



STORY **ERIN PEPLER**  
PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**



## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

**THE PLACE:** It's satisfying to find exactly what you're looking for – a perfect rug for the living room, or a quirky décor item that reflects your style. Now, imagine knowing that your new purchase was handmade, ethically produced and fair-traded. **Ten Thousand Villages** in downtown Oakville sells a variety of artisan pieces, including furniture, wall art, textiles and home accessories. The shop is the result of a non-profit program benefiting families in developing countries worldwide, such as Peru, Uganda and Indonesia. All items sold in-store and online are handcrafted by artisans who are paid a fair living wage for their work. Approximately 70 per cent of the artisans are women, many of whom are mothers. For store manager Esther Tchando, the goal is simple yet critical. "We want each person to make enough money to buy food, send their children to school and see a doctor when they are sick," she explains. "When parents aren't fairly paid, kids have to work. This prevents that. Every purchase supports children going to school and having a childhood."



Jessica Generalovic  
and Esther Tchando



# TEN THOUSAND VILLAGES



**THE STYLE:** The store carries a variety of unique items from 29 countries across the globe. There's something for everyone, from brightly coloured textiles and elegant stone carvings, to delicate glass pieces and rich woodwork.

**WHAT'S HOT:** Jewelry is always popular, and a variety of items made from reclaimed saris are always in high demand.

**FAVOURITES:** Right now, it's all about reclaimed saris from Bangladesh. From duvet covers to cushions and throws, no two are exactly alike, and the colours are incredible. Also popular are hand-knotted and hand-loomed rugs made by Bunyaad, a group of men and women from a small village in Pakistan. Made from 100 per cent wool, these rugs are dyed with natural materials such as tree bark, flowers and vegetables. "They are really, really unique, one-of-a-kind pieces," says Esther. Her enthusiasm is genuine and heartfelt. "We encourage customers to shop consciously, and question – is this a fair price? Not just in profit – think about the people who make the items. If as consumers, we ask these questions, we can help a lot."

**WHERE:** 226 Lakeshore Rd. E., Oakville  
905.337.2377 | [tentousandvillages.ca](http://tentousandvillages.ca) OH