



OCTOBER 24TH IS TAKE BACK YOUR TIME DAY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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We can provide fact sheets and interview subjects for reporters who wish to cover this story.

Seattle, WA – What do a gathering of writers in San Diego, a community forum on family dinners in the Twin Cities, teach-ins at several universities and the “Stop, Drop and Read” hour at the Montpelier, Vermont, public library have in common? These are just a few of the events happening across the country in recognition of TAKE BACK YOUR TIME DAY, (www.timeday.org) an US/Canadian initiative generating dialogue about the issues of overwork, over-scheduling and time poverty. October 24th is the second annual celebration of TAKE BACK YOUR TIME DAY.

“Last year, with over 200 events reaching thousands, we put the issue on the map. This year we hope to bring our message to an even broader audience,” says TAKE BACK YOUR TIME DAY staffer, Gretchen Burger, who is coordinating a community potluck in Seattle featuring acclaimed travel writer and Time Day supporter Rick Steves.

With TAKE BACK YOUR TIME DAY falling on a Sunday this year (October 24 marks the anniversary of the date in 1940 when the US officially got the 40 hour work week), many churches are helping to spread the message. The Massachusetts Council of Churches (www.masscouncilofchurches.org), in partnership with the Boston Time Day committee, has developed one of the largest and most exciting activities of Time Day 2004: the “Take Four Windows of Time” program. “Take Four Windows of Time” encourages MCC members, of which there are over 1700 congregations, to choose four windows of time for rest and relaxation between Labor Day and TAKE BACK YOUR TIME DAY. “The response to this program has been overwhelmingly positive,” says Diane Kessler, Executive Director of the Council.

And while October 24th is the official TAKE BACK YOUR TIME DAY, organizers see the date itself as part of an ongoing movement.

“TAKE BACK YOUR TIME DAY is one part of a larger campaign which is really gaining momentum and attracting interest from a broad range of individuals and organizations,” says John de Graaf, national coordinator for TAKE BACK YOUR TIME.

Over the past year, the TAKE BACK YOUR TIME campaign has adopted a six-point public policy plan—the “Time to Care” agenda; hosted a North American conference at Loyola University, Chicago; and most recently helped spearhead the formation of the IT’S ABOUT TIME coalition which calls on political candidates to begin addressing the impact of workplace demands on families by endorsing the “Time to Care” agenda.

While TAKE BACK YOUR TIME addresses all issues resulting in Time Poverty, the campaign calls attention to a just-published International Labor Office (ILO) book, “Working Time and Workers’ Preferences in Industrial Countries: Finding the Balance,” which shows that 20% of Americans work “excessive hours”—more than 50 a week—compared with 1.4% in the Netherlands and much smaller percentages throughout Continental Europe. The ILO reports that half of all Americans would prefer shorter working hours and have trouble balancing work and family responsibilities. (for more info: www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/condtrav/time/index.htm).

“It’s not at all clear that Americans need to work such long hours, harming their health, family life, communities and environment, in order to compete in the global economy,” argues Time Day’s John de Graaf, editor of the TAKE BACK YOUR TIME handbook. While the World Economic Forum recently found the US to be among the most competitive of world economies, it is no more so than northern European countries such as Finland and Sweden, where workers put in much shorter hours each year.

“We hope that these issues will be included in the discussions happening this weekend,” says Gretchen Burger. “And that really is the goal: to get folks talking about this critical issue. Even if there isn’t an event scheduled in their community, we hope that folks will gather with friends and family, share a meal and have a dialogue about how these issues impact their lives and what they see are viable solutions.”

To find out more about Take Back Your Time and the 2004 Time Day events, visit the official web site at www.timeday.org.

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Take Back Your Time Day is a project of the Center for Religion, Ethics and Social Policy at Cornell University, and is the first national initiative of the Simplicity Forum.