

Shore Home

Home tip

Even small changes can ramp up your home's curb appeal. Here are some ideas from ShopSmart magazine for projects that can be done in a weekend, each for \$150 or less: Replace the house numbers with over-size numbers in a style that complements your home's architecture. Cost: \$1 to \$40.

THE NEW COLOR OF GREEN



HOMeward BOUND:
ECO-FRIENDLY
AND FAIR TRADE, TOO

By Rita Papazian
Special to the Times

The word is that Homeward Bound has become "the buzz at the beach." And well it should. Consider, this is the fourth lifestyle shop Trip Rothschild and his wife Kathy Walsh have opened in four years. Does the couple see more stores in their crystal ball? Possibly, considering the magic they have spun on the retail landscape in such a short time.

"I feel this shop is just going to be amazing," said Walsh, reflecting upon the response from the community, just one month since its opening, next to Savvy Tea in Station Square, Durham Road in Madison.

The concept may not be magical, ~~except maybe~~ in the ambiance the couple's home furnishings, accessories, gifts, children's toys and women's fashions, bring into the home as the couple support communities and preserve the environment. That's not magic; it's spun gold.

One trend that has proven successful for the couple is their concentration on organic and eco-friendly, especially with the public's growing interest in preserving the environment.

The couple believe good business means doing good for the customer, the community and the environment. Therefore, in a few short years, their shops have stirred a little buzz from Great Barrington, MA and West Hartford to New Milford and now Madison, where a major part of their collection of furnishings represent "green" or "organic," "eco-friendly" products that come from socially responsible vendors. With many of the furnishings represented in Homeward Bound, the towns and communities where the products originate also benefit from the couple's purchasing power. For example, women with HIV in South Africa hand sew the colorful collection of beaded animals available in the shop. The monies received through the sale of these animals help these women fight the disease.

Ten percent of the proceeds from the sale of the shop's inventory of Sugarboo, carved wood hangings with poetic or inspirational sayings, is donated



to Earl Moslely's Institute of the Arts in Kent.

Five percent of the purchase price of the furniture from Jaipur, India sold in their shops is matched by the manufacturer and donated to the local Rotary

Giving back is part of the business philosophy Kathy Walsh (above) and husband Trip Rothschild share in running their stores. LEFT: High fashion meets function and eco-friendly. Photos by Maura Lavitt.

Club in India to help physically handicapped children.

Giving back is part of the business philosophy Walsh and Rothschild share in running their stores. When it comes to retail, it is not just about selling products and services, but also being connected to the community and respecting the environment.

When people come into the shop they are enjoying an experience. They are learning about

the materials that go into making the product; they are learning about the products' origins. For example many of the products are made with organic materials such as natural flax and linen; vegetable dyes; lamb's wool; recycled bamboo, sustainable woods; 100 percent organic paints or low-impact materials..

"If you're going to do anything nowadays, it's good to do

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Green: Home shopping with an eye towards eco-friendly and fair trade

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ment” or yourself, Walsh said. “If you’re sitting on a couch, you don’t want it to be toxic. We have to care. I have to care,” said Walsh, explaining the philosophy in amassing the collection of home furnishings.

“Not everything is organic. Once in a while, we’ll carry leather.”

Walsh cited one of the shop’s popular lines of furniture is Verellen. “This is my dream line. “It’s my sensibility: so beautiful, clean, comfortable, relaxing and homey,” said Walsh, flipping through the company’s catalogue of sofas and other styles that just cry out comfort and classic with simple lines and fabrics.

Having a discerning eye as a buyer is Walsh’s trump card. She is instinctive. She can spot trends. Walsh, who earned a degree in Fashion Merchandising from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, can take an eclectic mix of furnishings and make them work.

Walsh and Rothschild combined their talents to establish their lifestyle shops. She is a former buyer for Bloomingdale’s, Barney’s and Bendel’s and senior buyer at ABC Carpet and Home. He earned a MBA degree from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania is former owner of the Housatonic Valley Publishing Co. in New Milford where he was also chairman of New Milford’s Economic Development Commission. He has family ties to the Abraham of “Abraham & Strauss”

department store founded in Brooklyn, NY.

In an e-mail, Rothschild said he believes “...consumers are looking for what Homeward Bound offers: beautiful, distinctive, unusual products that offer value, tell a story and, as much as possible, are domestically made, sensitive to the environment, or support indigenous cultures. In addition, customers tell us that they particularly appreciate our customer service, design consultations and the aesthetic of the stores – with color and style consistency between our home furnishings and fashion lines. In this difficult economy,

consumers look for this added value and social responsibility to feel good about parting with their money.”

Rothschild said, “For a retailer to open any new store in this environment requires a share commitment by a venturesome landlord. In Madison, our store complements the other tenants in Station Square and the owners,

Kevin and Roxanne Coady, felt that Homeward Bound helps to enhance the complex as a shopping destination and brings something new and desirable to the retail mix in Madison – in which, of course, they are key participants themselves.”

The couple spend a great deal of time traveling the world looking for furnishings for their shops. Paris and especially its Maison & Objet home fashion show have become a favorite destination for ideas

and a barometer for trend-setting in the home furnishings industry.

“The French just have a way of putting things together,” said Walsh, who has a similar ability of her own. As she travels, she collects ideas and brings them back home to her shops.

“I respond to what I see and

then I pull it in,” said Walsh, as she mixes different styles and elements while maintaining a composed look. The talents are evident as one meanders the 3,000 square-foot shop offering beautifully appointed living room arrangements and accessories along with a children’s boutique, a women’s fashion corner.

Walsh is looking forward to a trip to Ireland, where she wants to be inspired by the green landscape and no doubt such inspirations will find a way into Homeward Bound.

Looking ahead, Walsh and Rothschild anticipate hosting, jointly with neighboring businesses, community events at their shop to offer fun activi-

ties with local artists, artisans and musicians. She is patterning this type of activity after her experiences working at Bloomingdale’s when former CEO and chairman Marvin Traub headed the department store and was a firm believer in sponsoring events to connect business to the community.

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Homeward Bound is earth friendly and kid-friendly too. Photo by Maura Lavitt.