

## Groups to Kmart: Pull crude T-shirt

*Staff Report*

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AUGUSTA - Complaining it a poor message, the Maine Women's Lobby and others asked Kmart and parent company Sears Holding Corp. on Thursday to stop selling a T-shirt that showed a stick-figure man shoving a stick-figure women with the caption "Problem Solved" underneath.

A company spokesman said the shirt has been for sale nationwide for months, and last week one call from Maine was the first and only complaint they've gotten about it. The depiction is meant to be light-hearted and they plan to keep selling it, Chris Brathwaite said.

During a news conference at the State House, Godfrey Banda of Lewiston said the T-shirt wasn't a laughing matter.

Banda is program coordinator for Boys to Men, an organization that promotes the healthy development of adolescent boys and tries to reduce interpersonal violence.

"It is our responsibility, most importantly men's responsibility, to stand up and say that physical, emotional and sexual abuse of anyone is not to be tolerated," he said.

"When I saw the shirt that was on the shelves in Kmart, I was honestly disgusted," echoed Thalia Matthews, 17, of Oakland and president of the girls advisory board for the group, Hardy Girls Healthy Women. "I see kids in my school everyday who have suffered from domestic abuse. And to me, these shirts promote abuse and domestic violence as nothing more than a joke."

Matthews had been out collecting donations for the Family Violence Shelter in Waterville when she learned of the T-shirt.

"These T-shirts come in size 6/7 for kids," she said. "It's just not right."

Hardy Girls asked Kmart to remove the T-shirt from its stores, take a stance against domestic violence and provide training to staff to better equip them to recognize and stop domestic abuse.

The "Problem Solved" shirt was not for sale in the piles of graphic-print T-shirts at the Auburn Kmart on Thursday afternoon. Store manager Roger Sanborn said he had no comment on the matter.

"These are cartoon characters. This company would never, ever condone or support that kind of behavior," Brathwaite said. "Attitude T's by their very nature are light-hearted looks at life."

