

# Sisters woman is running for coffee

Coffee is the second most exported commodity in the world. Yes, it is a beverage that gets our culture moving in the morning. But it's also finance, it's an artisan craft, it's a tree and fruit that makes up an important agricultural crop, it's your local coffee shop community, and it affects people of varying socioeconomic classes worldwide.

"Take our small family business for example," says Jesse Durham of Sisters Coffee Co. "While we are located in a small Oregon town, we have the regular opportunity to do business with coffee farmers from all over the world. We have several very meaningful coffee relationships with farmers, but I want to bring one particular coffee cooperative into focus. The Nyampinga coffee cooperative, comprised of 200 women, is located in Southern Rwanda, and is one that is very dear to my heart."

Durham first came into contact with the Nyampinga Coffee Cooperative in February of 2014. Sustainable Harvest, a Specialty Coffee Importer based in Portland, Oregon, invited Durham to

teach roasting workshops at an educational conference in Rwanda. The conference was geared at providing training specifically to women in Southern Rwanda in efforts to increase their incomes.

"While there, I had the opportunity to share with 400 wonderful women that no, coffee was not simply a little red fruit, but that it actually was a hot beverage that Westerners drink everyday," Durham said.

At the time, these women were producing coffees that were so low in quality they couldn't be exported outside of Rwanda.

"Imagine the discontent from our customers if I purchased these poorly processed coffees, which tasted like mold," Durham said. "Coffee, just like wine, is scored on a scale from 0-100. So if a farmer's coffee scores an 85, it translates into a very different financial income than a coffee that scores a 75. The coffee these women were producing were scoring the downward part of 70."

In the United States, a good cup of coffee usually means our mornings are a little brighter. To this rural community in Africa, it means



PHOTO PROVIDED

Jesse Durham is raising funds for a water pump for this coffee operation in Southern Rwanda.

their children can attend school. Good coffee symbolizes socioeconomic mobility, since the prices exporters and roasters are willing to pay is vastly higher than the prices for lower-grade coffees.

After two years, the women have received some training.

"They've learned how to taste for defective coffee," Durham said. "They've learned how to ferment and dry coffee better. This year's harvest, currently available at our shop, topped out at an 85.5."

Currently the Nyampinga Cooperative is manually transporting buckets of

water from a creek to a cistern, located half-a-kilometer downhill from the washing station where they process the harvested coffee. It takes the entire cooperative three full days to do this.

"This is an assembly line so inefficient that we would never tolerate it in the United States," Durham said. "We would take out a small-business loan, dig a trench, and install a water pump."

That option isn't so readily available in Southern Rwanda.

"I want to raise money for these women to buy a water pump," Durham said. "The cost of the water pump is

around \$3,000, and it would be truly life-changing for the entire community of Nyampinga. I am running the International Peace Marathon in Kigali, Rwanda on May 22."

The run will be undertaken in conjunction with a fundraiser for the water pump. Visit <https://www.crowdrise.com/nyampingacoffeecoop> fundraiser/ or donate in the jar set up at Sisters Coffee Co.

You can also buy a bag of the Nyampinga coffee. For every 12 oz. bag of Rwanda coffee purchased, Sisters Coffee will donate a dollar to the fundraiser.

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