

Max and Marian Farash Foundation
3-year grant for social entrepreneurship

STRATEGIC MISSION

The Coffee Connection and Project Empower provide comprehensive, continuous support to women and men on their journey toward sustainable recovery from addiction, including employment training. We teach inner competencies to trainees and staff in the course of their work in our coffee shops as they interact with customers and each other. We have weekly mandatory meetings for all staff and trainees which focus on specific issues that have come up during the week.

Inner competencies include self-calming techniques, communication skills, self-confidence, awareness of trauma triggers, relationship skills, nonviolent engagement, reframing, and assertiveness. Our employment training goes beyond the normal “soft skills” approach (how to dress, writing resumes, interviewing, basic work skills, etc.) to teach people in recovery how to keep working at a job once they get it. Too often the stress of employment, especially some trauma trigger-related situation with a customer or supervisor, leads to a relapse within two months of employment. We are aware of this potential, so we teach inner competencies to the trainees to avoid relapse, and even stay with them through short-term relapse periods so they can continue their training.

This program can be expanded to include more women and men as we open new locations for the Coffee Connection, providing increased opportunities for employment training and new revenues through the creation of new jobs. The work environment of our stores feels safe and “like family” to our trainees and staff. Sometimes they come in early or stay late because it is a safe place for them to be. Expanding staff and store locations will offer even more safe places, supportive environments, and sustainable programs for people in recovery throughout the Rochester area.

Our global mission includes a commitment to fair trade and living wages around the globe, as well as eco-friendly business practices. All the coffee we sell, both wholesale and retail, is fair trade, organically-grown, sustainably-farmed coffee, and we roast it onsite at the South Avenue location. At the Greenhouse Café on east Main Street, we grow some of our own vegetables and herbs and are planning to expand the existing greenhouse capabilities to grow even more food for all our locations. We buy locally from Rochester-area bakeries and food distributors, and at the Rochester Public Market, in order to support a sustainable economy in the Rochester area community. The more we expand our wholesale and retail business by opening new stores, the greater part we will have in helping to create a fully sustainable and just community and world. We are committed to the principle of every person receiving a living wage for their work. Both our operating and project budgets reflect our commitment to starting everyone out above the minimum wage, as we pay more than most businesses for comparable work. The New York state legislature is considering increasing the minimum wage to \$8.50; we already start our employees at that wage as a minimum. This principle will guide us as we create new jobs for each location. Our not-for-profit business model, reflected in this project proposal, builds on this core value. If no one has to get rich, everyone can earn more and live better.