



Valley native opens store stocking eco-friendly items

By Barbara Correa, Staff Writer

Article Last Updated: 06/22/2008 11:30:51 PM PDT

VALLEY VILLAGE - As an interior designer and environmental entrepreneur, Alegre Ramos has always been a bit ahead of her time. As a 5-year-old, she threaded beads onto a string and told her friends the bracelets were cloud chasers that would clean the air when shaken.

Almost 30 years later, Ramos is still preaching green living. But now, the wider culture has finally caught up to her. People are waking up to the connection between lifestyle and the environment, and the Valley Village native is making the most of it.

On June 10, she and her husband, Sean Cantalupo, opened the doors of Green and Greener, an eco-living store and design center located on a commercial strip of Laurel Canyon Boulevard just north of the 101.

A sort of small-scale Home Depot meets Whole Foods (minus the food section), Green and Greener sells everything from bamboo fiber T-shirts and belts made out of recycled bicycle tires to milk-based paint, biodegradable trash bags and solar-powered attic fans.

G&G isn't the only store in the Valley focused on selling green.

There are ecological fashion boutiques Green Rohini in Sherman Oaks and Deborah Lindquist in North Hollywood, and Follow Your Heart, the vegetarian caf and market in Canoga Park that also sells books, alternative medicines and some clothing.

But Ramos' store is different: "The concept was born out of my life as a green consumer, and I was frustrated that I couldn't go to one place and find everything."

Instead of a specialized boutique, Ramos has set out to create an old-fashioned general store with a community feel. In addition to selling customers economical fluorescent light bulbs or organic goat's milk lotion, Ramos is on hand to answer any and all questions about green products.

And this girl knows her stuff.

She explains bamboo fiber as the "silk for vegans," because it is as durable and evaporates sweat as effectively as silk, but is much faster and cheaper to produce. A smart powerstrip she stocks eliminates extra electricity that computers and printers continue to draw even after they are turned off.

Ramos' sustainable thinking extends to her design aesthetic. To remodel the store building, which used to be an appliance repair shop, Ramos removed vinyl vertical blinds from the

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.
PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

windows and used them as wainscoting in the business office. All the furniture is reused. Some was built (Ramos' husband is a woodworking genius) out of the plywood used to cover the outside of the building during construction.

As a business, Green and Greener could not have opened at a better time.

"Consumers are starting to look at their purchases through a new lens," said Seth Bauer, editorial director of The Green Guide, the Consumer Reports of the environmental products industry. "The first phase of (the environmental movement) was about land conservation and preservation. ... Phase two was pollution. The third phase is a consumer phase where people are finally starting to wake up to the fact that resources are finite and we leave a footprint on the planet."

It doesn't hurt that prices for food, fuel and everything else are rising quickly. But Bauer says he thinks consumers' adopting a green mentality would have happened regardless.

"Hurricane Katrina seemed to really break through in people's consciousness and make them more willing to listen to Al Gore."

For Ramos, the greening trend feels like an acceptance that has been a long time coming.

"It's nice to feel understood," she said. "When you're doing something so unusual, it's nice to have people who actually get it." *barbara.correa@dailynews.com*

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.

PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™