Program on Latin America and the Caribbean

Threads of Hope: Empowering the Indigenous Mayan Weavers of Guatemala

Presented by:
SU Students in Free Enterprise
Team Guatemala

The indigenous Mayan women of Guatemala have practiced the art of backstrap weaving for over two thousand years, and their weavings have served as artistic expressions to the world, both individually and collectively. Through all these centuries, this marginalized population has made an important income contribution to their households by selling hand woven goods. At present, there are nearly one million weavers in Guatemala, and not close to enough outlets or customers for their products. Team Guatemala was started with the mission to assist these women in their quest to raise themselves out of poverty.

Team Guatemala started in the winter of 2007 when members of the Syracuse University SIFE team traveled to Guatemala to conduct workshops on jewelry making. For the past three years, SU-SIFE has sold the jewelry along with other traditional woven product in the SU bookstore. Through partnerships with two fair trade organizations, Team G has been able to give 100% of the proceeds back to the women of Guatemala, allowing them better access to fair wages as well as health care and educational services. The team continues to work with the women on finding new and innovative ways to develop their products and grow their markets, and is currently planning a new initiative to assist a cooperative in opening a thread store in Chumanzana, Guatemala to aid the supply chain challenges of some 20,000 weavers in the area.

Refreshments will be served.

November 11, 2009
12:00 pm
341 Eggers Hall