

# Students Celebrate Sweat Free PC

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The weather could not have been more perfect for a Sweat Free PC event held on Upper Quad on April 26, 2009. The event was designed to promote and to celebrate Providence College's decision to abstain from selling any product made by sweatshop laborers in the bookstore.

"Now all the clothing that we're going to be purchasing for the next school year will not be made in sweatshops," said Catherine Bednarz '09. "It will be made in factories that have labor unions and labor laws."

The decision was made official on Feb. 20, 2009, by Rev. Brian J. Shanley, O.P., president of Providence College, to affiliate PC with the Workers' Rights Consortium [WRC]. Now it is ensured that all of the clothing sold in the College's bookstore is guaranteed to be "sweat free."

The decision came as a result of ongoing efforts made by a group of students who enacted a Sweat Free PC movement on campus last spring through a Contemporary Sociological Theory class taught by Professor Cedric de Leon, Ph. D.

The Sweat Free PC event on Sunday was designed to make the sweat free movement a true part of the campus lifestyle.

The main activity of the celebration involved tie-dying t-shirts that were guaranteed to be sweat free and were boldly labeled SWEAT FREE.

"We had 100 shirts and we sold all of them, which was pretty cool," said de Leon. "Now there are going to be 100 people walking around campus wearing tie-dyed Sweat Free PC t-shirts."

The event also included food from local vendors, including pizza and subs, as well as a raffle.

Originally, a speaker from the United Students Against Sweatshops was scheduled to attend and to give a lecture at the event as well. United Students Against Sweatshops [USAS] is a network of students who have organized to defend workers' rights and to promote solidarity movements and campaigns with garment workers who produce university apparel. Unfortunately, the speaker was unable to attend at the last minute. However, rather than being forced to move indoors for a presentation, students were provided with more time to tie-dye the promotional t-shirts and to enjoy outdoor activities, such as playing Frisbee on the quad.

"The event still went really well," said Bednarz.

"We ended up making a profit on our t-shirts, so we're planning on donating

the money," said Bednarz, who also mentioned that it will most likely be given to the Workers Rights Consortium.

"The most important thing [of the event] was that we increased our visibility on campus," said de Leon.

Another main goal of the event was to encourage all student organizations and clubs to get on board with the Sweat Free movement. If all clubs and organizations were to join the Sweat Free movement then all t-shirts and apparel distributed or purchased by clubs and organizations would be sweat free.

"I believe we have pledges from Amnesty, Women's Will, and SHEPARD saying that they will from now on only go through Sweat Free companies that support labor and fair trade standards," said Bednarz.

The movement was entirely successful in getting the faculty and administration on board to affiliate with the Workers' Rights Consortium. The next goal is to "deepen our roots...to increase our visibility through solidifying and consolidating...and making [the Sweat Free] organization part of everyday life," said de Leon. Now that the administration has done everything in its power to affiliate, the next step is to develop a code of conduct.

"We have agreed that we're going to have at least one student and a faculty member to draft this code of conduct," said de Leon. "We hope to have two students on this committee, one who is an upperclassman and one who is an underclassman, so that the knowledge replicates itself."

Codes of conduct that are adopted by schools affiliated with the Worker Rights Consortium typically include provisions affirming the payment of a living wage for workers, compliance with health and safety standards, and freedom of collective bargaining, as well as provisions banning forced overtime, discrimination of any kind, child labor and compliance with health and safety standards in the workplace. All of these elements are in accordance with the mission statement of Providence College, therefore making the adoption of a code of conduct an integral part of the Sweat Free movement.

Sweat Free PC is continually working to promote awareness on campus through events such as this. Additionally, another event was scheduled for April 29, at 5:00 p.m., in Moore Hall II. It was "an informational event where a former sweatshop worker from Honduras who was fired from her position for unionizing" spoke to students, according to Christine Halkett '09.