



2007 EPS FELLOW

Beth Richardson

HOMETOWN: Carrboro, NC

MAJOR/DEGREE:
Master of Business Administration Candidate,
Class of 2008

PROJECT TITLE:
NC Fair Trade

FACULTY MENTOR:
Patrick Vernon,
Center for Entrepreneurial Initiatives

COMMUNITY PARTNER:
The Change

PROJECT LOCATION:
North Carolina

“The EPS Fellowship gave me the opportunity to reach out and connect with fair trade groups in the area and to learn more about the fair trade movement in both North Carolina and on the national level.”



UNC ENTREPRENEURIAL PUBLIC SERVICE FELLOWSHIP (EPS)

NC Fair Trade

For my EPS Fellowship, I worked with fair trade businesses to establish NC Fair Trade, a membership organization and online directory of North Carolina’s fair trade communities. Members of NC Fair Trade partner with workers around the world to produce and sell goods like coffee, chocolate and crafts and to ensure that these workers receive fair wages. Often U.S. based fair trade groups provide the only options for employment for these workers. This summer, I recruited NC Fair Trade members and created a Web site to publicize events and news relevant to fair trade retailers and consumers. My goal is to build a community of businesses that will work together to educate the public about fair trade.

Project Goals

1. Contact all the fair trade businesses in North Carolina with the goal of recruiting them to join a North Carolina fair trade network.
2. Create a website with links, short descriptions and images of all members of NC Fair Trade.
3. Plan and host a launch event. Coordinate discussions with members of North Carolina’s fair trade community to develop a list of goals that are common to the members.

I have a small fair trade business called Zebra Crossings. From my own experience of starting this business, I realized that there was not a lot of communication happening among the fair trade groups in North Carolina and that all of the groups could benefit from further collaboration.

North Carolina’s fair trade community is a smattering of small to medium sized businesses that have operated relatively autonomously, planning individual events to celebrate International Fair Trade Day and other occasions of note in the fair trade community. Although one of the ma-



For the most part, the major ways to increase individual growth is to promote the trade sector broadly, organizations have taken a go-it-alone approach to consumer education. NC Fair Trade aims to coordinate events so that the public is significantly more aware of fair trade.

By the end of the summer, NC Fair Trade had 14 active members who met twice and completed interest surveys about their common goals. The website is complete, and as NC Fair Trade grows, any associated costs for the website will be covered by membership fees. In the long-term, NC Fair Trade may develop a portal through which members’ goods would be sold. Right now, members are discussing collective plans for International Fair Trade Day and for next year’s holiday season. We plan to build on the social capital created through networking and event planning to springboard into other mutually beneficial endeavors.



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