

Sara Holby is saving orphans and providing jobs for women in Africa through a tea company she started as a college student.
 ART GENTILE / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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Improving lives with each cup of t

By AMANDA CREGAN
 STAFF WRITER

With each cup of tea, one young woman is pouring hope into the lives of AIDS-stricken orphans.

Since Sara Holby, 25, of Upper Black Eddy, launched Ajiri Tea just three years ago, the charitable foundation has changed the lives of scores of orphaned African children and lifted women out of dire poverty.

Ajiri Tea's name is taken from the Swahili word "Ajiri," which means "to employ."

The nonprofit employs impoverished farmers and widowed and single women in an isolated village in Kenya while providing AIDS-stricken orphans in that region with an education.

Since the '04 Palisades graduate began

Ajiri Tea in 2009, more than 60 women who once struggled to feed their children can now support their families.

The women sit in circles each day, designing and creating unique, delicate labels from dried banana leaves.

Over the last few years, they've even managed to save a portion of their earnings to buy cows, seeds, tracts of land for farming and have been able to send their children to school.

"It's exciting that they've taken that money and done something with it," said Holby, noting many of the women now sell milk from the cows and crops from their newly acquired land.

In Kenya, education is provided, but children are not allowed to go to school without

books or a uniform. Also, tuition is charged for any child who wants to pursue an education past the eighth grade. All of the profits from Ajiri Tea fund the school fees of African children who have lost parents to AIDS.

This year, the foundation has funded the education of 19 children. In January, Holby anticipates that number will grow to 35.

"It's been really exciting," she said.

Ajiri black tea is produced at the Nyan-siongo Tea Factory, which is owned by more than 10,000 small-scale farmers in Kenya. The tea is sold in stores across the U.S. and Canada. In 2011, Ajiri Tea was awarded the Buyer's Choice Award for best black tea at the World Tea Expo.

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More Information

- Local vendors:**
 Bee Natural, Coopersburg
 Blooming Glen Catering, Blooming Glen
 Brigadoon Coffee House, Otts
 Bunn's Natural Foods, Southa
 Carversville General Store, Ca
 Fare on Main, Sellersville
 Fig Tree Market, Riegelsville
 Homestead General Store, Up
 Black Eddy
 House of Coffee, Lahaska
 Kimberthon Whole Foods, Otts
 Owowcow Creamery, Ottsville
 Wrightstown
 Poor Richard's Talk of the Tow
 Doylestown
 Rolly Brown's, Perkasie
 The Kitchen Potager, Ottsville
 The Larder, Doylestown
 The Talking Teacup, Chalfont