

Group seeks Fair Trade designation for Teaneck

Thursday, March 11, 2010

Last updated: Thursday March 11, 2010, 4:31 PM

BY HOWARD PROSNITZ

Teaneck Suburbanite
STAFF WRITER

Paula Rogovin was teaching her first graders about food sold in their New York City neighborhood when the children asked to learn about chocolate. Rogovin, a township resident who has taught in the NYC the public school system for more than 30 years, learned that 90 percent of chocolate sold in the United States is produced in the Ivory Coast by child laborers as young as her pupils.

She also learned that a large number of those children are recruited from other countries. To harvest the cocoa bean, the children hold the plants in their hands and cut them with machetes. Many accidents occur. The children live in dormitories and are paid almost nothing.

Yet chocolate so produced ends up in well-known brands, such as Hershey's® and Swiss chocolate, Rogovin said.



But she leaned of an alternative. Chocolate certified as Fair Trade guarantees that no child labor was used in the production. Fair Trade certification also guarantees that the adult workers are paid a living wage, work reasonable hours and are given job training and educational opportunities. The certification also guarantees that the product was grown or built without using pesticides or other harmful chemicals.

Fair Trade is a not-for-profit organization founded in England in 2000, said Tim Blunk, owner of Tiger Lily by Encke on Cedar Lane and a member of the township's Fair Trade steering committee. He noted that consumers can identify a Fair Trade Certified product by the logo on the packaging.

Rogovin quickly incorporated Fair Trade in her curriculum. Locally, she has joined with Blunk and three other township residents or business owners - Bruce Prince, owner of Teaneck General Store, Kean University Professor Dennis Klein and Rev. Gloria Tate, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church - to form the committee aimed at making Teaneck

Advertisement

PRE-SEASON SAVINGS
ITS GO TIME!
\$500 OFF MSRP
TOWARDS THE PURCHASE OF ANY NEW FORD • LINCOLN • MERCURY • SUBARU VEHICLE
www.ALL AMERICAN FORD.NET
MUST BE PRESENT AT TIME OF PURCHASE

the third New Jersey town to be Fair Trade certified.

Montclair and Highland Park are already certified as Fair Trade towns.

To become Fair Trade certified, a town needs at least eight retailers that carry trade products and eight not-for-profits that are involved with Fair Trade.

Prince estimates that a third of his merchandise is Fair Trade certified, including apparel and products made from bamboo and other sustainable woods. He plans to add a coffee bar to his store in the next few weeks at which he will serve coffee from Equal Exchange coffee, a company that is an active in the Fair Trade movement.

Blunk noted that he first brought Fair Trade artisan carved gift items into Encke Flowers, the Queen Anne Road store owned by his wife, Jennifer Lee. Both stores continue to sell hand-carved Fair Trade gifts.

Many of Blunk's flowers are Fair Trade certified, and customers can look for the Fair Trade label on the stems.

Most flowers sold in the United States are grown in developing countries and women are heavily involved in their production,



advertisement

Blunk explained.

"There has been a lot of sexual abuse. A Fair Trade certified farm is supervised and free of those abuses," he said.

Although Fair Trade flowers cost a little more, the money goes back to a committee of workers on the farms who decide how it is to be used, whether for job training, child care or some other program beneficial to the workers.

Blunk said that some township businesses are unaware that they carry Fair Trade products. He discovered Dr. Bronner's soap at CVS on Cedar Lane. Dunkin Donuts, nationwide, sells Fair Trade espresso coffee. Rogovin noted that the manager of Stop and Shop was surprised to find out that Newman's coffee and two flavors of Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream are Fair Trade certified.

Blunk explained that 80 percent of soccer balls sold in the United States are hand-stitched by 8-year-old children in Pakistan. At Tiger Lily, he sells an assortment of Fair

Advertisement

A large, colorful advertisement for All American Ford. On the left, there is a cartoon character of a man in a blue and red superhero costume with the number "1" on his chest, holding a football. To his right, the text "PRE-SEASON SAVINGS" is written in a bold, red, sans-serif font. Below that, "ITS GO TIME!" is written in a white, italicized, sans-serif font. The largest text in the ad is "\$500 OFF" in a very large, bold, yellow font with a black outline. To the right of this, "MSRP" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the "\$500 OFF MSRP" text, it says "TOWARDS THE PURCHASE OF ANY NEW FORD • LINCOLN • MERCURY • SUBARU VEHICLE" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. At the bottom left, there is the "ALL AMERICAN" logo in a stylized, blue and red font. To its right is the Ford logo. Further right are logos for LINCOLN Mercury, SUBARU, and a red logo with the word "LORD" partially visible. At the bottom right, the website "www.ALL.AMERICAN.FORD.NET" is written in a yellow, sans-serif font. Below the website, it says "MUST BE PRESENT AT TIME OF PURCHASE" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

Trade certified sports balls.

He described Fair Trade as a consumer movement that is the reverse of a boycott.

Fair Trade inspectors pay a surprise visit at least once a year to every Fair Trade farm or artisan to ensure that standards are being met, Blunk said.

Klein noted that there are only 13 Fair Trade certified towns in the United States. He said the committee has been in discussion with Holy Name Hospital about bringing in Fair Trade products to its gift store or cafeteria.

"Fair Trade combines business with ethics and gives consumers at a local level a say in changing the culture of the developing world," he said. "It gives us a way to help producers and artisans in those countries. When the products arrive at retail stores, consumers can buy them knowing that no child or slave labor was used in their production."

E-mail: prosnitz@northjersey.com



Advertisement

A large, colorful advertisement for 'All American Ford'. On the left, there is a cartoon character of a man in a blue and red football uniform with the number '1' on his jersey. To the right of the character, the text 'PRE-SEASON SAVINGS' is written in a bold, red, sans-serif font. Below this, 'ITS GO TIME!' is written in a white, sans-serif font. The largest text in the advertisement is '\$500 OFF MSRP' in a very large, bold, yellow font with a black outline. Below this, the text 'TOWARDS THE PURCHASE OF ANY NEW FORD • LINCOLN • MERCURY • SUBARU VEHICLE' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the advertisement, there are logos for Ford, Lincoln Mercury, Subaru, and Volvo. To the right of these logos, the website address 'www.ALL.AMERICAN.FORD.NET' is written in a yellow, sans-serif font. Below the website address, the text 'MUST BE PRESENT AT TIME OF PURCHASE' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.