

First 'Green Building' showroom opens across from Weavers Way

by SALLY COHEN

Signaling an important shift toward aligning ecology with economy, Philadelphia's first 'green building' showroom opened earlier this month across from Weavers Way Co-op in the Moving Arts Studios building. The Mt. Airy location is the first expansion of the Environmental HomeStore since owner Todd Ballantyne launched his pioneering business in the garage attached to his Lansdale home on Earth Day in 2006.

The company sells environmentally friendly products and offers contracting and interior design services for both residential and commercial buildings. From decorative wall plasters to sustainable floors, plywood substitutes, zero-VOC paint, sustainably built cabinetry, cotton insulation, wood treated for decking and countertops made of recycled paper, the store offers options that are aesthetic and healthy.

The Environmental HomeStore opened with a soft launch Monday, Sept. 3. "We're all about living well but modestly," says Ballantyne, "so we're fine opening here in this gentle way. We've been operating in Montgomery County for well over a year. In both places, we will take the time to hold workshops and to explain new products to our neighbors as well."

Ballantyne, 43, lived for several years atop what is now Coffee Junction at the Mt. Airy train station before converting an 1876 one-room schoolhouse in Lansdale to his current home. "Researching how to take this building down to its bare bones and build it up again is what led to the Environmental HomeStore," Ballantyne explains.

"I was frustrated, searching for green building materials for my



Todd Ballantyne opened The Environmental HomeStore Sept. 3 at 550 Carpenter Lane (at Greene Street).

looking for what products are out there and what impact they have on the environment. I had to order samples from all over the country; there was just nothing in this area to meet the need. I got passionate because there are more and better ways to fix up your house than the traditional toxic ways that we're used to."

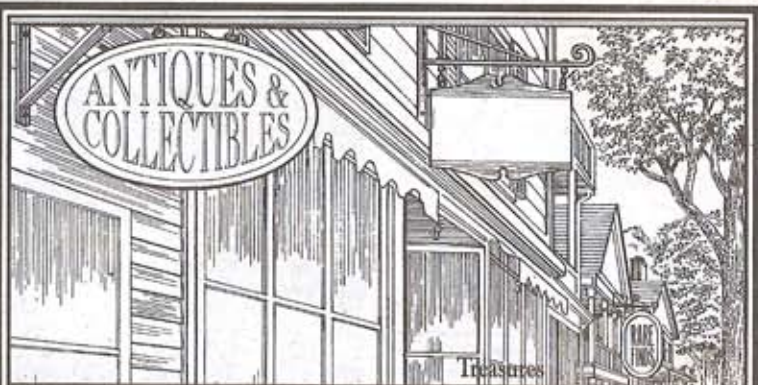
As a television producer, designer and director, Ballantyne knows what it means to see opportunities within problems, to meet budgets, to look appealing and to understand materials. Ballantyne credits almost all customers for arriving curious and often well informed.

"It takes time for us to explain what a really good healthy paint is, for example," he says. "Take zero-VOC paints. That's not just something that sounds good—'don't open the lid and see color'

conventionally full of very toxic chemicals that are bad for you, and children are 10 times as neurologically vulnerable to toxins. And while some major manufacturers now sell low-odor or low-VOC (volatile organic compound) paints, you need to be careful. The government has defined what a VOC is, but the criteria are built around what will produce and reduce smog and outdoor air pollution. They don't address indoor air quality, and this is different. Ammonia, formaldehyde and masking agents..."

The Environmental HomeStore will be open Tuesdays through Saturdays, with hours posted on the website (www.environmental-homestore.com).

It's at 550 Carpenter Lane (at Greene Street), two blocks west of Lincoln Drive. For more informa-



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