on our Rwandan students.

## Building a Foundation

To be successful in providing a solid educational program for our kids, we first need to build a strong foundation. And that is literally what we are currently building – buildings! We began our Early Childhood Development program in our Community Center in Gateko, and organizations in Rwanda have noticed the great success we are having. One of those organizations is the Bank of Kigali and they felt we needed a stand-alone ECDC. They have provided us with the funding for this project. Construction is well underway and it is located next to our Community Center. Our ECDC staff is already busy planning

just how to organize the new space. Our Community Center will continue to play a vital role in Gateko. It will be used for our staff offices, art classes for our children of all ages, our basket weaving cooperative as well as regular Community events.

Shelter Them is also in the process of building our own primary school. We have indicated on our website and in newsletters that Shelter Them has not been satisfied with the quality of education our young students have received after leaving our ECDC. We have arranged a temporary relationship with Open-Door Christian School, but we believe that the best long-term solution would be to build our own school, and that is what we are doing. The estimated cost of construction is \$100 000 US, and over 50% of that cost has already been raised. We have already hired our first teacher, Louise Igiraneza,, who will be teaching P1 students. We have proven that a solid education is the surest way to enable all children to build for themselves a sustainable and independent future of their own choosing. Please help Shelter Them to achieve that goal. Go to [www.shelterthem.com](http://www.shelterthem.com) and donate now. Together, we are building a foundation for the future.



## Christmas is Coming!

Christmas is just around the corner, and every Christmas, Shelter Them arranges a celebration for all the children we support. There is always lots of singing and dancing. There is always lots of food and Fanta drinks. And every child receives a gift. But it is not the gift itself that is important to the children , but the knowledge that their gift comes from someone across the sea who wants to wish them well, to congratulate them on their work, and to acknowledge their importance.

It is no small feat to provide Christmas for over 300 children. The cost ends up being about \$35 per child. You can help to make Christmas happen for our kids by visiting [www.shelterthem.com](http://www.shelterthem.com). Just click on the donate button and make a one-time Christmas donation. Or you can e- transfer your Christmas gift to [donations@shelterthem.com](mailto:donations@shelterthem.com). Whichever method you choose, you will know that you are making Christmas brighter and happier for our kids.

## Thank You

We have spent some time in this newsletter acknowledging the various successes of the children and young adults in our care. But we also need to acknowledge that these successes could not have happened without the tireless work and dedication of our teaching staff and caregivers. Julius Twahirwa, our education coordinator, says that teachers are the role models who guide their students to become good citizens and leaders, giving them the skills to lead independent and productive lives. And he is absolutely right, and we celebrate them. But it is also true that Julius, and Tao Gauthier, our country director, and all their staff could not do their work without you, our generous and loyal and committed supporters. So, during this holiday season, please find some quiet time to sit and reflect on all the lives you have helped to change through your commitment to Shelter Them. And on behalf of the Shelter Them Board members in Canada and in Rwanda, and of our staff who deliver our programs day after day, and of course of the children and young adults whose lives you are changing, please have a safe and joyous Christmas season and a very happy 2025.