

NEWS RELEASE

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Nader, Commercial Alert Urge Girl Scouts to Drop Program That Promotes Shopping, Fashion

Ralph Nader deplored the way that the Girl Scouts of the USA is taking part in a nationwide project with Limited Too which fosters the obsession with looks, fashion and consumerism which are the source of so much emotional and financial pain.

The "Fashion Adventure" project with Limited Too encourages girls to shop, try on clothes, and model them in front of others. Limited Too, with over 300 stores, is the largest retail clothing chain targeting young girls. Nader called on Girl Scouts National President Elinor Ferdon to stop the three year old "Fashion Adventure" project.

"The Girl Scouts do not exist to deliver a captive group of impressionable girls to the corporate marketeers of the land," Nader said.

The Girl Scouts of the USA is the largest voluntary organization for girls in the world. According to the Girl Scouts, "The purpose of Girl Scouting is to inspire girls with the highest ideals of character, conduct, patriotism and service that they may become happy and resourceful citizens."

"We hope that the Girl Scouts will return to their purpose, and teach girls that they will be judged by their merit and skills, and that they're much more important than what they buy or wear or how products make them look," Nader said.

"If the Girl Scouts were teaching how to deal with the manipulations of the commercial culture -- the way it fosters obsessive body image for example -- that would be one thing," said Gary Ruskin, director of Commercial Alert. "But they aren't arming girls against the wolves. They are delivering them to the wolves."

"Why is the Girl Scouts lending the legitimacy of its name to corporate selling campaigns?" Nader asked.

Girl Scouts earn "G.S. Fashion Adventure" patches for participating in the program, which includes "learning how and where clothes are assembled, what the design process entails, and how retailing works," according to the Girl Scouts. Girls are also given 15% discount coupons from Limited Too.

Peggy Charren, founder of Action for Children's Television, called the Fashion Adventure program "nauseating" and a "pure and simple sales pitch under the auspices of the Girl Scouts" in an August 17 *Wall Street Journal* article. According to the article, the Girl Scouts do not profit from marketing tie-ins.

The Wall Street Journal reported on how the Fashion Adventure program affected one parent and her daughter. "Just what the girls learn in the program surprised Laura Neal. Earlier

in the year, her eight-year-old daughter, Ellen, participated in the Fashion Adventure Program in Decatur, Ga. The next day, Ms. Neal found herself accompanying her daughter to the store, discount coupon in hand. Ellen went straight to the 'real short shorts' and a 'risque' sheer blouse that she had tried on during the program, Ms. Neal says. While Ms. Neal approves of the informational part of the patch, she is also wary of the sudden change in her daughter. 'She wasn't interested in clothes before,' Ms. Neal says. 'I saw a flash before me of what it was going to be like as a teenager, and it scared me.'"

Commercial Alert is a new project to help parents, children, and communities defend themselves against harmful, immoral or intrusive advertising and marketing, and the excesses of commercialism.

Commercial Alert's web address is <<http://www.essential.org/alert>>.