

New Fashion Brand Works to End Sex Trafficking, Gender Inequality

Written by Christina Tetreault



Story By: Taylor Seely

It starts with the simple concept that any woman sold into sex trafficking or enduring gender inequality could be your sister.

Mandy Multerer, one of three founders of the new Minnesota-based company [My Sister](#), said between four and five million women and children around the world are sold into sex trafficking each year.

To combat this crime, she and two others, Jonathan Sipola and Wayne Zink, created My Sister, a benefit corporation that promotes gender equality and fights to end sex trafficking by selling clothing, jewelry and beauty products to raise funds for various nonprofits with similar missions.

The company donates six percent of every purchase to its charity partners and nonprofit programs and 100 percent of all donations received via online or in person at various events the company attends.

By identifying as a benefit corporation, Multerer said [My Sister](#) could use its profits to make a bigger impact and help more nonprofits. Also, as a benefit corporation, the company's bylaws and regulations are influenced by its mission to eradicate sex trafficking and cannot be changed at any time.

"It's a for-profit classification that offers (us) a deeper ingrained way to stick to our mission," she says. Since the company opened, it has already raised more than \$30,000 to help prevent sex trafficking and provide after-care for survivors.

Sipola, who originated the concept of My Sister, thought of the idea after researching human trafficking for a social studies class he was teaching in Australia several years ago.

He learned that human trafficking is the second largest criminal industry in the world, and sex trafficking takes up 70 to 80 percent of the crimes. Shocked by trafficking's ubiquity, Sipola's first thought was to create a nonprofit to help spread awareness, but after researching, he discovered dozens of previously existing nonprofits already doing great work.

Instead of becoming a competing force, he wanted to support these companies in their work, thus the birth of My Sister.

Though the company officially launched online at [MySister.org](#) on May 4, 2015, planning began more than a year prior when Sipola, Multerer and Zink teamed up.

Zink, an Arizona native who used to own a similarly-structured company that raised funds for endangered species, helped with the mechanics of starting My Sister, while Multerer focused on making the company's overall design and branding what Sipola had envisioned.

Sipola wanted to begin by selling universal, affordable T-shirts.

"For me, it really turned into this opportunity to take an everyday product and make it a conversation piece," Multerer says. "I wanted it to follow that trend of the graphic tee but have a little bit more meaning behind it."

My Sister's shirt sayings range from sassy to mysterious to downright blunt and purpose-driven.

"You're not the boss of me' is a fun, sassy one that most people can get entertainment out of," Multerer says, "and 'Make Herstory' is a play off of 'make history,' but also make her story a more positive and loving one."

Another popular purchase among consumers is the in your face, "I Object, I Am Not An Object," tee, which Multerer says is a bold statement for women taking a stand against sexual objectification.

Along with tees, My Sister also sells handcrafted jewelry from trafficking survivors in Nepal, India, as well as lip shimmers, metallic tattoos and

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other accessories.

Within the coming year, Multerer said the company hopes to connect with more nonprofits in new states.

Interested readers should especially look out for any Arizona-designed My Sister shirts, as Multerer says she is hoping to pursue a partnership with Streetlight USA, the largest youth program in the country for adolescent victims of sex trafficking, based in Arizona.

“As many times as I can, I want to take our products and have it go a step further with our mission,” she says. “It could be your sister. We’re all sisters, so let’s treat each other as that and help each other out.”

