



# CCI's Greenheart Times

CCI: The Greenheart of Cultural Exchange



Winter 2009

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## Expanding Our Greenhearts: AYP Conference in Costa Rica offers attendees beaches, bonding and natural beauty

By Sara Murray



In November, members of CCI's National Office, Field Staff, and Sending Partners gathered in the magnificent beauty of Costa Rica for the 2008 Academic Year Program (AYP) conference. The lush surroundings made a perfect fit for the theme "Expanding Our Greenhearts", where staff learned more about going green and expanding Greenheart across the nation. While experiencing the sites and sounds of the coastal region and

field of cultural exchange."

To the delight of all, the conference was held just steps from the Pacific Ocean. In addition to the beach, conference attendees enjoyed outings to nearby volcanoes and natural areas. On the final day, CCI lent a hand with a tree-planting project at an ecologically friendly sugar cane plantation. Conference sessions were dedicated to Area Representative training, and planning of Greenheart projects for CCI students in 2009. Many Area Representatives pledged to carry out an Environmental Service project with their current CCI students during Global Youth Service day.

After a wonderful week of environmental activities and camaraderie, CCI staff and Area Representatives reluctantly boarded flights home. Overall, the 2008 AYP conference was a bonding experience and fulfilled the essence of Costa Rica -- *Pura Vida!*

*"The trip made me aware of the importance of working in environmental preservation. I admire The Greenheart foundation's initiative and I would like to collaborate with you also in this field. I am encouraging all our students to be involved in environmental activities. We are planning on working and developing ecological projects here in Colombia."*

Luis, CCI Academic Year Partner from Colombia

learning more about the green movement worldwide, the group also came together through laughter and storytelling, making it a true family affair. National Office staff member Andrea Dennis reflected on her experience: "It was such a joy bonding with the field staff. As a national office member, my face time with our field network is limited, so I always enjoy taking the time to thank them in person for all of their incredible hard work and dedication to the



CCI's CEO, Laura Rose and a young Costa Rican plant trees together.

More conference photos on page 6

## Tips for Responsible Travel

By Kristen Radtke

To kick off 2009 at CCI and celebrate the travel abroad department's new name as Greenheart Travel, we're sharing some simple ways to help protect the environment and social welfare of our earth with our participants.

We posted a comprehensive list of sustainable travel tips (<http://www.cci-exchange.com/greentraveltips.aspx>) on our website and have begun sending it out in all of our acceptance packets.

By taking steps to help our participants travel responsibly, we're staying focused on Greenheart's initiatives of environmental consciousness and cultural awareness. Mass tourism guzzles resources and can destroy the beauty of natural landscapes and erode the fascinating traditional cultures that drew travelers in the first place. We're working to make sure that doesn't

happen by providing plenty of easy ways to minimize the negative impacts of travel on the environment and the cultures that depend on it.

Greenheart Travel is encouraging participants to read up on their destination's culture and customs before beginning their program. The more travelers learn about a country and its citizens before arriving, the better prepared they are to act respectfully. By offering simple packing tips about how to avoid bringing excess trash like film boxes and plastic casing, travelers can prevent placing the burden of outside garbage on their destination. Suggesting the purchase of an inexpensive water purifier could keep dozens or even hundreds of plastic water bottles out of landfills. And by reminding travelers to stay on established trails when they're enjoying the

outdoors, we're working to avoid the erosion and disruption of wildlife that might come from uninformed travelers—some native flora can take years to replenish itself after being crushed by the boot of a careless hiker.



### Green Ideas

#### from Greenheart Travel

##### Before you go:

Try to book stays in lodging that follows local cultural practices and heritage. Not only does it support cultural sustainability and helps local producers, it'll immerse you in the heart of your destination

##### While you're away:

Set a timer that turns lights on and off automatically instead of leaving some on constantly. Set your thermostat so that the heat or air conditioning remains off.

##### When you're there:

Leave room in your pack for garbage you may generate in case it can't be properly disposed of right away.

##### Before you leave:

Fill out comment cards at places you stay to praise them for their environmental consciousness or suggest that they employ more sustainable practices.

##### After your trip:

Encourage other trip planners to follow some basic sustainable travel guidelines.

