



**The WIIT Charitable Trust: Helping High School Students
Explore the World of International Trade**

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The WIIT Charitable Trust is enriching the lives of high school students in disadvantaged Washington, D.C. area schools. Formed in 2001, the Trust supports charitable, scientific, and educational activities in international trade. Last year, the Trust decided to organize programs on international trade for a local high school with a large minority or underprivileged student base. Under the leadership of Mary Alexander, Deputy Director, Office of Government and Public Affairs, Panasonic/Matsushita and a group of twelve dedicated volunteers, the Trust designed and implemented an Adopt-A-School project. The adopted school is the Academy of Law and Public Issues of Largo High School in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

The high school project was a big success, and it is being continued this 2003-2004 school year. The Trust organizes programs to educate the students about international trade issues, explains how trade affects their lives and communities, and exposes them to possible careers in the field.

Programs for the Academy high school students have covered:

- **The World Bank/IMF policy meetings and anti-globalization protests.** The program dealt with the public's attitudes toward trade as shown in the Trust's public opinion poll.
- **Controls on chemicals that could be used in germ warfare.** With events unfolding in Iraq, experts on export controls asked the students to think about the role of governments in controlling chemicals. The speakers organized role-playing exercises, which the students later said they really enjoyed.
- **An introduction to market access issues.** In connection with the holiday shopping period, the speakers challenged the students to think about where merchandise comes from. The students participated in a problem-solving exercise on imports and exports.

The feedback from the students has been very positive. The students are eager to learn, ask insightful questions and are complimentary of the program. They said:

- "Thanks for visiting our class. You are a true inspiration."

- “You and your guests...did a great job with helping us with international trade. I cannot wait for your return.”
- “All of your information was informative. We had a lot of fun with your activities.”

One of the issues facing the Academy was a need for textbooks on international trade. As a result, through a generous donation from the National Retail Federation, the Trust provided 35 copies of *Imports in America: The Rest of the Story*, by WIIT member Laura Baughman.

The Trust is planning an ambitious series of programs for this school year, including a visit to Capitol Hill and possibly a visit to the Port of Baltimore. Sponsoring a job-shadowing day is also under consideration. Allowing the students to each observe a professional for a day would be an excellent way for them to gain exposure to different career possibilities, and the Trust hopes that many members of WIIT will support this project.

The Trust is looking into the possibility of expanding its high school program to another school in the Washington, D.C. area. With the help of WIIT members and other volunteers, the Trust is looking forward to watching the project grow and giving more students the opportunity to explore the world of international trade.

If you are interested in participating in the Trust’s activities, the Trust would welcome your help. The Trust is looking for volunteers to organize job shadowing, expand the program to another school, and help with programs for the 2003-2004 school year. For more information about the Trust, or to volunteer to help, please visit the Trust’s website at [website:http://www.wiittrust.org/projects.html](http://www.wiittrust.org/projects.html) and use the “contact us” feature. The Trust would like to hear from you!