



# THE SPECIALTY COFFEE CHRONICLE

A PUBLICATION OF THE SPECIALTY COFFEE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

SEPT | OCT 2007



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HOFFMAN**  
WBC  
WINNER



**HEATHER  
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RUNNER-UP

**BECKY MCKINNON**  
IN APPRECIATION OF  
ALFRED PEET

**THE ECOTAINER CUP**  
LA MARZOCCO TURNS 80  
COFFEE KIDS



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Photo by Bruce Millette/Bellissimo Coffee InfoGroup/www.pressphoto.com



## Features

### 5 **WORLD BARISTA CHAMPIONSHIP (WBC) WRAP-UP**

Get all the highlights from the 2007 competition in Tokyo.

### 8 **JAMES HOFFMAN: WBC WINNER**

Chat with this year's supreme barista, who hails from the United Kingdom.

### 10 **HEATHER PERRY: WBC RUNNER-UP**

As a champion among champions, Perry reflects on recording the highest finish ever by an American at the WBC.

### 12 **IN APPRECIATION OF ALFRED PEET**

The Specialty Coffee Association of America honors and bids farewell to Alfred Henry Peet, a great roaster of coffees.

### 14 **BECKY MCKINNON**

*The Chronicle* interviews coffee leader Becky McKinnon, an SCAA 2007 Recognition Award winner from Timothy's World Coffee.

### 16 **LA MARZOCCO TURNS 80**

An industry leader (and SCAA member) celebrates eight decades of excellence.

### 18 **THE ECOTAINER CUP**

International Paper Company and Green Mountain Coffee Roasters create an award-winning partnership.

### 22 **COFFEE KIDS**

Read how this non-profit has been working to improve the quality of life in coffee-farming communities for the past 19 years.

## Departments

3 ..... From the President

4 ..... From the Director of Communications

20 ..... Classifieds

21 ..... Industry Calendar

**On the cover:** World Barista Champion James Hoffman (Photo by Kenneth R. Olson/BaristaMagazine.com) and runner-up Heather Perry (Photo by Bruce Millette/Bellissimo) compete in Tokyo.

# COFFEE KIDS

## SUPPORTING COFFEE COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT THE COFFEE INDUSTRY

By Kyle Freund

**Like it or not,** most coffee farming families are dedicated gamblers, betting all of their resources, all of their work and their survival on the annual coffee harvest.

Small villages, like those in Veracruz, Mexico, become ghost towns during the harvest as fathers and sons—sometimes entire families—are recruited to coffee plantations. The meager pay makes survival difficult and adequate health care and education almost impossible. This is the reality for coffee farmers throughout the world.

Fair trade, bird-friendly, shade-grown and other premium price supports have raised awareness and are beginning to address the problem. The specialty coffee industry has always been at the vanguard of socially conscious efforts to provide a fairer price for a quality product and is leading the way for many industries.

While these premiums provide consumers, roasters and retailers the opportunity to ensure a fairer price, they do not address the root cause of the poverty in coffee farming communities: the singular reliance on coffee for income.

Coffee is all that many of these families have, and it is not enough.

### BREAK THE CYCLE

In order to break the cycle, coffee farmers need alternative income to supplement the annual harvest; communities need diverse local economies to ensure vibrant local trade. By diversifying income and reducing dependence on coffee, farmers will be able to continue farming coffee and lift themselves out of poverty.

The next step for the coffee industry is to invest in communities where coffee is grown and help develop local economies. The long-term health and success of the coffee trade is directly related to the quality of life in coffee-farming communities.

Quality coffee comes from strong communities.

### ENTER COFFEE KIDS

Enter Coffee Kids, a non-profit organization that has been working to improve the quality of life in coffee farming communities for the past 19 years. Emphasizing micro-credit, health care, education and small community-based projects, Coffee Kids fosters stable, long-term projects that help people pull themselves out of poverty.

Bill Fishbein, a coffeeshop owner, founded Coffee Kids with two partners in 1988 to give back to the millions of families working in coffee. Coffee Kids receives 90 percent of its funding from the coffee industry. That's because many in the coffee community recognize that the health and success of the industry is dependent on the stability and vitality of coffee-growing communities.

Coffee Kids works with local non-profits in coffee-growing communities to create community-based, grassroots programs that support and empower coffee growers, their families and their communities. The group currently works with 12 partners in five Latin American countries, including: Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Peru.

Coffee Kids success lies in providing a hand up, not a hand out. Programs come from the community as staff members work with community members to identify pressing needs and design long-term sustainable solutions. Each project is adapted to the community's unique culture and needs.

The Association of Northern Coffee Cooperatives (CECOCAFEN) represents more than 2,000 coffee farmers in Nicaragua. The organization operates two projects with Coffee Kids support. A micro-credit and savings project nurtures the entrepreneurial spirit by providing small, low-interest loans that allow community members to invest in small businesses, helping diversify and strengthen the local economy. In 2007, 735 participants in the program had saved a total of \$65,947 and 430 had received low-interest loans to invest in their own businesses.

Community members also saw a lack of educational opportunities for their children and created a scholarship program that currently supports 410 students as they continue their studies at various levels. While they study, students receive valuable experience by working for the cooperative.

In Guatemala, health care is severely lacking. There are nine doctors for every 10,000 people and the country has the highest rate of malnutrition in Central America. In many communities, people suffer from easily preventable diseases and illnesses.

The Association of Health Promoters of San Pedro (APROS) is a group of women providing basic health care and hygiene education to women and children in six rural communities around Lake Atitlán in Guatemala. The group conducts lessons in the prevention of common ailments and the importance of a proper diet, provides pre- and post-natal care and recently introduced a program serving widows offering check-ups and basic food supplies.

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(LEFT) Coffee Kids programs reflect the diversity of coffee-farming communities. CAMPO, a Coffee Kids' partner near Oaxaca, Mexico, has introduced a variety of income-generating projects—including beekeeping—to help diversify local economies and create sustainable communities. (RIGHT) Coffee Kids' partner, CECOCAFEN in Nicaragua is working to ease dependence on the coffee harvest through a micro-credit program that stresses the importance of savings. Women meet once a week to deposit their savings and learn about basic finance.

## ENCUENTROS

Another important aspect of Coffee Kids work is in coordinating *encuentros*, or exchanges, between partner organizations. These meetings facilitate sharing between groups where they can discuss current problems and the ways each group is addressing them. Through these meetings, the groups develop new approaches. The savings and micro-lending programs developed by Coffee Kids' partner Self-Managed Development (AUGE) in Oaxaca, Mexico, have been adapted and used by groups in Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

These grassroots efforts are building strong communities. Coffee Kids believes that quality coffee is dependent on vibrant communities and this involves investing in the people and the community, not just the coffee. In the future, Coffee Kids is looking to expand its model to more coffee-producing countries, but investors are needed.

By helping make daily life less of a gamble for coffee farming families, Coffee Kids and its supporters help ensure a sustainable future for the coffee industry from bean to cup.

For more information on Coffee Kids and its partners, please visit [www.coffeekids.org](http://www.coffeekids.org) or e-mail [info@www.coffeekids.org](mailto:info@www.coffeekids.org).



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Health promoters with Coffee Kids' partner, APROS, help ensure a healthier community by educating local women about the prevention of common ailments, the importance of a proper diet and the medicinal properties of local plants. (TOP RIGHT) The Rural Children's Education Foundation (FHC), a Coffee Kids partner, provides students in Costa Rica with the means to continue their studies and serve their community through scholarships and work-study opportunities. FHC also provides infrastructure support and supplies to elementary schools. (RIGHT)

