



Sisters of Notre Dame

California Province

Joan Harper: *fair-trade leader and advocate*

Three Catholics, one Jew, and an atheist sat around Joan Harper's dining room in 2005 and created what is now Fair Trade LA (FTLA). This is a local organization seeking to educate and inspire consumers to embrace fair trade products so that global farmers and artisans earn an equitable and sustainable living. The idea of FTLA was Joan Harper's dream and she now serves as the co-founder and Executive Director of this non-profit organization.

As the fourth of five children, Joan Beingessner began her relationship with the SNDs in 1956 at St. Helen's School in South Gate. As she reminisces about her earliest encounters with the SNDs she explains, "my years at St. Helen's planted early seeds for awareness and care for others. We were encouraged to pray for children around the world and to make donations. Fast forward through the years, that global awareness has only deepened for me. I have wonderful memories of the sisters being so warm and supportive. After all these years this speaks volumes about how dedicated the sisters have been in demonstrating pastoral care in their ministries and missions."

Joan exemplifies the lessons the SNDs taught her, thus propelling her desire to strive for fairness and equality in the fair trade marketplace. While fair trade products are currently being made in some countries, Joan feels a sense of pride, knowing that she has worked to:

- Improve the conditions for workers, that they will receive a just wage
- End child labor in many parts of the globe

Joan explains, "We are advocating for an intentional lifestyle choice. To impact this global movement, we are working to make Los Angeles the largest fair trade city in the United States."

As Joan advocates for these important causes, she also sees the parallel between her work and the ministry that the SNDs have so tirelessly provided in the remote areas of Uganda, educating children and elevating community living conditions. She said, "My continued awareness and commitment to global solidarity is, I believe, a powerful credit to the efforts and example of the SNDs, both locally and overseas." Joan is not alone in her commitment to service for those in need. Her classmates include SNDs Sr. Amy Hauck and Sr. Rebekah Kennedy. Another graduate of St. Helen's, Sr. Jane Marie McHugh, is one of the SND pioneers who opened the Uganda mission in 1995.

As the vivid memories flood back to Joan, she happily exclaims, "I am very proud to have been taught and supported by these wonderful women. I've gained lasting friendships as a result of my time with the SNDs, and I am honored now to carry their spirit into many hearts."