

**CONTACT:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Sept.**

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**Tamara Stenn**

**Director**

**KUSIKUY Clothing Co.**

**311 Williams St.**

**Brattleboro, VT 05301**

**Toll free: 1-866-KUSIKUY (587-4589)**

**Tel: 802-254-4044 Fax: 802-254-8301**

**Cell: 802-579-3386**

**e-mail: [tamara@kusikuy.com](mailto:tamara@kusikuy.com)**

**Web: [www.kusikuy.com](http://www.kusikuy.com)**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Fair Trade Makes a Difference**

**Brattleboro, VT** - Fair trade, the practice of ensuring that all participants in the development of a product or service are adequately compensated and cared for, helps to improve lives and benefit consumers in many ways. KUSIKUY Clothing Co. is a Fair Trade natural fiber clothing company that produces hand made knits in Bolivia.

KUSIKUY has been working with core knitting group, Artesania Copacabana, for 10 years now. In that time they have grown from a small stall in a busy city artisan market to owning two stalls and a large production facility in the outlying suburbs. This facility provides a safe, comfortable place for knitters to congregate, workshops to be held, meals to be shared, and children to play.

Elena Mamani, the director of Artesania Copacabana is highly regarded in the close knit, sometimes competitive, artisan community. She is regularly consulted by her peers for guidance and is quick to offer help to others in the lessons she has learned about quality control, and customer service. Her two daughters have traveled to Israel and Peru and are now in the Bolivian University studying biochemistry and business.

Elena is most proud of the development of the highly successful Beehive (retail \$24) and Windstopper (retail \$24) hats. These hats were designed in the USA and are hand knit of hand spun alpaca yarn. Elena had to work with her largely illiterate knitters to interpret the complicated USA directions and modify them to the hand spun yarn qualities. The result is stunning. The hats are gorgeous and the knitters now have a new hat style they can knit.

La Imilla is another group that knits for KUSIKUY. Located in a tropical valley, they have been severely affected by changing weather patterns. In the last 10 years they have seen their valley's water aquifers and lakes dry up. While they used to produce bountiful crops of onions, tomatoes, carrots, and wheat, they now are just farming corn due to the lack of water for irrigation. Last year whirlwinds ripped through the valley destroying some of the corn crops, often a family's sole income source.

Once just extra money, knitting is now becoming a primary income source for rural farmers. In the six years KUSIKUY has been working with La Imilla (which means "young lady" in Quechua), membership in this association has doubled. KUSIKUY works hard to accommodate this growing group, actively sourcing new customers and orders for them.

La Imilla knitters are most proud of the Jacqueline Elegance hooded wrap (retail \$164) they designed based on a USA KUSIKUY design. They saw areas where the pattern could be improved and actually modified it to make it drape better, use less yarn and reduce costs, and create an even better product than we had envisioned. As a special Andean touch, they added a whimsical tiered pompom in the style used for identifying llamas in Bolivia's wandering herds.

KUSIKUY invests 2% of all Fashion Alpaca sales into educational programs to help La Imilla knitters with skill building and to manage a recently acquired knitting facility. Look for new felted alpaca, alpaca crochet, alpaca fur trim, and sequin and semi precious stone encrusted knits coming from La Imilla for 2007!

KUSIKUY is available online at [www.kusikuy.com](http://www.kusikuy.com) and retails at specialty boutiques across the country. Check [www.kusikuy.com](http://www.kusikuy.com) for the location nearest you.

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