

The ESSEX FREE PRESS BUSINESS

60 years: Ten Thousand Villages celebrates history of 'fair trade' merchandising

BY SARAH FISHER

Upstairs from a room with products from across the world a simple statement is posted to the back of a door. Over five years, sales from the Ten Thousand Villages store in Leamington has resulted in 32,000 people finding work, it reads.

Ten Thousand Villages in Leamington is located at the corner of Talbot and Erie streets. It sells pottery, linens, jewellery and instruments made from artisans in developing countries. Their products are sold at a "fair rate," enough to support the artist and their family, Louise Langeman, a volunteer said. On Oct. 14 the organization will celebrate its 60th anniversary.

"They're paying artisans fairly, there's no child abuse and child labour involved," she said. "They're very conscious about the environment and repetitive orders are placed. We don't place large orders and then drop them, which is what some retailers do."

The idea of Ten Thousand Villages was developed in 1946 by Edna Ruth Byler, an American woman who sold doilies she bought in Puerto Rico on a trip. Initially it was called the Overseas Needlepoint and Crafts Project. In the 1960s the Mennonite Central Committee adopted the pro-

gram, and in 1968 the name was changed to Selfhelp Crafts. The first gift and thrift store was opened in Ohio in 1971. In 1996 the name was changed to Ten Thousand Villages. Currently, there are stores across North America.

Each of the sales people in Leamington knows the history. They can give the origin of the products they sell, and explain how fair trade has given thousands of people consistent employment. The organization has buyers that purchase handcrafted products from 120 artisan groups in 30 countries. Products from Selfhelp Crafts were first sold in Leamington in the 1970s in a thrift store called Et Cetera Shoppe. The Ten Thousand Villages store opened nine years ago.

Many of the customers know about Ten Thousand Villages when they come in, said Lisa Fehr, a volunteer manager.

"We have people coming in and saying, 'I've done all my Christmas shopping, but I haven't bought anything here,' which tells me people come in for more reasons than just the gifts," Fehr said.

According to Langeman, the artisans and buyers from Ten Thousand Villages determine the price for the product being sold. When that amount is established the artisan is paid for half of the total order. The first

installment helps the artisan hire workers needed to fulfill the contract. Langeman said the majority of the artisans Ten Thousand Villages deals with are single women. The contract states that arrangement will exist until the artisans have developed a successful business on their own.

"Often it will be a long-term commitment because the artisan could be living in a situation where there's an ongoing conflict," Langeman said. "So they may never have access to a good market. The West Bank is an

example."

On Oct. 14 customers are welcome for live entertainment starting at 10 a.m. A free gift will be given to anyone who makes a purchase. A thumb piano workshop will start at 10:30 a.m. with New York musician Kevin Nathaniel Hylton. Registration is required for the workshop. Anyone unable to attend the anniversary celebration is welcome to check out the store anytime. Ten Thousand Villages is open from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Monday through Saturday.



Lisa Fehr displays some of the textiles available at the Ten Thousand Villages store in Leamington Oct. 5. Ten Thousand Villages has stores across North America and sells products from developing countries at a fair rate. The organization is celebrating its 60th anniversary Oct. 14.

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Canada

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Look for the CFDC/SADC Announcement and follow the instructions.

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NOTICE

The Essex BIA is accepting nominations for Board Members for 2007. This term will expire with council in four years.

Interested applications should send a letter of intent to the Essex BIA and an election will be held. Those elected will be sent to Council for approval and appointment.

Qualifications to be on the Board of Management for the Business Improvement Area are:

You must operate or own a business or own commercial or industrial space in the "old" town of Essex. If you wish to have someone represent your business, they must be an employee and have your written permission to represent you and your business.

DUTIES

Board members attend at least one regular Board meeting each month and must be committed to this schedule.

Should show an interest in the Downtown and BIA activities in the present or the past. Must be committed to help with activities when needed.

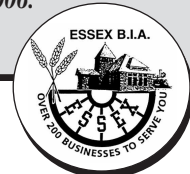
Should be enthusiastic and want to work together for the betterment of the Town and Business community on a whole.

This is a volunteer position.

Please send your name or nomination to the Essex BIA, 33 Talbot St. S., Essex Ontario N8M 1A8 c/o Marlene Markham-Gay, BIA Manager by October 20th, 2006.

Ballots will be made up and mailed to BIA members for voting.

Marlene Markham
BIA Manager
Town of Essex



Who's on the Web?

The ESSEX FREE PRESS

The Essex business community is all about opportunity. It employs thousands of local workers, supports dozens of local charities, sports teams and organizations, and offers residents a wide range of products and services to choose from.

But our physical boundaries no longer dictate where we do business.

Many area merchants are now doing business on the Web or establishing a Web presence.

Who's on the Web?

In celebration of Small Business Week – October 15 to 21 – the Free Press is compiling a list of businesses that are on the web for publication in our **October 18th edition.**

**Deadline for inclusion:
Friday, Oct. 13**

If you'd like your website address to appear in our "Who's on the Web?" feature for Small Business Week, please call Laurie at 519-776-4268.

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