



December, 2025

“It is Only the Beginning”



Susan Marlow had visited Rwanda 8 years ago and thought she knew what to expect, but she now admits that she was wrong. She said, “the country was and is still beautiful, but it really is the people and particularly the children I fell in love with.” She recognized the family-centric culture of kind and loving people and believes that “we could certainly learn a lot about what really matters in life and how fortunate we really are”. And she appreciated the other Shelter Them supporters on the trip. “It felt so wonderful to be around people with a common mindset and mission...to help others.”

Susan’s purpose for the trip was to reunite with Lucky, the young man she started to sponsor 8 years ago, and also to meet for the first time her other sponsored son, Bonheur, who is 10. She said, “My heart was so filled with joy after both encounters, and I knew I had put my charitable giving in the right hands.”

Susan also wanted to visit the schools that Shelter Them has provided to the village and people of Gateko. Shelter Them supports the early childhood education of over 100 preschool aged children in the community. In 2021, Shelter Them set up an Early Childhood Development Centre (ECDC) in the Community Centre that Shelter Them also built. However, the program became *too* successful and was running out of space, so with the help of a grant from the Bank of Kigali Foundation, we constructed a new building exclusively for the ECDC program.

Unfortunately, Shelter Them found that the children who graduated from the ECDC into primary school were not receiving the quality of education they deserved. Thanks to the very generous donation from the Global Trade Review, a British organization, together with additional generous support from donors in Canada, Shelter Them has constructed its own primary school as well, where children in Primary grades one, two, and three are being educated now. Primary grades 4 to 6 will be added next year. Susan said that “giving the children a solid educational foundation and making sure they start school each day with a good breakfast and end with lunch brought tears to my eyes.”



Susan went to Rwanda with the idea that this would be her last trip. But now she says she was wrong there too: “Now I know it is only the beginning!”

Every Child Deserves a Chance



Meet King. King is a new little boy to receive support from Shelter Them. He lives with albinism and perceptual disabilities. Despite the challenges, King's mother has never given up on him. She works hard selling vegetables at the market and takes on small jobs to provide for her only child. Some days they struggle to meet needs such as food and medical care, but King's mother remains hopeful and dedicated to giving her son the best life she can. King is sponsored, but his disability requires additional support beyond regular sponsorship, things like sun protection, medical care and specialized educational materials.

King is currently enrolled in our special kindergarten class in the Early Childhood Development Centre (ECDC), where he can learn, play, and grow in a safe and loving environment, and where he is guaranteed two nutritious meals each day. But he still requires regular hospital visits, medication, and follow-ups with specialists, which opened our eyes even more to the urgent need for disability support in the Gateko community. King is financially supported by two generous individual sponsors and also receives coordinated services through Shelter Them newly established Disability Support and inclusion Department, developed in partnership with the Rwanda National Child Development Agency (NCDA). This department helps ensure that children with disabilities receive the care, tools, and inclusion support they need to thrive in school and within their community.

When we first created the ECDC, we suggested that ECDC could also stand for Every Child Deserves a Chance. And that remains our motto, even for, *or especially for*, children like King. If you would like to help us to achieve that goal, please consider a donation to support our new Disability Support and Inclusion Department. Just go to our website, www.shelterthem.com. You will change lives!



What Is Sponsorship?

You may have noticed the word "sponsor" in both previous articles. Do you know about Shelter Them's sponsorship program? Shelter Them sponsors provide for the total care of a sponsored child, including shelter, education, and medical care. To provide this level of care, sponsors commit to pay \$40 CAD per month. Currently, 150 children in Rwanda are sponsored by 230 sponsors. In the past year, we are grateful to have added 30 new sponsors, but the need continues. Over 90% of all sponsorship contributions goes directly to the shelter, nutrition, education, and the health care of our children. Sponsorship is our most important regular, sustainable source of income that allows us to complete all the work we do.

Do you think that sponsorship might be for you? Then go to our website, www.shelterthem.com and click on CHILD SPONSORSHIP at the top of the home page. You will have all your questions answered and you will get to see some of the many boys and girls who still need sponsors. You can also read about the policies we follow to ensure their safety and protection. As we approach this Christmas season, we start to think about gifts. So, as you read about sponsorship, you might also think about Susan Marlow's comment about the joy she herself has received through sponsorship. Sponsorship is not just a gift to the child, it is a gift to the sponsor. Why not give yourself a gift this Christmas? And change the life of a child.