

Out of Africa

A RUTGERS-CAMDEN TRIP IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF SOUTH AFRICANS

• Kim Hancock and Anne-Marie Fala-classmates in a globalization and management course in the graduate School of Business at Rutgers-Camden-were shocked by the terrible poverty they saw on a campus-sponsored trip to South Africa in 2003. "On the way from the airport to the hotel, we noticed that the side of the road was lined with shacks," says Hancock. Our tour guide [Muhammad Khan], who operates his own company, pointed out that entire families live in them."

Over the next several days, Hancock (GSC'03) and Fala (GSC'05) also noticed an abundance of high-quality crafts at kiosks but almost no market for their creations. "Khan told us that he was committed to helping his countrymen, so we asked him to recommend local artisans who would be "Tilling to meet and work with us," says Hancock. When the duo got back to the campus's Atlantic City satellite MBA program, they brainstormed on ways to identify and export the crafts they had seen.

In August 2003, the women returned to South Africa to select the artisans they felt would have the best chance to succeed. They ironed out financing and production details and used their own savings to found The Flavour of Change, a business that sells such items as handcrafted sandals decorated with glass beads, silver jewelry set with semiprecious stones, and flowers made from recycled tin cans. Items are available through house parties, a catalog, and online at www.flavourofchange.com.

"At the parties, we spend about 10 minutes talking about the way the artists work and how they benefit from sales in the United States," says Hancock, an Egg Harbor resident. "One condition is our South African artisans earn at least the equivalent of the U.S. minimum wage. The business is set up so that 100 percent of our net profits go to the communities where the products are made. So far we've been able to help a primary school in the western Cape region provide a daily lunch for all 400 students."



Hancock (left) and Fala visit students at a school outside Johannesburg.

