

Christmas - \$10 - Christmas - \$10 - Christmas

For four years now, the widows at the Centre César in Kimironko have made arts and crafts products that we have sold in Canada. We have varied the products; always looking for something new and innovative, while having to think about weight, originality, and an acceptable price range for the Canadian market.

Thanks to benefit activities and presentations in several cities in Canada, it has been possible to sell these products and to remit 90% of the money directly to the widows. As I have previously written in this newsletter, these courageous women are lifting themselves up from over 10 years of grief and despair. These modest earnings have permitted them to lift up their heads, to hope, and above all, to feed their families. Of course, these earnings are too small to begin to speak of financial independence, but they are enough to hope that this could happen one day.

One new product that was developed in 2008 graced the Christmas trees of some Canadians. A small star, and two icicles made from beads were sold as a set for \$10 last November. A pretty card that was hand embroidered also sold for \$10, a package of 5 Christmas cards decorated with banana leaves was also available for \$10. There were also lovely bracelets of various colours, made with small pearl beads, 2 for \$10. Also available for the same price, the widows fabricated bags from African motif material; these bags are perfect for using when giving a gift of a bottle of wine, accompanied by a candle. Here in Rwanda, we don't have Christmas trees, we don't exchange gifts, and buying wine is not conceivable. However, with \$10, we can purchase a kilo of meat, some rice and some vegetables to have a nice Christmas celebration with family.



Recently, we have found a product that meets our criteria and answers our concerns, and as well, has a very interesting environmental factor. We use old calendars to make paper beads that we ultimately turn into splendid jewellery. We are recycling paper, which is excellent for the environment, we are saving on the cost of materials, and we offer our customers a quality product at a reasonable price. You can also be assured of the uniqueness of the product, as no two are alike.

Retail or wholesale, a jewellery set (necklace, bracelet and earrings) sell for \$10. You can see them on our website and can order them on-line, or you can purchase them at one of our conferences or benefit activities organized to raise funds to in support of our goal to assist these surviving widows.

If you purchase jewellery from Birks, it will surely be precious to you. However, to purchase a paper jewel is just as precious, but in another way. You would know that with this purchase, not only would you be adorning your neck, or that of your wife, mother, daughter or fiancé, but you would also have the knowledge that you have fed another woman and her family.

I realize that Christmas is still far away in the mindset of Canadians, and you may ask where I am going with this....Well, here it is! All of these fine products which can be associated with Christmas hope for these women are now available for you to help make a difference. Christmas in Rwanda is a religious holiday, where we give thanks for life, for love and for peace. A good meal is the traditional way to celebrate the day, but it often happens that we go into debt at this time of year unnecessarily. This year, why not offer a humanitarian gift!!

“You must be the change you want to see in the world”... (Ghandhi)

Maman Nicole