
Lecture promotes fair trade outlet in South Bend

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The daughter of a firefighter and parks _____
an early age the importance of giving back to the community.

Reimbold, proprietor of the Just Goods fair trade store in South Bend, said she didn't intend on giving back to the community by becoming a retailer, but realized her store can help make a change in the world.

"If we feel glad about what we're doing, and it meets a need, then we've found our calling," she said.

Reimbold, a graduate of Kenyon College in Ohio, spent part of her college career researching international studies in Ecuador. While there, she experienced something that changed her life forever.

She spent a day working with children in a carrot field, where children would pack heavy loads of carrots down field rows.

"Here I was in the prime of my life ... and I could barely make it down to the end of that row, and here were these little children and that's what they did with their days," she said. "We can learn about things, hear about them, read about them, but when we feel them physically and make human connections, we're changed."

And she was.

"I came back knowing that I couldn't just live life normally," she said.

Instead, she continued to research international affairs, and took a second trip to Ecuador with her children 10 to 12 years after her first stay in Quito, Ecuador.

While there, she visited the Cloud Forest where she met a women's co-operative, Mujeres Medio Ambiente. The group of 35 single women who use locally harvested and hand-processed fiber to make their goods asked if Reibold knew of a place in the United States where they could sell their products.

Reibold said she took on the experience of selling the products in the United States herself.

"I think [my decision] was a combination of being kind of stir-crazy — I was at home with the kids and lots of diapers — and maybe a bit of a calling," she said. "[I thought], maybe this is something I should do."

When she realized there were very few fair trade outlets in South Bend, she decided to start one.

"I was trying to live a life that was in line with my values," she said. "I didn't want to shop in a way that supported sweat shops and child labor, and there just weren't a lot of consumer choices in our area at that time. Low and behold, four months later I was having my first trunk show in my home."

Later, Reibold opened her fair trade store "Just Goods" in South Bend, and has paired with international organizations including Mujeres Medio Ambiente, Fui Reciclado and Global Mamas.

These partnerships provide an underlying thread that keeps Reibold's goal of making a difference alive, she said.

"[Fair Trade] is not a trading partnership where one can say, 'Ok it probably cost you this much to make this ... so give me 10 of them, and I'll pay you a fair price,'" she said.

"It's more about, 'Well tell me about your work. What do you need? What is it like in your community? What do you need in order to put food on the table? There's a lot more to [the partnership]. It's long-term and ongoing."

These kinds of questions uphold the key principles of fair trade — to support safe and empowering working conditions, ensure the rights of children, cultivate environmental stewardships and respect cultural identity, she said.

Reibold said if consumers want to buy fair trade, they simply have to look for certified fair trade labels such as the Fair Trade Federation logo or the World Fair Trade Organization.