



Independents Coffee Cooperative Invests In Solar Drying Facility with Peruvian Coffee Farmers *Farmers will visit shop owners in Philadelphia during October*

(Philadelphia, PA) – Independents Coffee Cooperative has taken the concept of cooperation to a international level--extending the chain from the streets of Philadelphia to San Fernando, Peru. Through their partnership with Equal Exchange Coffee, the Coop will raise over \$12,000 to support quality facility upgrades for a small coffee farming community in a remote area of the Andes Mountains near Cusco, Peru. Multiple events are scheduled for October, 2007, at which Peruvian coffee farmers will visit local coffee shops and tour the city in an effort to affirm their relationships with the cooperative.

“We believe this is a very powerful way to support our producer partners and create a direct connection between our customers and the producers that work so hard to grow delicious coffee,” said Angela Vendetti of Mugshots Coffeeshouse, a founding member of Independents Coffee Cooperative.

The Peruvian farmers will stay in Coop members’ homes, and will be guests at special events such as breakfasts, espresso workshops, bowling parties and tours of Philadelphia. “We’re trying to get as close to a one-to-one connection as we can with our relationship to Cooperativa San Fernando. One of the Peruvian farmers will not only see my business, meet my staff, and see my customers drinking the coffee he produced, but he’ll also meet my family and I look forward to the opportunity to meet his in the future,” explained Douglas Witmer, co-owner of The Green Line Cafe and founding member of Independents.

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INDEPENDENTS COFFEE, ADD-1

The San Fernando Cooperative struggled for years to bring their coffee to the international market and got their break in 2005 when Equal Exchange began purchasing from them. “The growing conditions are perfect for coffee, but the rain can be a real problem when you are trying to manage the drying process,” said Beth Ann Caspersen, Quality Control Manager for Equal Exchange. “Drying the coffee on raised beds, under plastic canopies, or *carpas solares*, will dramatically improve the consistency of the beans,” she said.

As the sole provider of “Independents Peruvian Select” in Philadelphia, Independents Coffee Cooperative saw a chance to create a deep relationship with the community through coffee sales and to commit to raising the needed funds to construct the solar drying beds. “We wanted to connect our customers with the producers in a different way, beyond the coffee itself,” said Jim Lilly of Metropolitan Bakery.

“We plan to raise money through community events and to promote Independents Peruvian Select in each of our stores,” said Joe Cesa of Joe Coffee Bar. “I hope to see Beltran, a producer visiting the states in October, arrive here and be greeted by a crowd of cheering people. This is about a people connection and the opportunity to link our two communities,” he said.

Independents started informally in 2003 when four independent coffee shops, Joe Coffee Bar, The Green Line Cafe, InFusion, and Mugshots began sharing information and resources. Recognizing a common “triple bottom line philosophy,” as the founding members, they realized they could do more to help small farmers and make a positive impact on the environment if they did it together.

Based in Philadelphia, Independents Coffee Cooperative is a group of independently owned coffeehouses focused on increasing the sale of fair-trade & organic coffee and educating consumers on fair-trade and sustainability issues, while making a positive impact in their

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communities, on the environment, and in the lives of the people who produce the products they sell.

For more information on the scheduled events and a complete list of the coffee shops involved in the Independents Coffee Cooperative, visit www.indepedentscoffee.com or e-mail independents.coffee@gmail.com.

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