



Lindsay Steiner/ Staff Photographer

Donkey Coffee and Espresso owner Chris Pyle practices brewing coffee yesterday afternoon before opening day on Friday. The business is located at 17 1/2 W. Washington St.

Café brews up coffee, social consciousness

by **Kristine Phillips**
For *The Post*

The opening of a new Uptown coffee shop will offer Athens java junkies a different take on their favorite drink — and bring fair-trade coffee to the area.

Donkey Coffee and Espresso, 17 1/2 W. Washington St., will employ “fair trade,” which gives farmers from small villages a chance to make living wage by purchasing their coffee beans from Dean’s Beans in Salem, Mass., said Christopher Pyle, part owner of Donkey Coffee and Espresso.

Buying coffee beans only from companies that practice fair trade helps to better the economic opportunity of the third-world countries that produce the coffee, according to the Dean’s Beans Web site (<http://www.deansbeans.com>). These villages are largely made up of indigenous peoples trying

to retain their culture.

Donkey Coffee’s fair-trade coffees include Tierra Madre, the first coffee to be certified organic in Costa Rica, as well as organic beans from East Timor, according to a Donkey Coffee and Espresso news release.

The coffee beans used for the house blend at the café are imported from the Sidamo region of Ethiopia, where the use of agrochemicals is nearly non-existent, according to the release. These coffee beans also are highly ecological because they do not require water, making them free from water supply contamination.

The socially conscious coffee available at the new café might spark a trend in Uptown coffee shops, but it will be slow in coming. Perk’s Coffee House and Roastery, 49 S. Court St., is beginning to convert to only fair-trade coffee, but it is a long process, said Perk’s manager Nathan Hayes.

The arabica-bean coffee at Brenen’s Coffee Café, 38 S. Court

St., is not certified as fair-trade coffee, but the coffee is not produced in sweatshops because of long production times and higher quality, said manager Josh Thomas. Also, the roaster of the coffee assures Brenen’s owners that farmers receive a good wage for the raw materials.

Donkey Coffee offers Athens residents and Ohio University students a social conscience not only through its coffee but also through its atmosphere.

Donkey will provide a “justice table” where customers can read about community events to further emphasize its role in social justice, according to the release. Owners also have booked local and regional acts for Donkey Backstage, a stage in the back of the restaurant intended for regular poetry reading, weekly open stage and quality film nights.

The goal of the coffee shop is to provide an alternative atmosphere for coffee shops Uptown, Pyle said.