



# Reaching out to Retailers

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## *What was your goal?*

In 2009 the [Mankato Area Fair Trade Town Initiative](#) (MAFTTI ) started its work in Mankato, a town of 35,000 in southern Minnesota, with only one wholly dedicated Fair Trade coffee shop. In order to meet the Fair Trade Towns USA criteria it was a priority to find evidence of Fair Trade products anywhere they could be found, encourage a general increase in their availability and make this information known by any means possible.

## *What was your strategy?*

**Sowing seeds:** Experience shows that personal, cheerful advocacy can, over time, reap dividends with supermarket management or with individual shop owners if they are shown that involvement with “Fair Trade” can resonate positively and profitably for the store as well as the town.

**Strengthening the Fair Trade constituency:** The key to Fair Trade is “informed demand,” i.e. a growing number of people who understand that, as Fair Trade USA says, “Every Purchase Matters.” Developing this constituency can be done by Fair Trade education, by encouraging or organizing shoppers’ direct lobbying of, say, supermarket produce managers, by regularly making available an updated Shopping Guide showing where individual Fair Trade products can be found in the locality and by keeping the Fair Trade campaign in the public eye.



## What are 3 tips for a group aiming to increase Fair Trade availability in their community?

**Advocacy** needs a positive, professional approach if it is to succeed in impressing its target. If working on a supermarket, do some research about its status (chain or independent) first. Make friends with the manager(s) of the section(s) you are interested in or the Store Director and explain the “win-win” nature of promoting Fair Trade.

**Seize opportunities** when they present themselves. If you find a shop owner is hearing the Fair Trade message from elsewhere, celebrate the fact, make yourself known and see to it that s/he understands how the store could become part of a town-wide campaign.

## What did your campaign achieve?

Measured against the Fair Trade Towns USA criteria, Mankato now has twice the number of shops with Fair Trade products than is required. This reflects a general growth of Fair Trade availability plus the value of both documenting the change and spreading the information around.

The growth of the Fair Trade network in Mankato has facilitated practical support for a Ten Thousand Villages kiosk in the principal shopping mall for the Thanksgiving-Christmas period in 2012, saving potential customers a 60 mile trip to the nearest store, a development that might turn out to be a step down the road towards a Ten Thousand Villages store in Mankato sometime in the future. Such is the stuff of dreams!



## Fair Trade Bananas Mankato, MN

*Organizers in Mankato, Minnesota have achieved something tough – rallying supermarkets! They successfully introduced Fair Trade bananas into a supermarket in early 2012, and didn't let the momentum stop there.*

*With persistent optimism, campaigners made a strategic relationship with the Store Director. They then advocated directly to this contact, bringing the benefits of Fair Trade to the attention of the store. Since that spring, sales of Fair Trade bananas have steadily grown. Today, a total of 4 supermarkets in Mankato offer a variety of Fair Trade produce thanks to their superb outreach.*

