

Wheaton Coffee Company Roasts Flavor Through Forgiveness

WHEATON, Ill. - To his customers, it's a great tasting bag of freshly roasted coffee. To his employees, it's a whole lot more. That's because Pete Leonard's coffee company gives a second chance to those in society who need it desperately: former-prisoners.

In a country with over 2.2 million prison inmates at a given moment, there are always thousands of felons looking for jobs. But post-prison people, by Leonard's lingo, wear their records like a scarlet letter - in this case a black "X" next to the job application question: Have you ever been convicted of a felony? It's a damning mark; a life sentence of turn-downs.

But thanks to the Second Chance Coffee Company in Wheaton, Ill., these post-prison people have a chance to re-integrate into society. Now, their actions every day are telling a very different story than their old prison records. They work hard to provide for themselves and their families, while helping grow a brand that they are all proud of: I Have a Bean, coffee that sources from only the top 1% of the world's bean producers, is both roasted and delivered the day it's ordered.

"Our ultimate aim is to perform so well and produce such an outstanding product that other employers will reconsider their hiring practices," says Leonard, who founded Second Chance in 2007. "A prison record only proves that a person has made a mistake at some point in the past. None of us want to be judged by the worst thing we've done. Rather we want to be known as people for the way we live now. The 'present evidence' of the content of our character."

At the South Loop Whole Foods annual "Turf Wars" competition, I Have a Bean coffee came in first place in a taste test competition with over 150 store patrons. Among the other competitors was Intelligentsia, a well-known favorite among coffee aficionados.

Just like the coffee they roast, these former-prisoners are becoming first-rate employees. Something they wouldn't have had a chance to become without Leonard embracing the "X" on a job application.

Winning the hearts and taste buds of their Chicagoland customers isn't easy to do inside their small, 1,800 sq. ft. roasting plant. However, with the following supplies and procedures they make some of the best tasting coffee in Chicagoland:

- Top 1% of coffee beans

- Wild experimentation to develop the exact specifications for roasting each variety
- A top secret Bean Master 5000—a patented roasting device of Leonard’s own invention

Find out why you need to hold your cream and sugar. For more information, give I Have a Bean a call at (630) 384-9657, or email Pete directly at pleonard@ihaveabean.com.

I Have a Bean coffees can be bought directly from the company website at www.ihaveabean.com and is available at most Whole Foods Markets in the Chicagoland area.

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