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Better Living

BROWARD Family LIFE

COMPLIMENTARY

APRIL 2009

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SAVING THE Earth

MEET 3 LOCAL FAMILIES MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Planting a Seed

Yes, you can cultivate a greener family. These local entrepreneurs are ready to help.

We know you really do want to be more green. Who, after all, doesn't want to help save the earth? But sometimes, taking the initiative to being more environmentally responsible is a little like cleaning out your closets. It needs to be done. You keep meaning to do it. But somehow, you just don't get around to it.

Meet three local families who are trying to make a greener life more accessible for all. They know it begins with a seed. They believe you can do it. And they're banking everything they're worth that you really, really do want to try.

BY KIKI BOCHI



Finding your green comfort zone

Mylene D'Arelli wants you to know you don't have to turn your life upside down in order to be more green. It's not like anyone is asking you to move your family into a cave and eat nothing but twigs and berries.

Even small steps can make a big difference, says D'Arelli, a mother of two who recently opened an eco-friendly home store called Green Dwellers.

The store, in Plantation, is the first of

its kind in South Florida. It offers home products made from organic, recycled, renewable or sustainably harvested materials. This is the place where you can find linens made from bamboo, clocks made from recycled bicycle parts, dishware from recycled glass, children's tea sets made from recycled milk bottles and wood items certified as formaldehyde-free.

D'Arelli also stocks green cleaning products, reusable water bottles, organic pet supplies, baby bottles free of PVC and phthalates, and select home improvement and remodeling products.

"I'm doing it because no one else is doing it," says D'Arelli, whose clientele travels from as far away as Jupiter and Coral Gables to reach her store. Some products are also available through the store's website. "Anything that is eco-friendly, renewable, recyclable, I have it."

D'Arelli says she became interested in green products after her husband, Paul D'Arelli, became the first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified attorney in Florida. As

she learned more about environmentally responsible construction, she couldn't help wondering. "If you already live in a house, if you're not building a building, how do you green your house from the inside?"

Not that she's dogmatic or anything. She just wants to help people take as many steps as they can toward a greener life.

"It's just too overwhelming for people to think I have to save the Earth, I have to save the polar bears or seal the ozone layer," D'Arelli says. Feeling powerless in the face of such huge problems, many people just turn away.

D'Arelli wants them to understand smaller steps make a difference, too. "I'm not trying to save the world. I'm just trying to make a difference in my community. Every time I sell a reusable bottle or a reusable bag, I feel like I am doing something."

Her advice to others? "Don't feel overwhelmed. Don't feel like you have to gut your life. Just do what you can do," she says. "It's about your health, but it also has a trickle down effect. Everything we do has a trickle down effect on the environment."



Organic food for thought

It certainly seems like a no-brainer. Given the choice, who wouldn't want to feed their children pure, fresh, organic foods?

These days, only the most determined parents make their own baby food, however. The rest of us, well, we settle for jars of what's out there and wonder why there isn't something better available.

That's what Michael and Karen Stanley are counting on. Parents of a toddler themselves, they have launched Yummy in My Tummy, an organic baby food store that opened in November in Davie.

"The goal is to help the parents," explains Michael Stanley, who has 15 years of experience in the restaurant business and a degree from the Culinary Institute of America. "The mission is to give parents something to make them feel like they are taking charge. The less processed foods and the less chemicals you put into your body, the better off you are going to be."

This is not something the couple has entered into casually. It took a year to get the store off the ground. They hired a chef to come up with creations that would appeal to even the most finicky baby. And then they tested the recipes, again and again.

"Like any new business it is a challenge," Michael Stanley says. "But this is it. We're giving it 110 percent."

Karen and Michael Stanley may be the company's founders, but Sophia Clare, their daughter, is the real inspiration behind Yummy In My Tummy. When the couple began introducing her to solid foods, they were disappointed by the taste and lack of selection of

commercially available organic baby foods.

The difference with their products is that they are made fresh. It's like restaurant take-out for the toothless set. The store features a rotating menu of signature blends and purees such as sweet peas and baked apples, as well as textured small-bites portions of dishes such as spiced pumpkin or spinach with squash. The foods, which have no preservatives, have a shelf life of two to four weeks and come in recyclable containers.

These may be brutal economic times in which to launch a business, but the Stanleys are convinced they are selling more than a product. They are selling a lifestyle.

"There are some people who don't get it, and that's fine," Stanley says. "But there are a lot of people who do get it, who are more concerned about what they eat and what they feed their children."



There's a real sense of accomplishment in knowing they are providing a product that feeds small bodies and helps the Earth. "Just giving someone an organic product is a wonderful thing," Stanley says. "We don't all live the perfect life, but you do what you can do."