



## Student makes time for 'coffee break' touting fair trade

**Members of the Columbus Council on World Affairs' Council Fellows program take part in an event that calls attention to product issues.**

By IAN PORTER

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Not satisfied with traditional coffee accoutrements such as cream and sugar, Reynoldsburg High School student Jessica Conroy takes her cup o' joe with some social activism.

Conroy celebrated World Fair Trade Day Saturday, May 10, by holding an open house "coffee break" at her house. Guests could stop by, enjoy a cup of fair trade coffee and learn more about fair trade principles.

Her open house coffee break was one of hundreds of events held simultaneously all around the country at 3 p.m. that day, collectively making up "the world's largest fair trade coffee break."

The Fair Trade Resource Center organized the event to publicize the principles of fair trade and encourage the public to buy fair trade goods, according to the organization's Web site.

Transfair USA is the nonprofit organization that certifies products as fair trade. Among the criteria coffee products must meet to receive the "Fair Trade Certified" label are requirements that coffee bean growers receive fair wages and work under fair labor conditions, according to [transfairusa.org](http://transfairusa.org).

Conroy studies international business at the Eastland Fairfield career center satellite site at Gahanna Lincoln High School. Recently, she has focused her studies on fair trade and will complete her senior project on the topic.

She organized the local "coffee break" as a part of her involvement with the Council Fellows youth program at the Columbus Council on World Affairs, an organization focused on issues in international relations.

The Council Fellows program allows a select group of high school students from Central Ohio to gain knowledge on international relations and to develop leadership skills they can use as future

community organizers and professionals, said Stephanie Calondis, the council's director of youth programs.

For the past two years, the Council Fellows have organized initiatives around the central theme of "conscientious consumerism," Calondis said.

"It's amazing," she said. "They continue to astound me how committed they are."

Conroy said that in the past, she never thought about the origin of the products she was buying. Now, she said she is more aware of the issues and buys fair trade as much as she can.

"When I think about people around the world that are not getting paid fairly, it's just kind of sad," she said.

Bailey Cleary-Foeller, another Council Fellow and a student at Fort Hayes Alternative High School in the Columbus City Schools district, said promoting "conscientious consumerism," which includes promoting fair trade products, impacts other areas such as education, trade and the environment.

"The thing that attracts me most to this issue, more than any other, is that it encompasses so many other ones," she said.

"Rather than going to Wal-Mart and buying things made in sweatshops, you can buy things that are locally produced, organic, and fair trade certified," Cleary-Foeller said.

Other than promoting the issues she cares about, Cleary-Foeller said the Council Fellows program has given her skills in community organization and public speaking.