

Portland Press Herald

December 22, 2006

Groups Denounce Kmart Shirts

Blethen Maine News Service *Portland Press Herald / Maine Sunday Telegram*
Friday, December 22, 2006



AUGUSTA - Groups that work to combat domestic violence went to the State House on Thursday to show their displeasure with the sale of a T-shirt for boys that some say promotes domestic violence.

Hardy Girls Healthy Women and Boys to Men held a press conference to say they have asked Kmart's parent company, Sears Holdings, to remove the Route 66 Attitude T-shirt from store shelves.

Earlier, a separate group at the State House shredded some of the controversial shirts.

The Maine Women's Lobby also weighed in, calling on Sears Holdings to remove the shirts and become a leader in preventing violence.

The T-shirt depicts two panels of stick figures, with a male figure pushing a female figure out of a box, with the caption "Problem Solved."

Thalia Matthews and Deanha Giguere, students at Messalonskee High School in

Oakland who spent the past two weekends collecting donations to support a shelter for victims of domestic violence, said the shirt sends a bad message.

"Selling the message that using physical violence to solve your problems is OK is not acceptable," Matthews said at the news conference as her sister, Alyssa Matthews, held up the T-shirt. "I want Kmart to take these shirts off their shelves for good, wherever Kmart's are located," Thalia Matthews said.

The shirts were removed briefly from store shelves in Augusta last week at the request of a shopper, but were returned at the direction of Kmart's parent company.

Kimberly Freely, manager of corporate relations for Sears Holdings Corp., said on Thursday that the shirt's message is not meant to be taken as supporting domestic violence. Freely said the figures are cartoon characters, not real people.