When she was nine years old, Ellie attended a charity event. The guest speaker was a Rwandan refugee who told stories of how long periods of guerrilla warfare had left many women widowed without family, homes, or income. Ellie wondered if there was any way for someone on the other side of the world to help?

She thought about the fact that many Rwandan women were raising sheep and cultivating their wool for sale. Ellie’s scout troop had recently taken a knitting class, and Ellie put two and two together. She could help Rwandan families sell their wool outside of Rwanda. She began making inquiries about selling wool yarn products in the United States.

At first, Ellie wanted to make knitted hats from Rwandan wool and sell them in the United States. Then she thought about selling the wool to knitters. Another idea emerged for non-knitters: a DIY loom-knitting craft kit so non-knitters could make their own hats easily.

Armed with ideas, Ellie started KidKnits. She pulled in her family and a church ministry to help her accept shipments of Rwandan yarn and sell, assemble, and ship out the crafting kits.

Ellie was impressed with the number of Rwandans participating in the venture: “When we started last fall we had ten women spinning yarn in Rwanda, and now we have twenty and plan to have forty workers by the end of this year!” The sales have been growing so fast that...
KidKnits has been recruiting more volunteers to assemble craft kits.

KidKnits is a charity, so all proceeds go to the Rwandan women who contribute the yarn. The revenue they’ve generated from selling yarn has enabled them to purchase clothes for their children and send them to school. Their new income has enabled the Rwandan women to feed their families three solid meals every day. (Previously, they ate less than once per day.) Those are big changes, but during a trip to Rwanda, the women told Ellie and her family that the most significant change in their lives is the security of knowing that they have steady work and the dignity that they receive through their daily work.

Check out Ellie’s company and the craft kits at www.kidknits.org!

Ellie says, "Don’t forget that no matter how old or how young you are, you can always help someone in need!"

Valentine’s Day is a great time to express love and caring for your family and friends. In preparation for February 14, make a list of the people to whom you want to give valentines and jot down the sentiment you want to share.

Who's in your heart?