

BREAD FOR RWANDA: GCSEN 2020 ALUMNUS, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR FEEDS MILLIONS IN AFRICA

GLOBAL CENTER FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP NETWORK ALUMNUS CAROLINA FERNANDEZ FORMS flourFLOWER TO SUPPORT BAKERIES, FEED MILLIONS, EMPLOY MAKERS AND SPREAD JOY

KINGSTON, NY, USA, May 11, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Carolina Fernandez (pron. Caroleena), a successful financial planner, author, artist and entrepreneur took a trip to the landlocked central African nation of Rwanda in 2012. It changed her life and the lives of millions, especially women in that country, as she embarked on a journey of faith, creativity and social entrepreneurship.

Carolina's journey to Rwanda, and to [GCSEN](#), the Global Center for Social Entrepreneurship Network began in 2012, when she met Dennis Hanno, then Dean of Students at Babson College, Wellesley MA., and now President of Wheaton College MA. Babson's Center for Women's Entrepreneurship was planning a trip to Rwanda, which Carolina funded for twelve students. Later deciding to visit that country herself, but having never traveled to Africa, Carolina had no idea what to expect but was delighted by the people of Rwanda. She admits to being astonished at the level of poverty, but notes that the country has overcome many of the miseries of the genocide there (1994-1995) and now has a fairly well functioning government, and agricultural and business sectors.



flourFLOWER Owner, GCSEN Alumna Carolina Fernandez

Traveling outside of Kigali, the capital, Carolina encountered a compound run by the Benebikira Sisters of Rwanda, a Roman Catholic Jesuit religious order founded in Rwanda in the early 1900's. There she learned of the joblessness and hunger of the many men, women and children that years before had crowded the gates of the Sisters' compound, looking for food. Since that first trip, Carolina and her husband have dedicated themselves to improving the food insecurity and joblessness of many people in Rwanda, especially women.

In January 2020, Carolina was invited to be a Fellow at GCSEN's [Social Venture](#) Research Institute's (SVRI) bootcamp at Wheaton College MA. Wheaton's Social Entrepreneurship program is funded by the visionary Diana Davis Spencer Foundation of Bethesda MD. SVRI is an innovative GCSEN program for faculty, administrators, non-profit and business leaders dedicated to Social Entrepreneurship education and empowerment, bringing them together annually to learn best practices for social ventures which create prosperity while mitigating entrenched social problems. Social ventures foster "4P" tangible benefits for People, Profit, Planet and Place. GCSEN, through its SVRI, works closely with college campus partners Wheaton College (MA), SUNY New Paltz, Saint Peters University (NJ), Vassar College, Rutgers University and the IgniteED

system of Jesuit Business Schools on in-class and on-line classes, social venture formulation co-curriculum development, research projects, publication of white papers, and thought leadership conferences.

Anticipating an opportunity to teach social entrepreneurship at the college level, and embarking on her social venture in Rwanda, Carolina said, "SVRI gave me context as to what the expectations of college students taking a social entrepreneurship class might be. It made me acutely aware of how the college generation perceives social media and how that might translate into social consciousness and activism. SVRI worked really well for me, reviewing social entrepreneurship best-practices and introducing me to a wider network of thought leaders, especially introducing me to GCSEN's Founder Mike Caslin, who is a great teacher and academician, and now a friend."

flourFLOWER's Hand Made, Recycled Soft Canvas Tote Bags

Since 2012, overcoming many obstacles, Carolina and her husband have contributed to the building of two mass-production bakeries in Rwanda that have modern bakery equipment and kitchens, two rural outpost retail bakery shops, and food distribution vehicles for use in and near Kigali, the capital. The entire operation is run by the Benebikira Sisters, who employ dozens of previously unemployed women in good working conditions. Incredibly, the bakeries feed 39,000 people every week including 5000 children, with fresh, locally produced breads. That's two million servings of bread annually in a nation of twelve million!

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By building bakeries in Rwanda we feed millions. flourFLOWER employs women there to make unique artisanal items, thus supporting the bakery operations. Its great for the makers and the receivers!"

Carolina Fernandez, GCSEN Alumna, Owner flourFLOWER

Realizing that the bakery project is a large and distant undertaking that must be economically self-sustaining, Carolina has now created a social venture called flourFLOWER. During a visit to Rwanda in 2018, Carolina had an epiphany. "I saw that the flour sacks used in the bakery were being tossed out. Being a textile artist, I recognized that the quality of the canvas sacks was quite high. I thought, what if we recycled the discarded flour sacks and retrofit them into something beautiful that we could sell. Then we could buy more flour, feed more

people and ultimately build more bakeries, feeding and employing more people! I met with some Rwandan friends and asked them to start making re-fabricated bags out of the canvas sacks. Over time, I started-up flourFLOWER, producing a variety of lines of soft canvas tote, cosmetic and carry bags made of African fabric for sale globally. The recycled flour sacks are all stitched by Rwandan women, lined in African fabric and fitted with crafted leather handles. The money made from their sales over the internet goes directly back into our bakery project."

On April 1, 2020, Carolina formally launched www.shopflourflower.com, the virtual sales arm of her social enterprise. The site now includes a unique line of handmade artisanal jewelry made of African beads, seeds and glass, as well as selected recycled materials. The women she has hired



flourFLOWER's Artisanal Canvas Tote Bags from Rwanda

are natural craftswomen, just needing work. Carolina says, "flourFLOWER exists to build bakeries in Rwanda, to feed and give work to those facing fragile food supply and economic instability. We believe that creating things of beauty produces joy for both maker and receiver, elevating the human experience. Our line of artisanal products has been designed for that end." With that end in mind, Carolina continues to look for opportunities to educate, employ and feed the vibrant and industrious women of Rwanda, while ensuring the sustainability of the bakeries, feeding millions.

To further assist the Benebikira Sisters of Rwanda see: <http://benebikira.net/>. Tax deductible donations may be sent to: Benebikira Fund, Paraclete, 207 E Street. South Boston, MA 02127, email: paraclete@paraclete.org. To contact Carolina Fernandez, email: carolina@shopflourFLOWER.com For more information about GCSEN and SVRI, contact Mike Caslin, mike@gcsen.com

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flourFLOWER Rwandan Handcrafted
Bracelet

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