

# Wonder Where the Weavings Come From?

The Handweavers of Leon Cooperative was originally established in 1983 by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees with the participation of 40 Salvadoran war refugees and 40 Nicaraguan workers.

The Salvadoran members of the cooperative returned to El Salvador in 1988, and the UNHCR essentially withdrew its support for the project. Six of the original Nicaraguan weavers were determined to keep the cooperative alive, and continued at a very low level of productivity for the next two years.

In 1990 the New Haven/León Sister City Project took an interest in the weaving cooperative, providing loans, training in organizational skill, marketing and design assistance.

Since then, some weavers have left the cooperative to form their own family businesses. The weavers have found other markets within Nicaragua as well as among foreign supporters, and they continue to explore new designs and color patterns.

The NH/LSCP continues to support the weavers by buying goods at fair prices, and reselling them in New Haven to support its other work in the rural community of Goyena.

**By purchasing these woven goods, you're supporting the New Haven/León Sister City Project and the weavers of León!**



*Daniela Zapata Garcia began working with the cooperative in 1983, and has since taught the rest of her family how to weave. Here, she double-checks the quality of thread as it is wound onto a loom.*



*Left, Lilian Centeno Muñoz works a loom, and, at right, shows off finished woven shoulder bags.*

*In 2007 Lilian was taught to weave by her mother-in-law, Daniela Zapata (above).*



*Celebrating 25 years in 2009!*