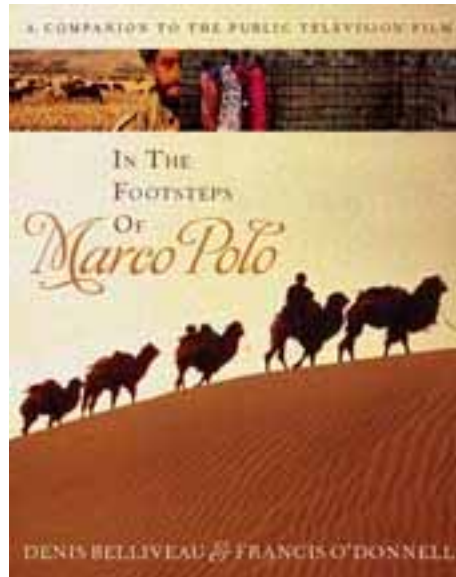
**For a complete list of Greenheart Travel's Sustainable Travel Tips, visit our website, [www.cci-exchange.com/greentraveltips.aspx](http://www.cci-exchange.com/greentraveltips.aspx).**



# CCI Sponsors PBS Documentary, “In the Footsteps of Marco Polo”

By Lori Tibbett

CCI is proud to sponsor the public television special program entitled “**In the Footsteps of Marco Polo**” which debuted in November on New York television station WLIW. It is the incredible story of two men who decided to retrace the steps that Marco Polo took from Venice, Italy to China in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It took them two years for this journey, which is documented in this PBS program currently airing across the United States. There is an accompanying book for the program filled with incredible photographs of their journey.



which will be aired across the country for the next three years. The show opened on PBS stations in states across the country including California, Oklahoma, Kentucky, New Mexico, Ohio, Virginia and more. Additionally, CCI's brochures are being distributed at national book signings.

If you are interested in watching the show, you can view it online, or find the schedule from your local PBS station on their website at <http://www.thirteen.org/marcopolo>. Stations are being added throughout the year, so keep checking! You can also order

As an underwriter for this program, CCI has a 15 second “commercial” at the beginning and end of the 90-minute show,

the book from the website. 

## ExchangesConnect! A New Social Networking Site from DOS

Attention all CCI participants and host families! There is a new social networking site at the Department of State, created to bring together friends of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) exchanges:

ExchangesConnect: <http://connect.state.gov>

All are invited to join! This includes host families, local coordinators, area representatives, CCI staff.... If you're a participant on an exchange program, it will ask you which program you are on when you register. Once registered, you can download photos, articles, videos, etc.. However, if you prefer that the Department of State do this, just send them the material and they'll make sure it's posted on the site.

## CCI's Greenheart Times

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Since 1985, The Center for Cultural Interchange (CCI) has been dedicated to the promotion of cultural understanding, academic development, environmental consciousness, and world peace.

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**Center for Cultural Interchange:  
The Greenheart of Cultural Exchange**

# Fair Trade Chocolate: A Sweeter Choice for Valentine's Chocolate Lovers

By Allison Havens, Greenheart Shop



This Valentine's Day, give your sweetheart a truly sweet chocolate—give Fair Trade chocolate! Although it will definitely fulfill any sugar tooth...

Fair Trade chocolate is made sweeter

not necessarily by its sugar content, but by its contribution to human rights and sustainable community development in communities such as Ghana and Ecuador.

“Many people would be surprised at the widespread epidemic of child- and slave-labor conditions on most commercial cocoa farms,” explains Greenheart Shop Manager, Katherine Bissell Cordova. The world market price for cocoa is so low that farmers often resort to child slave labor to squeeze out any kind of income.”

The solution to this problem is Fair Trade certified chocolate. Fair Trade certification guarantees a minimum floor price for cocoa beans so that farmers can rest assured that they will be able to make a fair wage and living from the sale of their cocoa beans. This in turn allows them to afford to send their children to school, instead of having them work on the farm, and to afford basic necessities such as health care and clean water. Fair Trade also ensures that the cocoa is grown in environmentally sustainable ways that do not encourage deforestation or the pollution of waterways.

Divine Chocolate, the first worker-owned cocoa cooperative in Ghana, is an example of the positive



Divine Chocolate bars

effect of Fair Trade on farmers in West Africa.

Because of Fair Trade, the workers in this community have been able to provide schooling for their children, increase women's empowerment, and create a sustainable life for themselves, their families, and the land they live on.

