

INSPIRE! africa!

March 2017 Newsflash

We Remember

As we approach the month of April, we would like to take the time to acknowledge Rwanda's Genocide Memorial Day coming up on April 7. We send our thoughts and prayers to our Rwandan friends as they honour the memories of their friends and relatives lost during the genocide in 1994. **Just in time for holiday shopping.** We will also have another large African Market of Rwanda inspired crafts, cards and clothing, we will also have a cash bar and movie snacks. Donations will be requested.



If you are interested in attending a memorial service, the Rwandan Canadian Society of Calgary will be hosting a commemoration of the 1994 genocide on Saturday, April 8th. The event will take place at Mount Royal University from 3 – 6 pm with a reception to follow. Please see their website for full details <https://www.rwacalgary.ca/AnnualCommemoration.php>

2016 Charitable Receipts

Tax receipts for 2016 have been sent out. A HUGE thank-you to all of our generous donors! With your support we raised over \$106,000 in 2016 to support projects in Rwanda. If you did not receive your tax receipt, please email Jae Cowie at jaecowie@yahoo.ca.

An Inspiring First Year!

In January 2016 **Aspire** welcomed the first class into its vocational training pilot program. Over the course of the year, two classes of 50 women each took courses in a variety of subjects over the course of 6 months. The courses focused on cooking and childcare and household skills in addition to sessions on health and rights awareness as well as the opportunity to receive counseling support. The program also offered an educational childcare service for the women's pre-school aged children.

To date the program has been deemed a success! Thirty-seven women are now placed in full-time jobs and earning enough money to support themselves and their families! Twenty are working as housekeepers, three are looking after children, one is working in a supermarket, two in coffee shops and four are employed as cooks. Seven other graduates found employment on their own working in private homes and looking after children. **Aspire** also secured 1 to 3-month internships for an additional 53 women in hotels and 1 in a school as a children's caregiver.

Also, of note, the women were charged a modest monthly fee to participate in the program which was used to offset the cost of training. This is an incredible first step towards **Aspire's** self-sufficiency.



A trainee feeds a baby in a highchair during training!



Trainees at their graduation ceremony!

Colours Galore at the African Market

You may have noticed there was an extra dash of colour and excitement at the 2016 annual fundraiser. Last year's event marked the first appearance of the African Market! This edition's feature volunteer, Merrill Genereux, worked with two groups in Rwanda to create beautiful crafts and ship them to Calgary in time for our annual fundraiser. The women from the Aspire Tujyembere co-operative and the children from Fair Child Youth Foundation, a deaf school, worked to create colourful and unique bags, jewelry and Christmas ornaments. The proceeds all went to continuing the financial support of INSPIRE!africa projects.

Did you miss the market? Are you still wishing you'd bought a couple more bags and ornaments? Check out www.primatesagogo.com where you can find more handmade Rwandan crafts whose proceeds help continue the support of the women and children all year long!



INSPIRE!africa Volunteer Profile – Merrill Genereux

Volunteers are such an integral part of what has made INSPIRE!africa successfully. We thought a fun way of showing our appreciation for their support would be to showcase a few of our dedicated volunteers and hear about what INSPIRE!africa means to them. A gigantic thank you from us to all of you! In our inaugural profile, we hear from Merrill Genereux, a long-standing INSPIRE!africa supporter and the driving force behind this year's African market and Primates a Go Go! THANK YOU MERRILL!!



"I was first introduced to INSPIRE!africa by my brother who had attended a fundraiser and then sent me the newsletter. At that time, you were reaching out for volunteers and were advertising the upcoming trip to Rwanda. As it turned out, I kind of went about everything backwards. I signed up for the trip and when I returned, I was hooked. I have been a volunteer ever since.

Nothing speaks to the reasons to support INSPIRE!africa like seeing first hand, where the money raised is going and meeting those people who are directly affected by it. For me, that trip moved me to action. My life has been forever altered by people I have met, places I have gone and things I have experienced. All of which would never have transpired had it not been for that travel opportunity and the generosity of INSPIRE!africa.

I volunteer for INSPIRE!africa for all of the obvious reasons; it's rewarding, challenging, it gives me a sense of contribution, but above everything else, it's a lot of fun. I enjoy working with the other volunteers. It is a very cohesive and welcoming group of individuals. Everyone is so generous and we all seem to possess the same kindred spirit. We have common goals and we are given free rein to achieve them. I also can't say enough about how grateful and appreciative every Rwandan that I have met, is towards me as a representative of INSPIRE!africa. It is quite humbling.

Working with INSPIRE!africa is quite different from other volunteering I have done. It is a small organization that has far reaching impacts on those who benefit from its support. For me the number one reason I continue to help raise funds for INSPIRE!africa is that all the money raised goes directly to the projects that have all been initiated by Rwandans. After the genocide, these survivors recognized their own needs and set out how to address them.

Whether it is the Livestock program, the Helpline, Housing Renos or the Student Sponsorships, every time I go back to Rwanda, I am always so encouraged with the visible progress I see. Now that I have been involved with INSPIRE!africa long enough, I also see the "paying it forward" that is starting to occur from initial recipients of our support. Not that this has anything to do with me, but I feel very proud and it all makes me feel warm and fuzzy inside."

Next INSPIRE!africa Volunteer Trip to Rwanda – Spring 2018

As Merrill has explained, our volunteer trips to Rwanda will make a big difference in your life. Come with us to see the impact INSPIRE!africa donations are making, meet our beneficiaries yourself and experience Rwanda culture and sites. If you are interested, send us an email: info@InspireAfrica.org.

Save the Date!

Yes that's right, we know the date and we're already getting excited! This year's annual INSPIRE!africa fundraiser will take place on **November 16, 2017**. No excuses, let's get this event in the calendar!!

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