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HEADLINE: Company doesn't want to make a statement

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BODY:

Politeed, a new line of T-shirts, hopes to provoke discussion with its shirts that ask questions rather than make statements about current political and social issues.

Sherry Henry, the Dallas-based company's CEO and co-founder, said the point is to avoid taking a side by leaving in question the shirt wearer's stance on an issue.

The 12 categories in the T-shirt line range from Iraq and gay rights to global warming and abortion. Questions within those groups include: Will God judge us for destroying the Earth? Does terrorism require America to rethink free speech? Do illegal immigrants contribute to the prosperity of the United States?

The shirts, which cost \$24.99, are made in the U.S. and are available online at www.politeed.com. They come in four colors and two styles: tank top and short-sleeve.

Here's what Henry had to say about the company's mission to make T-shirt fashion debatable, current and outspoken.

Background: Henry said she and business partner Lisa Stone came up with the concept in 2005. Money came from a buyout at Verizon Wireless and savings. They launched the line in August.

Swag time: Celebrities and others lucky enough to get a swag bag - a gift bag filled with must-have items - at the Sundance Film Festival this month and the Academy Awards in February will find a shirt.

Look at the facts: "There is always some shirt out there ... whether it's about a Democrat or a Republican, that is [a] bashing kind of T-shirt.... This way, we came up with a way to ask simple questions that face the nation. I didn't want to tell people how to think. I wanted them to think for themselves and look at the facts more."

Why? "There is more to [any issue] than just what's on TV. But you don't get that time to delve into it. Your national news is a 30-minute segment. It gives you a surface view, and that's a basis to start with. . . . It's your responsibility then to take it forward. You can't just rely on what a group of people tells you unless you really look into it."

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Reaction: Henry said some people have e-mailed her and said they can tell what side of the issues she's on by the way the questions are asked. She disagrees.

"A question is a question. There are no liberal questions or conservative questions," she said. "It's how you interpret [them] and how you discuss it with other people" that make the difference.

Reaction to a T

Here's what two Richmond-area women had to say about the Politeed shirts.

"I so love this idea. Americans are so completely into what they are doing in

their daily world, they're not thinking about the big picture. [I'm for] anything that can spark discussion ... opens up [people's] brains to why they believe what they believe. Then they can measure that against what the other person's thoughts are on the subject."

- Michelle Corridon, founder of The Chic Armoire, a wardrobe consulting company

Hanover County

"They could've gone edgier.... Young people - the generation behind me

they're not going to make change if they're asking safe questions like that. Look at history - Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi. Look at civil wars and ... significant events in history. They didn't happen because somebody played it safe and asked soft questions.... We have to ask questions that start a dialogue. That doesn't mean the answers will be easy to accept or hear. We wouldn't be the home of democracy if we hadn't stopped to say, 'Wait a minute, we have to dig a little deeper.' "

- Rebekah Pierce, founder, publisher and editor-in-chief of Average Girl: The Magazine

Midlothian

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