

I ♥ worker rights

For Valentine's Day, choose union-made, shun sweat-shop products

Love may be priceless, but not all Valentine's Day gifts are created equal. With a union, the workers who make them can bargain for decent wages and working conditions; without one, not so much. The good news is that consumers who care about humane working conditions can buy candies and chocolates made by workers represented by a union — Bakery Confectionery Tobacco and Grain Millers (BCTGM).

One of the oldest and best-known Valentine's candies — pastel sugar hearts with quirky sayings — is made by members of BCTGM Local 348 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The so-called Sweethearts, made by New England Confectionery Company (NECCO) since 1902, are also the nation's top-selling Valentine's candy. Just be sure to look for the Sweethearts brand; otherwise the pastel hearts you're buying are imitators made by nonunion competitors.

Three national brands sell Valen-



tine's candies manufactured by members of BCTGM Local 125 in the San Francisco Bay area: Ghiradelli Chocolate Company sells Valentine's Day chocolates in tins, boxes and packs; See's Candies sells Valentine heart boxes with hard, soft and nut chocolate candies; and Jelly Belly Candy Com-

pany sells Valentine's Day gift boxes, tins, and packs.

But the tradition of the dozen red roses, sad to say, is tricky from the standpoint of worker rights. Most cut flowers sold in the United States are

grown in Colombia and Ecuador by workers — mostly female — who are exposed to unhealthy pesticides, paid poverty level wages of about \$8.25 a day, and forced to work long hours in the period leading up to Valentine's Day. Colombian flower worker unions aren't asking U.S. consumers to boycott their products, says Steven Coats, executive director of U.S. Labor Education in the Americas Project (US/LEAP) — a union-supported worker justice group. But there are no certification systems in place to tell consumers that flowers were produced by workers treated humanely.

Meanwhile, the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) is urging the public to take a stand — on Valentine's Day — against forced labor and child labor in the West African cocoa industry. Most major chocolate companies have committed to using independent, third-party programs to certify that

their cocoa suppliers comply with international labor standards, ILRF says. But Hershey continues to lag behind the industry. ILRF is asking supporters to send a "Valentine" card to Hershey CEO David West, and to watch or host a screening of "The Dark Side of Chocolate," a documentary exposé available online for a \$6 suggested donation. Visit laborrights.org to take part in the campaign.

Some Hershey's Kisses and other Hershey's chocolates are still made by members of BCTGM Local 464 in Hershey, Pennsylvania. But increasingly, the company's products are made in Mexico or in nonunion plants in the United States, says BCTGM spokesperson Corrina Christensen.

The same goes for Nestlé Chocolate, which makes some products at BCTGM-represented factories in Illinois, but others at nonunion facilities and in Mexico.



Portland Auto Show is eco-friendly

A solar/electrical vehicle charging station — the first of its kind in the Pacific Northwest — was unveiled at last month's Portland International Auto Show. Also known as an Energy Transfer Merchant (ETM), the charging station prototype was designed by newcomer EV4 Oregon and installed by Portland's Christenson Electric, a union company signatory with IBEW Local 48. The charging station will be built by Oregon companies, using Oregon products, as a kit that can be assembled anywhere quickly. The charging station includes a quick charger that electric car owners can plug their vehicles in with a "shade" made of solar panels. The solar energy collected from the panels can be used to run the station's lights during the night or it can be used to help charge the electric cars, depending on how the station is set up. The first station in Portland will be located at a Portland Development Commission parking lot on NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., and will be fully operational in March. "People who drive electrical cars don't want to use coal or petroleum to charge them. We're using energy that was on the surface of the sun eight minutes ago," said Chad Biasi, managing member of EV4 Oregon. "We were thrilled to partner with Christenson Electric on this project and use their extensive knowledge and expertise." Biasi is pictured above left with Lynn Frank, Five Stars International, a consultant to EV4 Oregon; Hans van der Meer of EV4 Oregon; and Dean Skaar, vice president of business development at Christenson Electric. They are standing next to a quarter scale model of the charging station.

INDEPENDENT RETIREMENT LIVING

Westmoreland's Union Manor

6404 SE 23rd Ave.
Portland 97202
503•233•5671

Kirkland Union Plaza

1414 Kauffman Ave.
Vancouver 98660
360•694•4314

Manors Make the Difference

- Studio and One-Bedroom Apartments
- Affordable Rent includes Utilities (EXCEPT PHONE AND CABLE)
- Planned Events, Clubs, and Activities
- Ideal Locations offer easy access to Bus Lines, Shopping, and Entertainment
- No Costly Buy-In or Application Fees
- Federal Rent Subsidies Available (MUST QUALIFY)



KIRKLAND UNION PLAZA *Opened in March of 2002*



LABOR LEADERS IN THE
PORTLAND BUILDING TRADE
MOVEMENT ORGANIZED THE
UNION LABOR RETIREMENT
ASSOCIATION IN 1962, WITH THE SOLE PURPOSE
OF PROVIDING HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY.

"We believe that everyone earns the right to retire, free from pressures of earlier years."



Kirkland Union Manors
3530 SE 84th Ave.
Portland 97266
503•777•8101

Marshall Union Manor
2020 NW Northrup
Portland 97209
503•225•0677

WWW.THEUNIONMANORS.ORG
TDD 503•771•0912