

Shop with a Conscience Over the Holidays

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As Black Friday – the start of the holiday shopping season and also the start of the most active time of year for charitable giving – approaches in the midst of an economic crisis, Americans are considering what, or even if, they can contribute to charity this year.

With that in mind, labor rights and human rights organizations today are releasing the **2009 Shop with a Conscience Consumer Guide** to promote the notion that our shopping – the way we choose to spend our dollars – can create positive change. Created by SweatFree Communities and the International Labor Rights Forum, the Shop with a Conscience Consumer Guide provides a list of sweatshop-free options for consumers who would like to purchase sweaters, pants, coats, scarves, socks and other apparel made under ethical conditions.

“This year’s guide features 20 ‘sweatfree’ companies, offering a diverse selection of apparel and confirming the growing consumer demand for clothing made under fair and humane conditions,” said Bjorn Claeson, Executive Director of SweatFree Communities. “This holiday season every dollar we spend on presents that are made by workers who have good jobs and are paid decent wages is an economic stimulus dollar.”

“The power of our connections to workers around the world is real, and can make a meaningful difference in their lives; all we need is the consciousness to act and use that power,” added Bama Athreya, Executive Director, International Labor Rights Forum.

The guide profiles companies that produce clothing in accordance with international fair labor standards, such as ensuring workers health and safe working conditions; living wages and good benefits; and treatment with respect and dignity. In addition, the guide promotes clothing produced in shops where workers are organized into democratic unions or worker-owned cooperatives and have an effective, collective voice in determining their wages and working conditions.

The 2009 Shop with a Conscience Consumer Guide can be found at:

www.sweatfree.org/shopping.

SweatFree Communities coordinates a national network of grassroots campaigns that promote humane working conditions in apparel and other labor-intensive global industries, and work with both public and religious institutions to adopt sweatshop-free purchasing policies. Learn more at www.sweatfree.org.

***International Labor Rights Forum** is an advocacy organization dedicated to achieving just and humane treatment for workers worldwide. Learn more at www.laborrights.org.*