

## From the Desk of President Deb Peterson November – December 2016

In my last **From the Desk of the President** I highlighted 2 NYSUT Social Justice Programs: the “**Why in 5**” campaign which uses a short set of talking points to educate others about significant Social Justice issues and the “**Start the Conversation Program**” which shines a light on race and ethnicity.

In this issue, I would like to shine a light on **Fair Trade**. NYSUT has been encouraging Fair Trade since a **2006 NYSUT RA** resolution was passed. The resolution resulted in a statewide education and awareness campaign, encouraging NYSUT members and the schools they work in to purchase Fair Trade products.

Coffee and chocolate are two of the most widely traded commodities in the world, and the United States consumes one-fifth of the entire world's coffee, making it the largest consumer in the world. In fact, coffee is the second largest import into the U.S. after oil.

Many small coffee and cocoa farmers receive prices for their crops that are less than the costs of production because a variety of commercial buyers, processors, and exporters take advantage of them, forcing them into a cycle of poverty and debt.

Children have to quit school and are denied basic human rights including a sound education because they are forced to work on coffee farms to keep labor costs low.

In addition, there are severe environmental consequences to the current commercial methods of growing and harvesting these crops, e.g., poisoning the land due to overuse and misuse of herbicides and pesticides.

Small growers and cooperatives in Latin America, Africa and Asia find it almost impossible to compete with large corporations and agribusiness in locating buyers for the high quality products they produce.

Fortunately, **Fair Trade** is a viable economic solution correcting market imbalances by guaranteeing a minimum price for small farmers' harvest encouraging organic and sustainable cultivation practices, and assuring consumers that the coffee they drink was grown, harvested and purchased under fair and humane conditions.

NYSUT has built support for Fair Trade through an education and awareness campaign and by encouraging the purchasing of Fair Trade products by its 600,000 members and the schools within which they work. NYSUT encourages all of its locals, actives and retirees, to show solidarity and support by these workers by pledging to purchase Fair Trade products especially, coffee, tea and chocolate, whenever possible. The following links will take you to a list of Licensed Fair Trade products and vendors:

<http://fairtradeusa.org/products-partners#tabset-tab-2> <http://www.globalexchange.org/print/11834>

