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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fair Trade to the Last Thread

Brattleboro, VT - Everything about KUSIKUY, a Fair Trade clothing company, is consciousness, known, transparent and beneficial for all.

“We source the best alpaca fleece from Bolivia’s only cooperatively owned professional alpaca spinners.” explains Director, Tamara Stenn.

Developed by the United Nations Industrial Development Group over 10 years ago, this facility has quality European equipment specially modified for alpaca’s long, silky, slippery fibers. Herders, who own part of the mill, are guaranteed fair payment for their fleece.

Urbanization is a problem that is gripping Bolivia and many other developing countries. Poverty forces people to leave traditional lifestyles in the countryside to seek more opportunities in the city. Often these opportunities do not materialize and entire families get drawn into a downward cycle of poverty, lost traditions, values and native language.

KUSIKUY knitters work at home, in small adobe farm houses, rural villages, and while tending the farm, animals, and family. There is no factory to report to or hours to clock in. Knitters are paid by the piece and often knit together sharing in camaraderie, watching each others’ children, and learning together. A sweater takes two weeks to knit. The knitter’s simple, tranquil, life is lovingly knit into each garment. This beauty is felt in the quality products they create.

“I can feel the love that went into my KUSIKUY knits. It is like when my grandma used

to knit for me” wrote customer, Karen Castles.

“We chose to first develop relationships with the knitters, then the herders and spinners.” explains Stenn. “After this we started looking toward the fashion industry to see where we could go with our skills and material.”

Stenn spent the past 10 years developing KUSIKUY. She lived in Bolivia as a Peace Corps volunteer for three years and returned to the USA with an armload of sweaters to earn a Masters degree in International Development from the School for International Training, and to launch KUSIKUY.

“Joining the fashion industry,” explains Stenn, “I was amazed at how many people present expansive fashion yet feel no care or concern as to how these fashions were made, from what materials, in what conditions, by whom. It’s a total disconnect.”

KUSIKUY Bolivia coordinator Claudia Vargas agrees, “To wear a beautiful garment and know that perhaps the woman who painstakingly sewed the pretty sequins on or strung the beads or finished the seam was earning just 60 cents a day in a hot sweatshop somewhere in Asia is horrible. Clothing is so personal. Someone has to touch it, breath the fiber dust as it is cut, thread the machines. There is thought put into it. It is so tactile, intimate. I want to know who made my clothing, who knit it. Or at least know that they were well compensated and cared for.”

“I don’t mind paying more money for something if I know that the money is being distributed fairly to everyone who contributed to the product.” explains KUSIKUY customer Denise

Fortunately KUSIKUY products are surprising affordable.

“This is because we buy directly from our knitters,” explains Stenn. “We know each and every one of them and they knit just for us. There is no middle man to be paid. And we pass these savings on to our customers.”

KUSIKUY is available online at www.kusikuy.com and retails at specialty boutiques across the country. Check www.kusikuy.com for the location nearest you.

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