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Editor's Note

Madilyn Ray's essay, "Dr. Chocolate," profiles Tom Neuhaus, a Cal Poly food science professor who also regards himself as a "chocolatier." However, the essay can teach you about a lot more than just Neuhaus's professional interests. For instance, Ray does an impressive job weaving information about complex issues like Fair Trade and chocolate production into her depiction of Neuhaus's attempts to "better our world" through chocolate. Moreover, Ray also includes her experiences sampling some of the chocolate Neuhaus makes and sells. As you read, look for the moments when Ray inserts her thoughts and ideas without covering up Neuhaus's voice.

As you write your own profile, keep in mind your audience—which should include your profile's subject. How would your interviewee respond to your depiction? After reading Ray's profile, Neuhaus said he was impressed by Ray's "sensitivity to the objects in the room and on the desk . . . I like that she described the look in my eyes—you don't usually read that. She was also sensitive to body language. [The essay] had a nice beginning and end—made you want to finish reading. Very charming. Very human."

Dr. Chocolate**Madilyn Ray**

You can learn a lot about food science professor Tom Neuhaus by simply standing outside his office. His door boasts liberal minded stickers, and the adjacent wall is plastered with posters and fliers advocating Fair Trade and organic products. On the inside, half the walls are covered by bookshelves stretching from floor to ceiling stacked with cookbooks and chemistry books. His desk is a general clutter of plastic candy molds and student papers waiting to be graded. At your feet you'll find large paper grocery sacs of miscellaneous chocolate products, and over in the corner a box for a chocolate fountain. Upon first impression, Dr. Neuhaus seems like an outspoken, passionate, and extremely involved individual. Here at Cal Poly he oversees production of our very own Cal Poly Chocolate, which sells at Campus Market and El Corral Bookstore. He runs Cal Poly's Fair Trade club, and owns and operates his own chocolate company, Sweet Earth Organic Chocolate, which he sells at Splash Café, among other retailers. His work experience with chocolate runs deeper than what meets the eye, and Dr. Neuhaus has a dream to better our world through chocolate, which seems absurd, but he is actually making headway. In my interview with Dr. Neuhaus I learned all about his mission to better peoples' lives through Fair Trade chocolate and why we should all support his cause.

Ask Tom Neuhaus about his beginnings in chocolate and he will tell you it was before he was born. During World War Two his grandparents would send

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cigarettes to his aunt and uncle in Germany to use as currency when inflation was high and money was worthless. In return, they would send his family German chocolate, which at a young age, he came to love. Other encounters only deepened this self-proclaimed “foody’s” interest in chocolate. He lived in France for three years and tasted chocolate from Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland. When he came to Poly, he started teaching in the Food Science and Nutrition Department and developed the class FSN 250, Food and Culture, which focuses on traditional and contemporary food customs. “I started to think about food as something that humans eat and make and that there’s politics,” he explained. “And so much that goes into it. I thought it would be really neat to take one product like chocolate and really know a lot about it.” He learned he could start a chocolate business and teach students how to run it by exemplifying our school’s “learn by doing” motto. In 2000, he taught the FSN 201 Chocolate Enterprise Project class, which meets on Fridays and teaches students about chocolate, and even pays them to produce it for Cal Poly.

All of Dr. Neuhaus’s products are made with organic and 100% Fair Trade Certified ingredients. Fair Trade is a system which empowers farmers and workers in third-world countries and gives them money for their labor. Fair Trade commodities are superior because they encourage people to do quality. “It’s built into the structure of the thing.” Neuhaus’s interest in Fair Trade started when a Peruvian man, who heard he was in the chocolate business, called and asked him to come to Peru to help improve the economy of his village whose main business was farming cocoa trees. After returning to the States, Neuhaus designed plans for a box of chocolates he thought he could sell at Trader Joe’s or in a gift store, with all the proceeds going back to the village. He made sample chocolates out of sustainable, local Peruvian ingredients, each one representing a different civilization of Peru. The plans never came through, but Neuhaus was already hooked on the idea he could help others by doing what he loved.

