

Fair Trade Festival promotes social justice, equity

by Derek Paulus - Wednesday, December 05, 2012

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The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh held its 8th annual Fair Trade Festival on Nov. 29 as part of the University's continued effort to promote fair trade and operate under its standards.

The products featured are available for purchase on campus through the holiday season and beyond.

Clothing, jewelry, crafts and various food items were sold at the festival, which was held at Reeve Memorial Union. Throughout the year, UW Oshkosh also provides a line of fair trade clothing and jewelry in University Books and More. Fair trade Aspetto coffee and tea is sold in Blackhawk Commons, Reeve Union Marketplace and MiTaza Coffeehouses. Divine Chocolate is also a fair trade product that is sold at Corner Convenience Store. The sale of fair trade products helps provide small-scale producers with a fair payment.

UW Oshkosh held the first Fair Trade Festival in 2005, followed by a campaign in 2007 to become a Fair Trade University. In 2008, UW Oshkosh became the first Fair Trade University in the United States.

In holding this title, the University meets the standards set by Fair Trade colleges and universities, which works to "seek equity in trade and promote development." UW Oshkosh utilizes a Fair Trade committee, made up of faculty, staff and students, which operates under the Campus Sustainability Council to ensure that the campus meets fair trade standards.

These standards include making fair trade products available at University stores, using fair trade products at University meetings and other events and committing to the education and awareness of the fair trade campaign. In addition, UW Oshkosh is a member of the Fair Labor Association (FLA), which monitors vendors to ensure they are not using sweatshop labor in their production. The University only selects vendors approved by the FLA.

Hnou quo Vang is a UW Oshkosh senior majoring in environmental studies who worked at the Fair Trade Festival Nov. 29 providing information about fair trade and the University's commitment to the campaign. She said fair trade is a social justice issue that she is passionate about.

"We're trying to create a market for social justice," Vang said. "Trying to have a conscience, essentially."

Vang said the biggest step in UW Oshkosh's efforts to promote and support fair trade was becoming the first Fair Trade University in the country. She said she looks forward to the next steps taken by the University to improve upon its commitment to this social justice issue.

By taking on initiatives in support of fair trade in the U.S., UW Oshkosh is part of a fair trade system that supports more than 800,000 farmers in 48 countries, helping them provide for their families and

communities.

Learn more:

- [Fair Trade at UW Oshkosh](#)
- [Fair Labor Association](#)