

Student athletes, Governor tackle sweatshops

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Interviews and photographs available upon request

High school field hockey club goes sweatshop-free; Students and supporters thank Gov. Strickland for Executive Order

Columbus – Area high school students and Governor Strickland gave Ohioans something to be thankful for – and proud of – this Thanksgiving: alternatives to sweatshops.

The Hilliard Lynx Field Hockey Club team today announced its commitment to stop buying gear from companies engaged in sweatshops violations, and thanked Governor Strickland for his recent Executive Order directing his administration to establish a sweatshop-free procurement policy for the state. The club, which is not a part of the school district, voted this fall to adopt a sweatfree policy for their uniforms and spiritwear, in order to support women and children around the world. They sported their new sweatshop-free shirts at a press conference today at the Statehouse, and were lauded with commendations from State Representative Dan Stewart.

"We are proud as a team that we are helping lead an effort to end sweatshop conditions around the world. To know that we did something that the Governor of Ohio also did is very rewarding for our team and we just want to show other students that everyone can make a difference in their own way," said Deidre Thompson, Senior captain of the Hilliard Lynx Field Hockey Club. "Maybe our team can inspire other teams to do what we did and help women across the world work in decent conditions and make enough money to support their families."

The students' action comes at a time when sweatshop-free policies are gaining traction across the state, and team members today joined community allies in thanking Governor Strickland for his recent Executive Order. This summer Lucas County also adopted a sweatfree purchasing policy.

"We thank the Governor for establishing policy that prohibits the state from purchasing manufactured goods made in sweatshop conditions. This is an important step which signals a call to respect basic human rights and labor law," said Tim Burga of the Ohio Conference on Fair Trade. "We look forward to working with the administration on implementing and enforcing this rule and moving the state toward membership in the Sweatfree Consortium."

Students and supporters thanked Terry Tyler, Ohio's Chief Procurement Officer, and presented him with hundreds of postcards showing public support from across the state for

the Governor's initiative and for collaboration with other states, cities, and counties to achieve the goals of Ohio's new policy. The Sweatfree Consortium is a collaborative effort of state and local governments committed to enforcing sweatfree purchasing policies.

"I want to thank the players and parents of the Hilliard Lynx for taking the bold step to adopt a sweatfree policy for the team's uniforms and spiritwear, and Governor Strickland for enacting a statewide sweatfree policy," said Hilliard Lynx coach Jason Perlman. "As a coach, there is nothing more rewarding than seeing the team grow not just as players, but as young ladies. These 26 young women should be commended for their decision to tackle this issue that can easily get swept under the rug."

Supporters also released the 2009 *Shop with a Conscience* Consumer Guide in time for the holiday shopping season. "The biggest shopping day of the year is just days away and maybe what this group of high school students did will show others that buying sweatshop-free is easy," said Perlman. "This holiday guide put out by SweatFree Communities is available now so that more gifts given out this holiday season can be sweatfree." The guide is available at www.sweatfree.org/shopping and is produced by SweatFree Communities and International Labor Rights Forum.

Dana Vanderkolk of the Columbus Council on World Affairs Council Fellows Program thanked the Hilliard athletes and the Governor for their actions. "We challenge everyone to factor human rights into the decision-making process when it comes to purchasing apparel and other products," she said.

For more information, visit: www.sweatfree.org/ohio

Read Governor Strickland's Executive Order at:
<http://www.governor.ohio.gov/News/PressReleases/2008/October2008/News101608/tabid/871/Default.aspx>

Download the brand new 2009 *Shop with a Conscience* Consumer Guide at:
www.sweatfree.org/shopping

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SweatFree Communities coordinates a national network of grassroots campaigns that promote humane working conditions in apparel and other labor-intensive global industries by working with both public and religious institutions to adopt sweatshop-free purchasing policies. Using institutional purchasing as a lever for worker justice, the sweatfree movement empowers ordinary people to create a just global economy through local action. Learn more at www.sweatfree.org

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The **Hilliard Girl's Field Hockey Club** is organized through the Hilliard Optimist Club and has completed three seasons playing junior varsity and varsity against Central Ohio high school and club teams. Representing Hilliard Darby and Hilliard Davidson high schools, 24 girls played in the 2008 Fall season. To learn more about the club, visit www.hilliardlynx.com.