

Making Ripples

School Shopping for Ethical Clothes

by Amanda Bancroft

Parents don't want their kids to get hurt, and most parents don't want to see kids in general get hurt. That's why many parents choose to purchase sweatshop-free and sustainably made products for their children whenever they can afford it. Even though one t-shirt isn't destroying the planet single-handedly, all the small purchases of billions of unsustainable products add up. And kids working as slaves or in unhealthy conditions are harmed physically and psychologically. One child wears the clothes while another dies producing them. (Omelas, anyone?)

Luckily, we have great local options. Good Things Boutique located at 108 N. Block in Fayetteville offers a variety of clothing, makeup and supplies. Their Earth Divas Fair Trade backpacks are made of hemp and cotton. A fun variety of organic cotton t-shirts for both genders, pants, skirts, bras, and underwear can create a complete back-to-school outfit for teens. They also offer a line of organic, cruelty-free makeup like foundation, blush, eye shadow, and mascara made by 100% Pure. These fruit-pigmented products are mostly vegan, with no synthetic ingredients. Owner Jessy Lang said that "when somebody chooses to shop locally, that has such an impact on our local community and artists. It has a domino effect." Referring to sustainable products, she says, "If we want to be our best selves, we should provide the best for ourselves."

Terra Tots Natural Parenting, located at 15 S. Block in Fayetteville, has colorful eco-friendly backpacks and lunch supplies for the kiddo. They offer popular SugarBooger backpacks, Oh Baby Food, Itsy Ritsy reusable snack bags, Life Factory glass water bottles, baby bottles and food storage containers, lunch boxes and bamboo utensils – even the "spork," an all-in-one combination of a spoon and a fork. Lunch supplies can easily be color-coordinated in a set.

Owner Jennifer Creel states on their website that nobody needs to be perfectly green to shop there. "Every kind of mom is welcome at Terra Tots. Every mom can find support for her journey regardless of whether she chooses to use cloth diapers or not, and every family can get the help they deserve from our staff. Any little change a family makes means a step in a better direction for their families and their communities."

Some argue, quite validly, that few can afford the luxury of organic or fair trade products because they're expensive. It's often asked why such products can't be cheaper. But more importantly, we should be asking why most people can't afford to buy a product unless it was produced by harming a child or our planet or both. The real injustice is not that fair trade producers and organic farmers earned a living, but that the consumers in our society often don't have the income to support these producers. For those who do, ethical school supplies offer

multifaceted rewards and come with the knowledge that we may not be perfect, but today we stood on the side of love for our kids – *all* the kids.

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