

HSU Global Awareness Week highlights Fair Trade

November 30, 2011

ABILENE—Fair trade offers consumers in the United States the opportunity to help people in developing countries earn reasonable wages for the work they do, students at [Hardin-Simmons University](#) learned during Global Awareness Week, sponsored by the school's Baptist Student Ministries.

Anne Olson, public policy specialist with the [Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission](#), illustrated the need for consumer awareness during a chapel service at the university. She asked any members of the standing audience to sit if they did not own a purse or backpack. Nobody sat down.

"Sit if you don't know the brand of your backpack or purse," she said. A few faculty and staff members sat, but most of the students remained standing.

"Sit if you do not know the country where your item was made." A smattering more sat.

She continued with the last question: "Do you know how much the person was paid who made your backpack?" Everyone sat down.

Olson, coordinator of [Good News Goods](#) for the CLC, told students how fair trade helps put food on family tables, fight AIDS, and provide healthcare and clean drinking water to people living in poverty.



Anne Olson, public policy specialist with the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission challenged students to play a role in combatting human trafficking.

Good News Goods uses an Internet site to market products made by artisans in impoverished parts of the globe, many of them former victims of human trafficking. Proceeds raised from the sale of the merchandise goes to help the craftsmen, with a portion also going to help fund international development projects.

"Global poverty, hunger, human trafficking, and AIDS are a reality for millions around the globe each day," said James Stone, director of church relations for HSU. "Hardin-Simmons and [Logsdon Seminary](#) are fortunate to be able to host Good News Goods in a manner which provides all of our campus community an opportunity to engage these who suffer—both by understanding their plight and recognizing our mandate to act on their behalf."

Olsen told students they can play a role in combatting human trafficking, which affects some 27 million people in the United States and around the world. "It is a part of being a Christian to take these injustices to heart. We should be concerned of how our brothers and sisters in Christ are treated around the world," she said.

"Fair trade is a new movement that exists to remedy child labor, people

working in slavery, and unsafe working conditions. Fair trade allows people to have a market for their goods."

Good News Goods provides information on its website about the lives of the artisans who make the products sold on the Internet.

"Unique Batik is a group of women in Guatemala who now have dignified employment. Without the income they get from Good News Goods and Unique Batik, they wouldn't have any income," Olson said.

"Samina is an 18-year-old soccer ball stitcher in Pakistan who now has health care and was able to receive the thyroid operation she needed. This is the first year for workers there to have health insurance."

Putting more faces to products she added: "In Ghana and on the Ivory Coast, Divine Chocolate is the world's first farmer-owned chocolate company—a co-operative and innovative new business that fights slavery and violence. You see, we can use our spending to fix problems rather than create them. Purchases of Good News Goods have brought dignity, stability, and hope to people across the globe. Just one purchase from every Texas Baptist this year could help a million families be lifted out of poverty for one whole year."

Hardin-Simmons is the first Baptist General Convention of Texas-affiliated university to engage with Good News Goods campuswide, Olson noted. During Global Awareness Week, Good New Goods set up a marketplace in Moody Center where students could see the products before they order them off of the Internet site.