



April, 2024

## Every Child Deserves a Chance

The goal of Shelter Them has always been to provide for the needs of children and families in Rwanda, following the horrors of the genocide against Tutsis in 1994. While that goal has led us to provide food, shelter, and medical care to those people in need, over the years our focus has moved more and more towards providing education to those in our care, especially the children. This move has been deliberate, because we firmly believe that education is the surest way to provide these children with a fair chance to lead an independent, productive, and sustainable future of their own choosing.



We also believe that to be effective, education must begin as early as possible. The Rwandan government provides primary and secondary education to all Rwandan children, but they cannot afford to provide preschool for the children. The families in our care, often headed by single mothers, cannot afford the expense of private preschool education either. That is why, in 2021, Shelter Them created its own Early Childhood Development Centre (ECDC) in the village of Gateko. There are currently 96 children, 3 to 6 years of age, enrolled in our ECDC program.

Our readers in the developed world might not have a clear idea of the nature of our ECDC, because it provides much, much more to these children than just an education. In fact, there are five major functions of our ECDC, five pillars, on which the program is built.



1. The first pillar, of course, is **learning**. The play-based curriculum provides our children with the educational skills to enter primary school on an equal footing with children who come from a more advantaged background. This past year, the staff has created a library and established a regular reading program to promote literacy and a love of reading in the children.

2. Second, our ECDC provides the children with **protection**. Before the ECDC was built, parents had to lock their children in their homes while parents went to work, for the children's safety. Now, there are many caring adults – teachers, caregivers, and other staff – to ensure a safe environment where children can learn and grow.

3. The third pillar is **nutrition**. At the ECDC, children are assured of receiving two nutritious meals each school day. Of course, good nutrition enables children to achieve their full cognitive, physical, and social potential, but not all families have the capacity to provide it for their children. In 2023, a large kitchen garden was created for the ECDC to provide fresh vegetables, and earlier this year, Shelter Them purchased two cows to provide fresh milk for the children. Our goal is to build strong bodies to go along with strong minds.



4. **Hygiene and sanitation** were a major problem for both children and their families, because there was no reliable and convenient source of clean water. Shelter Them has provided that source, and one of the water points in the village is right outside the community centre where the ECDC is located. At first, the children were reluctant to drink water from the taps because, in the past, water had made them sick. Now each student has his or her own drinking bottle which they can refill whenever they want. And our caretaking staff works hard to ensure that the ECDC is clean and sanitary every day.



5. The final pillar is student **health**. It is important in the play-based curriculum our education coordinator has developed, so students are active while they learn, building healthy bodies along with healthy minds. A summer camp also provides healthy nutrition as well as varied experiences in arts, sports, and games outside the school year.

As you can see, the Early Childhood Development Centre in Gateko provides much more than just an education. Our ECDC ministers to the *whole* child, starting these youngsters on a journey towards an independent and productive future for themselves, untied to a future of poverty and dependence on others. But as you can imagine, this ECDC program does not come without cost, and as student enrolment increases, so do our expenses. Do you believe that the Shelter Them Early Childhood Development Centre is providing an important service? Do you believe that every child deserves a chance to build an independent and sustainable future instead of one tied to poverty? Then you can help. Here's how...

## Join the ECDC Club!

What is the ECDC Club? It is a program designed specifically for the ECDC in Gateko. Of course it stands for the **E**arly **C**hildhood **D**evelopment **C**entre, but it also stands for **E**very **C**hild **D**eserves a **C**hance. 100% of all contributions to the ECDC Club goes to the needs of the ECDC in Gateko. To be a member, you need to commit to contribute \$15 each month to the Club. \$15 might not seem to us to go very far these days. But in Rwanda, \$15 can provide a miracle:

- \$15 can provide the books and toys and learning tools that will start these kids on their adventure in education.
- \$15 can provide the salaries for the teachers and caregivers and cooks and cleaners who provide a safe, clean learning environment for the students.
- \$15 will provide all the food to give these children two nutritious, well-balanced meals each day, something they could not count on before they enrolled in the ECDC.
- \$15 will pay for all the cleaning products that will provide these children with a clean, hygienic environment in which to learn, and that example is a model for cleanliness and hygiene in their homes.
- \$15 per month can transform the lives of these young children, not just now but for the rest of their lives.



