

Phoenix Coffee Company Supports Socially Responsible Coffee

Sarah Wilson Jones, the CEO of Phoenix Coffee Company, has a theory about why Fair Trade Organic Café Femenino coffee seems to offer an extra kick of energy. When drinking either the Café Femenino Mexican or Peruvian coffees, the consumers are not only getting a dose of caffeine, they are also experiencing a taste of the uplifted spirits of the women who grow and harvest the beans.

On November 10th, 2007 at the five Phoenix Coffee shops including locations at Coventry, Lee Road, Lakewood, Superior and South Euclid employees donated all their tips to the Café Femenino Foundation's Christmas fund. The Christmas project called "A Coffee Child's Christmas" raises money in order to give children who live in coffee communities a small gift for the holiday season. These children, who are accustomed to so little, are overjoyed when presented with a small cup of hot cocoa or a loaf of sweet bread for the holidays. Employees at Phoenix were able to raise \$525 in one day for the Café Femenino Foundation's Christmas fund. In addition, Phoenix Coffee Company will match the amount raised by the baristas to reach a total of \$1,050. Many of the Phoenix Coffee employees are young adults just out of college or current students, many of whom work more than one job. Despite this, all employees were extremely generous. Customers also participated in the tip donation day and many were very giving. In fact, one customer at the Coventry store said she was a loyal customer of Phoenix not only because of the high quality drinks they offer, but also because of the company's support of social responsibility.

The Café Femenino Foundation was developed by The Organization Products Trading Company, and strives to enhance the welfare of women and children in coffee communities around the world. More often than not, coffee is grown by rural indigenous people who live in extreme poverty. In many cases, these native populations are treated as sub-standard citizens within their societies. Living conditions are far worse for native women. Women and children are often victims of domestic violence, have little access to any sort of financial resources and are isolated from other women. Café Femenino was started to try to give these women some power in their communities. By giving more power to women, the rates of domestic violence are greatly reduced and attention to

education, medical care and childcare are on the upswing. On the coffee projects, women are responsible for making decisions about how to raise and harvest the coffee plants, and how to organize their farming co-op. For the women involved in the coffee projects this is the first opportunity for them to be able to earn an income which gives them control over their present and future.

Currently, there are Café Femenino Coffee Projects in Peru, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Bolivia and the Dominican Republic. With the help of donations the Café Femenino Foundation is able to further aid women by granting requests of the women involved in the coffee projects that enhance their lives. For instance, one woman wanted to build an adobe stove that would reduce the amount of smoke and pollution created by her old fire pit. With the Foundation's backing dirt roads are being built between coffee farm co-ops so the coffee harvest can be more quickly exported and increases communication amongst coffee farmers.

Café Femenino is an example of how coffee drinkers and coffee suppliers can support social responsibility. While one is enjoying their daily cup of coffee one can also be an active participant in supporting positive changes for coffee growers across the globe.

- Jessie Mueller
Barista at Phoenix Coffee on Coventry