The Greenheart Shop, a local non-profit Fair Trade store, is encouraging Valentine's chocolate lovers to make life sweeter for children and cocoa farmers

in other countries by buying Fair Trade chocolate this Valentine's. For dark chocolate lovers, try Kallari Rainforest Family chocolate in 70%, 75%, and 85% dark. Kallari is made by an indigenous Kichwa community in the Ecuadorian Amazon rainforest. Check it out online at <http://www.greenheartshop.org/p-2720-kallari-fair-trade-chocolate.aspx>. For those looking for something a little sweeter, try Divine's white chocolate, white chocolate with strawberry, milk chocolate, milk chocolate with hazelnuts, dark chocolate with fruits and nuts, and mint dark chocolate. If that's not love, we don't know what is.



Kallari Rainforest Family



The Greenheart Shop is located at  
746 N. LaSalle Drive, Chicago, IL  
Tel: 312-264-1625

Email: [info@greenheartshop.org](mailto:info@greenheartshop.org)

**Visit us online!**

[www.greenheartshop.org](http://www.greenheartshop.org)

Store hours are Mon-Fri 11-7pm; Thurs 11-8pm; Sat 11-6pm; Closed Sundays.

## CCI Faces | Profiles of Our Employees

### Melissa Ozkurt, CCI's musical diva, offers a glimpse into her life outside work

As a Work Programs Assistant, Melissa works on a variety of projects with the Program Director, including training overseas partners, developing materials and, above all, helping to ensure that Work & Travel students are having a successful program.

#### How long have you worked at CCI?

1 year

#### Where did you grow up?

Izmir, Turkey

#### Do you speak/read/write any languages other than English?

I speak/read/write Turkish and some French

#### What type of music do you like?

I was a music major in college, so I was forced to like it all! Everything from classical to rock. Some of my favorite bands/artists are the White Stripes, Snow Patrol, Stars, Imogen Heap and Maria Taylor

#### Favorite book or magazine?

I don't have just one! I love *Pride and Prejudice*, *A Tale of Two Cities* and stuff by Orhan Pamuk. Right now, it's a treat if I get to read something that isn't related to grad school. For magazines, I enjoy reading the *Economist* and my guilty pleasure is *Us Weekly*.

#### Any hidden talents?

This isn't exactly hidden, but I play a variety of instruments: clarinet, flute, saxophone, and piano.

#### What's your favorite way to spend a weekend?

Relaxing with my fiancée, Joe, meeting up with friends for drinks, and/or exploring Chicago and its environs.

#### How many countries have you traveled to? And which one would you like to return to?

Countries traveled to: 14

Return to: Egypt

#### What is your favorite food to cook at home? Or to eat out?

Home: Kofte: a traditional Turkish meat dish

Out: Pizza: my fiancée and I are pizza fiends!

#### What's your dream job?

My dream job would be to work in an international student office for a university (large or small). Many American university students are not aware of the process that international students go through to attend school in the



Melissa Ozkurt

U.S., and I would love to work in an environment that bridges support for exchange visitors and informative exchange forums for US students.

#### Why are you interested in working with international students?

I went to an international American school from Kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade, so I've been surrounded by different cultures my whole life-it just feels natural that I'd be working in an international environment! Plus, I believe that cultural exchange is possibly the most valuable form of education a person can experience. That said, it's important to have dedicated professionals in the field who can assist international students in experiencing a positive, safe exchange experience.

#### What is your best advice for a CCI Work & Travel Partner? Employer? Student?

As cliché as it sounds: expect the unexpected. There is no uniform procedure when it comes to cultural exchange, and flexibility is key! Being open-minded, flexible and understanding even in the most trying of times is the key to a successful program.



# PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD



**Costa Rica Conference:** 1. CCI'ers pose to take a photo on the volunteer project. 2. Smiling on the job allowed! 3. Conference participants enjoy a day trip to nearby nature areas. 4. Volunteers get a lesson in tree-planting from a *tico* (as Costa Ricans are sometimes referred to).



**Academic Year Program:** 5. Vlad (Romania) receives a "Player of the Week" award for his water polo skills (from Sherri Hooker). 6. Khanh (Vietnam), at the Miss Merry Christmas pageant in Texas, won a trophy for the best float in the parade (from Jeannette Singleton). 7. Shaima (Pakistan) and Alexandra (Russia) with the Houston Chapter of Zonta International, a global organization of professionals working together to advance the status of women through service and advocacy (from David Godwin)