Would you like to be a member of our Club? Do you agree that every child deserves a chance? Then go to our website, [www.shelterthem.com](http://www.shelterthem.com), and join up. Just click on the donate button in the top corner of the home page, select the currency you prefer, and then Join the ECDC Club! It's easy. And it is rewarding, knowing that you are helping these young children to take the first step on their journey to an independent, productive, and sustainable future. Education opens that door! You have the key! Join the Club today!



## Giddy-Up! It's Time for the Annual Shelter Them Gala

A promotional poster for the 18th Annual Charity Gala. The background is a dark red with a pattern of lighter red diamonds. The text is white and gold. At the top, it says 'SHELTER THEM'S 18th ANNUAL CHARITY GALA'. Below that, 'Fedoras & Fascinators' is written in a large, elegant, cursive font. Underneath, 'KENTUCKY DERBY GARDEN PARTY' is in a bold, sans-serif font. The date 'JUNE 2, 2024' is prominently displayed, with '5PM DOORS OPEN 6PM DINNER' below it. The location 'THE GARDEN | MANDARIN | 8 CLIPPER COURT BRAMPTON | ON | L6W 4T9' is listed. A QR code is in the bottom left. At the bottom, it says '\$90 PER PERSON', 'TICKETS @ SHELTERTHEM.COM', 'SILENT AUCTION VENDOR', 'SILENT AUCTION CANADA', and 'THEME | KENTUCKY DERBY'. There is also a small graphic of a red flower and a hat.

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PRIZES FOR BEST HATS!

The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Shelter Them Gala is coming to Brampton, Ontario on June 2. The theme this year is a Kentucky Derby Garden Party, so saddle up and buy your tickets now while they are still available. And the Derby is also a big party, so dust off your fedoras and your fascinators and put on a show. There is no betting on horses, but there will be a silent auction where you can put your money down on the treasure of your choice. And there will be prizes for the best hats! As always, you will enjoy a great meal and great conversation with Shelter Them friends and supporters who you may not have seen since the last gala. As an added treat, 13 teenagers from a Brampton high school visited Rwanda recently, and they have been invited to the gala, along with their parents and teacher chaperones. You will be able to hear about their experiences in Rwanda and meet members of the next generation of Shelter Them supporters!

The gala will be held once again at the Garden Mandarin, 8 Clipper Court, Brampton. Tickets are \$90 per person. There are several ways to purchase your tickets. You can go to the home page of our website, [www.shelterthem.com](http://www.shelterthem.com), and follow the instructions you find there. Or you can use website direct

link at <http://shelterthem.com/events>. Or just use the old-fashioned technology: phone Jocelyne Alexandre at 416 768 7478. She can answer all your questions. And she is fun to talk to. Be sure to ask her about the fascinators she will be sporting!

Whatever method you use, get your tickets now before they are all gone. You will have a fun time and you will be supporting a great cause – the children and families in Rwanda who count on our support to help transform their lives! See you there. Giddy-up!

## It's Finished! Check Out Our Revised Website

Our Shelter Them website has just undergone its first major overhaul in a long time. So, if you have not been on the website in a while, you should have a look. You will be amazed by the progress we have been making recently on behalf of the children and families in Gateko village. See the building that has gone on – houses, the community centre, the drying shed for crops, access to fresh water. Learn about the medical care that Shelter Them is providing. Learn about the successes of the farming and saving cooperative that is now being run by the local farmers themselves. Learn about the psychosocial counselling provided to community members who still suffer the effects of the genocide against Tutsis in 1994. And so much more. And best of all, see the photos of all the smiling children (no more masks!), in school and at play, building a better future for themselves.

None of these successes would have been possible without the dedication and energy of our staff in Rwanda. And these successes would not have been possible without the dedication of *you*, our sponsors and supporters, whose generosity has made all this possible. Thank you for your commitment to the cause of raising out of poverty so many children and families on the other side of the world. So, as you browse through our website, [www.shelterthem.com](http://www.shelterthem.com), keep that fact in mind. YOU made it all possible! Murakoze!

