



NEWS RELEASE

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Students & teachers travel to Nicaragua to learn about Fair Trade Trip includes stay with Fair Trade coffee farmers in countryside

Latham, NY – February school vacation is a time when many teachers, students and their families head south to soak up some sun. Fifteen students and teachers from around New York State will be heading south to Nicaragua from Feb. 13-20 to do a lot more than sunbathe.

Representing communities in the Capital District (Voorheesville, Delmar, Ballston Spa), Central New York (Solvay, Dryden), Hudson Valley (Poughkeepsie, Wappingers Falls), Westchester (Elmsford, Nyack) these individuals are committed to learning about and experiencing injustices of the global economic system AND viable alternatives to it. The trip is organized by the Labor-Religion Coalition of New York State and is led by Maureen Casey, International Coordinator. She has led 28 groups since 1997 (primarily to the U.S – Mexico Border), bringing 120 youth and 251 adults on what most describe as a “life-changing experience.”

The alternative economic model that this group will examine is **FAIR TRADE**, a model that insists that the farmers who produce commodities like coffee and chocolate must be paid enough to support their families in health and dignity. Fair Trade guarantees that no child labor, no forced labor and no slave labor are involved in the growing and processing of certified commodities like coffee and chocolate. Environmental sustainability is another Fair Trade requirement. This is a stark contrast to the reality described by the US Department of Labor in September 2009 that listed cocoa grown from a number of West African countries among goods produced by child labor and severely exploited youth.

Next week’s travelers to Nicaragua will live with Fair Trade coffee-producing families to learn first hand the positive effects that the system has on farmers and their communities. They will also examine the dominant global economic model and its effects on people. Their tan will likely be minimal, but they will have learned lessons on this school vacation impossible to teach in a classroom.