

Shop sells 'environmentally respectful' T-shirts

□ Innovative Eugene store avoids toxic chemicals by using water-based ink

By Hope Nealson
Emerald Reporter

T-shirts have now officially entered the ranks among language, toilet paper, music and beer as being either politically correct or incorrect.

The newest store to open in Eugene's downtown area is selling "environmentally respectful" T-shirts and sweatshirts. Most of the designs so far have been for organizations and events, such as the Women's Law Forum and Earth Day.

Wildman Clothing uses only water-based screen printing, rather than the popular ink product plastisol, on its U.S.-grown cotton shirts.

Most screeners today are using plastisol for printing T-shirts, which contains toxic chemicals. Shirt manufacturers then use toxic solvents to clean up what's left after the shirt-making process is over.

The water-based ink requires soap and water for cleanup, gives off no toxic vapors during screening or drying, and results in a softer T-shirt, said Wildman owner John Howell.

The drawback to water-based ink is that it is harder to work with and is semi-transparent; thus only certain color combinations are possible.

Howell said that aside from creating clothes that are safer for the environment, Wildman is dedicated to building and supporting the community, both locally and globally.

"We're a community oriented business that is progressive and concerned about the world we live in," Howell said.

Howell said he has worked with many non-profit groups that are concerned about making the planet and society a better place to live.

Wildman has made T-shirts for more than 40 community groups, including the Eugene parks and recreation department, Shanti, Sacred Heart General Hospital, the University of Oregon Residence Staff and the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity.

Steve Malewicz of Alpha Tau Omega said the fraternity chose to print its T-shirts through Wildman for its last three events.

"We used Wildman because they gave us a good price," Malewicz said. "Plus, they're environmentally safe."

A self-taught artist, Howell said he started out as a robotics engineer and one day decided to do something that would benefit



John Howell, owner of Wildman Clothing in Eugene's downtown mall.

Photo by Michael Stender

society.

Howell said that although he does a lot of the design for most of the shirts, many local artists have helped him draw his T-shirt ideas.

Howell said he moved to Eugene in 1989 and began building a name for himself in the community. He printed T-shirts out of his apartment on his dining room floor.

Howell said he didn't think he would get a shop downtown, but a space opened up and he grabbed it. Despite the high number

of retail store closures in the downtown mall last year, Howell said he was glad to get a central office where he could display what he has made and receive more orders.

"Business has been getting better day by day," he said.

The store's latest project is making the T-shirt for the April 22 Earth Day celebration at the downtown mall. Wildman is one of the sponsors of the event, which will feature the band Crash Test Dummies and performers Mark Allen and Ron Lloyd.

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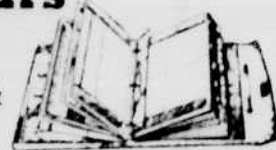
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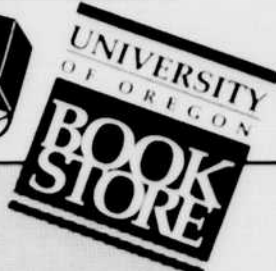
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