



*The North West Company is a leading retailer of food and everyday products and services to rural communities and urban neighbourhoods in Canada, Alaska, the South Pacific and the Caribbean.*

## **NEWS RELEASE – For Immediate Release**

### **Discount Foster Care Clothing Effort Goes Statewide. New Participating Retailers Extend Reach From Southeast To North Slope.**

**Anchorage, June 19, 2009:** Foster youth face enough challenges. Showing up to a new school in tattered second-hand clothing doesn't help things. A volunteer discount clothing effort spearheaded by foster care alumni and advocate Amanda Metivier, and Rep. Les Gara (D-Anchorage), aims to change that. The effort, which draws on retailers to offer clothing discounts to foster families, has now gone statewide with the recent announcement this month by rural Alaska's AC Stores, and JC Penney in Anchorage.

"Foster youth face a lot of challenges, and it doesn't help when they stand out among their peers in used or inadequate clothing," said Metivier, statewide coordinator for Alaska's foster care advocacy group, Facing Foster Care in Alaska. "This effort started with baby steps. It's grown enough now that we need to get the word out statewide," said Gara, also a foster care alumni.

"Alaska Commercial Company is excited to offer our support of the 'Clothing Alaska's Foster Youth Program'. The Foster Wear Program aligns perfectly with Alaska Commercial Company's commitment of supporting the youth in the communities we serve," announced Alan McCollor of AC Stores.

Gara and Metivier came up with the idea of FosterWear at a conference in Seattle, where local organizations have started a name brand clothing store for foster youth. The State's Office of Children's Services has worked hard with Gara and Metivier to help extend the reach of this effort.

"Foster children grow up to become neighbors, co-workers and community leaders," said Office of Children's Services Resource Family Program Officer Tracy Spartz-Cambell. "We're so thankful that these businesses recognize the importance of contributing to the success of our youth. And we are very thankful for the support these businesses are providing to Alaska's foster parents."

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FosterWear participants now include: REI in Anchorage; Homer's Jeans in Homer; The Prospector in Fairbanks and Valdez; Nugget Outfitters in Juneau; JC Penney in Anchorage; Army Navy in Anchorage; AC stores in Dillingham, Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue, Barrow, Sitka, Klawock, Craig, King Cove, Sand Point, Kodiak, Cordova, Yakutat, King Salmon, Togiak, St. Paul Is., Hooper Bay, St. Mary's, Mt. Village, Emmonak, Kotlik, St. Michael, Unalakleet, Nuiqsut, Fort Yukon, McGrath, and Aniak.

Omni Stores, with locations in Bethel and Dillingham is also hoping to join the effort soon, and Metivier, OCS, and Gara's Office are still trying to attract new participants.

"It is REI's sincere hope that other retailers will join us in supporting the foster youth of our communities by helping them secure quality clothing adequate for the unique challenges of our Alaskan lifestyle," said REI's Mike Herzog, who helped found the effort by signing REI on as FosterWear's first participating store in January.

The participating stores offer different discount plans for licensed foster families. For the discount details at each store, or for more information, see [www.hss.state.ak.us/ocs/fosterwear](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/ocs/fosterwear), or contact: Izabel Bowers with the Office of Children's Services at (907) 465-3656 or Representative Gara's office at (907) 250-0106 or 269-0106.

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