

ROAST MAGAZINE SMALL BUSINESS GRANT RECIPIENT IS CATRACHA COFFEE

Photos by Mayra Orellana-Powell



IN EARLY 2022, ROAST ANNOUNCED a \$5,000 grant for a small business in the coffee industry. The grant application was open to any roastery, cafe or other coffee-related business in operation for at least two years. A written submission form and 5-minute video were required to apply, detailing how the grant would be used to make an impact in the coffee industry or local community.

“Our success at *Roast* has always been driven by the support of amazing companies and people in the coffee industry,” says Connie Blumhardt, the founder and publisher of *Roast*. “We wanted to give back to this community in a direct way and provide the opportunity for a special project or effort to come to fruition.”

Applications flowed in from coffee companies around the world, each doing amazing work to make

an impact by creating opportunities for employees, giving back to the local community, innovating with technology, committing to equity and diversity, developing sustainable practices, or in other ways.

While there were many worthy applicants, ultimately the 2022 Roast Magazine Small Business Grant was awarded to Catracha Coffee, an exporting company based in Marcala, La Paz, Honduras, that was established in 2010. The grant was awarded for the purpose of building a cafe space in the coffee-farming community of Santa Elena.

Catracha Coffee currently has a production roaster in Santa Elena that serves to roast coffee for producers in the area, contributing to an increase in local coffee consumption and supporting producers who sell their coffee in the community. The cafe will offer career development for local baristas, and further the growth of specialty coffee awareness and education in the region.

“I am so grateful to be selected to receive the 2022 Roast Magazine Small Business Grant,” says Mayra Orellana-Powell, owner and co-founder of Catracha Coffee. “Dreams come true. This grant will allow us to offer more options for youth in the community.”

Led by Orellana-Powell, who grew up in Santa Elena, co-founder Lowell Powell, and general manager Eva Vasquez, Catracha Coffee exports approximately 85,000 pounds of coffee each year from more than



80 producers who live in the municipality of Santa Elena. Since 2012, Catracha Coffee has paid over \$2 USD per pound for exportable green coffee to each producer (farmgate price).

In 2021, Forbes named Catracha Coffee as one of the 50 Latina-owned companies “innovating to sustainably, and deliciously, feed the world,” and Orellana-Powell was among its 100 “mujeres poderosas” (powerful women) in Central America in 2020.

In addition to economic impact in the coffee sector and local women-led leadership, Catracha Coffee and its roasting partners fund Catracha Community, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that invests in long-term social impact opportunities without taking resources from a coffee producer’s bottom line. Since 2016, Catracha Community has continued to fund the Catracha Quality Project, youth and women’s workshops, family gardening, reforestation projects, public art initiatives, and teacher salary supplements.

With the cafe, Orellana-Powell says they would like to create a space “where the coffee consumer



ABOVE Youth conference in Santa Elena.

RIGHT Art workshop in Santa Elena.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

WHILE THE FOLLOWING companies were not selected to receive the Roast Magazine Small Business Grant this year, the work being done by these applicants was particularly notable to the judging panel. If you would like to support these organizations and their efforts, as outlined below, please visit roastmagazine.com/grant.

● **Connect Roasters**, based in Bourbonnais, Illinois, was founded by Caleb Benoit in 2016. The company is built on a give back model, with a portion of sales donated to support community development in the coffee-producing countries where it sources its coffee, as well as efforts in the local community. One of the organizations that Connect supports through coffee sales is the Greater Chicago Food Depository, which operates as the food bank for the city of Chicago and Cook County. To further support the Food Depository, Connect is raising funds to conduct a three-month summer pop-up program with its mobile espresso cart around the city of Chicago, with a portion of all sales supporting the Food Depository.

To learn more about Connect Roasters, visit connectroasters.com.

● **Happy Cup Coffee Roasting**, based in Portland, Oregon, was established in 2011. Led by owners Michael Sherman and Frank McLaughlin, Happy Cup proudly employs people with intellectual and developmental disabilities from the local community as a central component of its mission. Together with supported-employment partners, Happy Cup fills positions at both the roastery and its cafes at fair market wages. The goal is sustained employment with Happy Cup, but the company says it is thrilled when folks use these skills anywhere life may take them. Happy Cup is seeking to improve mobility accommodations and adaptations to visual and auditory triggers in its common spaces, and also to deploy an information campaign to share the benefits of employing people with different abilities with customers and area businesses.

To learn more about Happy Cup Coffee Roasting, visit happycup.com.



Embroidery workshop in Santa Elena.



Art workshop in Santa Elena.

culture can develop for the people who cultivate and harvest coffee in the same way as it happens in the best cafes around the world.” She adds, “The cafe can also provide additional local employment opportunities and a place to sell locally made food. With this grant, we will train a group of interested youth from Santa Elena to be baristas, and remaining funds will be used for startup costs and salaries.”

Watch the video submission for this grant program (produced by Joe Cline) at roastmagazine.com/grant and learn more about Catracha Coffee at catrachacoffee.com.

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