

For Immediate Release

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Artisan Coffee Imports, LLC - Great Lakes Entrepreneur's Quest Vision to Action Challenge Winner

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Artisan Coffee Imports, LLC brings traceability and affordable premium decaf beans to US roasters

Ann Arbor, Mich., March 8, 2013 – The Great Lakes Entrepreneur's Quest (GLEQ) presented awards to the mid-year winners in its thirteenth year of the statewide business plan competition on Thursday, January 31, at the ACE'13 event in Livonia. One of the ten GLEQ Vision to Action Challenge Winners, Artisan Coffee Imports, LLC (ACI) is now initiating projects that will bring high quality, traceable decaffeinated coffee to US roasters at an affordable price.

Historically, because decaffeinated bean purchases are a small fraction of the total coffee bean purchase roasters make, they have to sacrifice on taste to get prices that will be palatable to their end users. Now ACI is building relationships that will allow US coffee roasters to purchase in a "co-op" fashion ultimately resulting in being able to buy the small quantities at the low price they need but with significant improvement in the quality. "We're excited to offer a cooperative buying program," says Ruth Ann Church, President of ACI, "it will solve many problems related to decaf for micro-roasters. The most important – it will reduce costs of excellent quality beans."

ACI will be attending the Specialty Coffee Association of America annual "Event" trade show and conference (April 11-14, 2013 in Boston, MA - <http://www.scaa.org/>) and promoting the co-op buying initiative to import direct trade, green decaf from Ethiopia and Colombia (Huila region). "The quality of decaf from Artisan is the best we have ever seen-- rivaling some of our finest non-decaffeinated micro lots." says Kurt Stauffer, Rowster Coffee, Grand Rapids, MI. Stauffer continues, "We value and pay for the quality and gladly pay more for this type of stellar specialty quality. We only wish we could get more and get it easier!" Another ACI client, Ted Stachura, Equator Coffees & Teas of San Rafael, CA said, "At Equator Coffees, we refuse to compromise on flavor, transparency and fairness to our coffee producers - even when it comes to decaf. By purchasing through Artisan, we've been able to provide high quality coffee for our decaf consumers,"

This co-op buying initiative could have a significant impact on the level of quality and taste in the \$2 billion specialty decaf market in the U.S. The traceability project ACI is pursuing would allow roasters to have the same confidence in their decaf product as they do around their regular caffeinated product. Again, Church, "At Artisan, we're passionate about the traceability of our decaf. Showcasing the hard work of producers by maintaining transparency is a concept that our customers embrace, too."

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[About Artisan Coffee Imports, LLC](#)

Artisan Coffee Imports LLC, founded in 2009 and based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, is an importer/broker of specialty decaffeinated green (unroasted) coffee. The only importer of its kind, Artisan enables roasters to customize their decaffeinated coffee purchase to support their brand. Artisan offers customers the choice as to which decaffeination process and which quality and origin of bean makes the most sense for their operation. Coffee is warehoused on both coasts (NJ and CA) and also sold through a location in South Bend, IN. Contact: Ruth Ann Church, President, Tel: 734-717-6278; Email: rachurch@artisancoffeeimports.com, website: www.artisancoffeeimports.com.

About Great Lakes Entrepreneur's Quest

GLEQ, now in its thirteenth year of continuous operations, is a Michigan-based 501 (c) (3) non-profit education program designed to accelerate the formation of high-growth companies.

GLEQ sponsors a statewide business plan competition twice each year. The competition accommodates ventures in various stages of development. Entrepreneurs with new business concepts compete in the New Business Idea category. Ventures in the early launch phases and those with grant income and customer revenue compete in the Emerging Company category. Ventures working with SmartZone advisors and seeking seed funding can compete for the \$100,000 SmartZone Award. Innovation Awards are available and planned for ventures in Advanced Manufacturing, Food Safety, Medical Devices, Green Chemistry, Information Technology and Alternative Energy.

GLEQ leverages a portfolio of 185 volunteer business and investment experts to provide training, coaching, mentoring and judging. GLEQ was a past recipient of a 21st Century Jobs Fund Grant and current operations are funded by an Entrepreneurial Support Services grant from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.