



IN THE PRESS



Woods Hole resident Nicole Goldman opened 'g' Green Design Center in Mashpee Commons on Wednesday. She aims to provide everything from green home furnishings to building supplies in the retail store.

CAPE COD TIMES/Paul Blackmore

The eco-conscious entrepreneur

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MASHPEE — Some of the bamboo display shelves were still empty last week and the conference table was yet to be set up, but the 'g' Green Design Center was open for business.

"We're still waiting for products every day," said the store's owner Nicole Goldman. "It's evolving, it's an organic process."

Where to go green

- 'g' Green Design Center, North Market Street, Mashpee Commons, Mashpee
- New England Green Building Center, 21 Conwell St., Provincetown

As global warming makes daily headlines and hybrid vehicles are ever more common on the roads, 'g' is the latest Cape business to tap into society's growing environmental concern.

"There is a much broader consumer awareness of the very real environmental cost of not being green," said David Barclay, the executive director of the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association, an organization that promotes the use of renewable energy.

Goldman's design center, which opened Wednesday, will cater to multiple segments of the eco-conscious market.

It will, she said, be a retail shop for green housewares as well as a showroom and consulting service for customers interested in environmentally friendly building or renovations.

The store's "gateway products" — Goldman's term for items that will appeal to customers still learning to be green consumers — include bamboo eating utensils, nontoxic cleansers and all-natural body scrubs.

For the serious builder or renovator, the center offers countertops made of concrete and recycled glass, table surfaces made of compressed paper and several lines of green flooring, paint and cabinets.

Goldman, a longtime interior designer who lives in Woods Hole, has also developed a network of trade partners that will allow her to refer customers to painters, contractors and other professionals with the expertise to help them execute green-building projects.

"She's filling a need on Cape Cod for a lot of folks," said Bruce Torrey, a member of Goldman's professional network and the owner of Building Diagnostics, a Sandwich company that analyzes homes for energy efficiency.

"The services Nicole offers will ring true with a lot of folks who are looking for a better alternative" to conventional construction.

This combination of housewares, building supplies and expert advice, said Goldman, differentiates her business from the other environmentally friendly enterprises in the area.

The Cape boasts a handful of green architects, solar installers and other businesses that specialize in one focused area of green building.

"I wanted to make it more integrated," said Goldman. "I wanted to give people all the resources and make things more accessible."

In Provincetown, New England Green Building Center offers a similar array of eco-friendly building products, but, Goldman believes that the distance between the two businesses will prevent them from competing too directly.

New England Green Building Center founder Jeff Rogers said that some competition might occur, but he noted that a lot of his sales are to locations off-Cape.

Inspiration

Before embarking on her current business venture, Goldman had long been what she called "somewhat conscious" of environmental issues.

Her interest was piqued last fall when the editors of some design magazines for which she freelanced started asking for articles about green design.

"I thought, this is really where building is going," she said.

However in January she began looking around for places to purchase eco-friendly building materials and discovered that such products were surprisingly hard to find.

The idea of opening her own green-design center began percolating and by August she was beginning renovations on the retail space in Mashpee Commons.

Though Goldman has no formal retail background, she is confident that her previous experience running a design business with her husband will help her.

"I'm pretty good at creating something from nothing, at pulling together all the pieces," she said.

The business, said Goldman, is starting up at precisely the right moment.

"I couldn't have done this a year ago," she said. Until very recently, she added, "people weren't thinking 'this is my problem too.'"

Location is key

The center's location in New England may also give it an advantage; this area's cold winters drive up the cost of home heating and may make energy-efficient building more appealing.

"The Northeast has a particular economic interest in reducing consumption because of the high percentage of energy costs that go to heat buildings," Barclay said.

Though 'g' has been open for less than a week, Goldman has already heard from a friend who is encouraging her to open locations in Portland, Ore., and on St. John in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

While she is not yet ready to take that step, Goldman does think that businesses such as hers could succeed in a variety of places, as the movement toward green living becomes increasingly mainstream.

"People's perceptions that it's only for the crunchy granola types is changing," she said. "It's not everywhere, but it could be everywhere."

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