Since then Dr. Neuhaus has traveled to West Africa many times, visiting Fair Trade cocoa operations in Ghana, Cameroon, and the Ivory Coast. In the Ivory Coast alone there are over 600,000 cocoa tree farms, and they grow 75% of America’s chocolate, sadly not many of the farmers are being adequately compensated. He designed a special box of Ghanaian chocolates which he sold at the Mission downtown to raise money which he sent back to Ghana to one of the Fair Trade companies. That was when he started his company Sweet Earth Organic Chocolates: “I felt like I wanted to take this beyond academics. I was tired of just talking or teaching about it. I wanted to *do* it.” A year ago he also started the foundation to help cocoa farmers called Project Hope and Fairness. So far they’ve raised money and built bathrooms in villages, donated scales to farmers so they don’t get “cheated” by the middle man, and given farmers boots to protect them from being bitten by the green mamba snake. To Tom Neuhaus,

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Project Hope and Fairness “shows [the farmers and their children] that you love them and that you actually care and we don’t just sit over here and eat chocolate while they have no future at all . . . and yet, when you sell Hershey’s to raise money for your football team or whatever at your school, the children who picked those beans were either slaves or they never got to see the inside of a classroom.” This is only the tip of a much larger problem: how to make the dispersion of money and things equitable across the planet, and, even more difficult, how to do this through a seven employee chocolate business.

Right now Tom is working to raise funds to put roofs and electricity in three classrooms at a school in the Ivory Coast where they teach cocoa farmers’ children how to sew clothes and make leather products. “It’s a very big issue, but every journey begins with one step.”

Dr. Neuhaus knows the inside and out of producing chocolate. In the chocolate business he is known as a melter. He buys finished chocolate from a processing plant in Wisconsin, who buys blocks of cocoa butter and chocolate liqueur from the Dominican Republic, or Peru. The chocolate comes in bags of what are known as coins, which helps to melt the product quickly. Sweet Earth Organic and Cal Poly chocolate are made with half Dominican beans and half Peruvian beans. Dominican beans have a “roasty low-note,” while Peruvian beans have a “high floral note,” and the mixture of the two compliment each other. So how do Sweet Earth Organic and Cal Poly chocolates (he uses the same recipe and ingredients for both) measure up to the rest of the world’s? “We won first prize in San Francisco among thirteen other chocolate companies . . . even over some fancy European chocolates,” he says with a sparkle in his eyes. One surprising fact is that 50% of Tom’s business is selling bulk chocolate to other small chocolate makers, who want high-quality, Fair Trade and organic chocolate for their own companies. He even sells cocoa butter to soap makers. He explained to me the difference between “dark,” “bittersweet,” and “milk” chocolate. Bittersweet means that it is made with 47% cocoa and about 52% sugar. Milk chocolate is made with 10% cocoa, the rest is sugar, which is why milk chocolate is people’s favorite. Dark chocolate can be as much as 80%, and even 92% cocoa. Chocolate with a higher percentage of cocoa uses less sugar and milk, which gives it that strong, bitter flavor.

Cal Poly has nine different products all handmade by students, while Sweet Earth Organic has machinery to make 80 or so products. I decided to buy, and try, some of the chocolate to help me write my paper. I sampled one Cal Poly milk chocolate bar, which has smooth texture, and ultra sweet taste. After feeling the rich flavor in my mouth, regular Hershey’s chocolate tastes thin and grainy. I also bought some bittersweet chocolate eggs from Sweet Earth Organics, which were exquisite. I asked Dr. Neuhaus what his favorites were. He said he could never get enough of the cashew turtles, peanut butter cup,

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and peppermint cup, which he is convinced are going to be big sellers around the United States a year from now.

When people choose Fair Trade products, whether they be chocolate, coffee, clothing, or whatever, they support a better life for thousands of families of poor farmers and laborers around the world. What Cal Poly and Sweet Earth Organic chocolates offer us is a way to indirectly help those impoverished farmers with the power of our dollar. Tom Neuhaus has traveled the world around and seen his work helping the people who need it most. A product he created, a simple chocolate bar, is helping to build a school for children in West Africa, a luxury they otherwise would never know existed, and gives him greater joy than he can put into words. It is hard to describe, as I interviewed him, the expression that came across his face as he told me about the children he visited in Cameroon, or when he showed me pictures of the bathrooms he funded in Ghana. Unmistakable pride in his work shines through his eyes more brightly than anything I've ever seen. He accomplishes more in one Friday afternoon teaching Poly students about Fair Trade chocolate than most people do in a lifetime. What's more, his products taste amazing and give a future to children of cocoa farmers in third-world countries. Tom Neuhaus is 56, and when he retires he says he doesn't just want to sell his house, move to a golf course, and bat a ball around. "I want to do something for people. I want to travel and get to know people . . . the world is a very small place, and I want to use business to do that."

Madilyn Ray is a food science major at Cal Poly.