

2011 GREENSTEP Winners

Carpet Plus: Progressive in going green

By Amy Joyce Rush

Carpet Plus of Charlottesville, Va. was the first retail recipient of FCW's GreenStep award. In April, FCW recognized the retailer's leadership in green retailing that included carrying a full line of green products and making concerted efforts to reduce its carbon footprint by producing less waste, driving eco-friendly vehicles, using energy efficient lighting and much more. Since receiving the prestigious award, Carpet Plus has continued to make significant strides in its commitment to sustainability. Today, some 75 percent of product on the showroom floor is green.

"Our selection of eco-friendly products continues to increase and change," said Duane Cassis, co-owner. "We carry cork, bamboo, linoleum, wool carpets and rugs, sustainably harvested woods, items with recycled content and products which can be recycled. We have created our own Made in America logo to clearly mark all products in the showroom that are manufactured in the United States, as we feel

increasing concern about buying local and every product's carbon footprint," he said.

In addition to merchandising green product, the dealer extends its sustainable commitment to other areas of its business. "We always try to apply green practices to our business operations. We invested in fluorescent and LED light bulbs throughout our facility and have tinted our storefront windows to maximize cooling/heating efficiency.

We are now sending our waste to a recycling facility in hopes of minimizing our carbon footprint and are fighting to bring a carpet recycling program to our area. We recently installed a natural clay plaster over a large portion of our showroom

walls which increases indoor air quality," reported Cindy Adams, co-owner.

The company began a cork recycling program in the Charlottesville area in 2009.



Carpet Plus' new cork wall

"We continue to recycle thousands of corks each month through Re-Cork C'ville. We also recently became a Certified Plus member of the Charlottesville Better Business Challenge, a friendly local competition among businesses to incorporate sustainable practices in their day-to-day operations. All Carpet Plus employees try to

stay involved in the local green building efforts by sponsoring workshops and supporting local events," said Adams.

Yet Cassis said that "greenwashing" has become an obstacle in that almost every product in the market is claiming some

level of green.

"As a retailer, we feel the responsibility to investigate the products we recommend. We try to stay abreast of not just the product content but the manufacturing procedures, recycling and company policies. When a customer walks into our showroom, it's obvious that we place a strong emphasis on eco-friendly products," said Cassis.

And while the consumer is responding to and asking for green, according to Adams, she said that, "The consumer usually assumes that green options are more expensive and sometimes this is true. We are fortunate in that Charlottesville is a very progressive community in its attitude toward environmental responsibility. Of course, we point out the quality, value, longevity and the importance of using green products. Fortunately, environmentally friendly products are becoming more and more affordable every day. As the consumer demands green products and sustainable practices, the manufacturers have to deliver. It is our hope that one day "green" will be the norm — not the exception — and it will be priced accordingly," said Adams. **FCW**

Mohawk's dealers embrace green

By Amy Joyce Rush

Mohawk's aligned dealers have been among some of the more progressive stewards of sustainability. In 2008, the company recognized several of its dealers that had embraced the green movement. These retailers continued their efforts over the years, some reporting an increase in recycling efforts and the merchandising of green product as well as an overall deepened commitment to green.

One of the biggest areas of concentration for these retailers has been the reclamation and recycling of carpeting, pad and, in some cases, packing materials as well.

Starks said that initially, they couldn't get carpet recycled in Michigan but for the last three months have been recycling everything they rip up. "That's costing us a

little bit of money — \$300 per month out of pocket," he said.

Michigan Tile & Carpet uses a 10 by 20 out-building for recycling.

Starks said that, as a Mohawk Floorscapes store, all the products are marked as to what is green and what is made in the U.S. "We certainly sell recycling as one of the benefits of doing business here."

Likewise, Sergenian's Floor Covering in Madison, Wis. began its reclamation program in February 2007 and, according to Jim Garner, CEO, "To this date, we have not put any carpet or pad in landfill." The company has recycled nearly 3 million pounds of carpet and pad.



Michigan Tile and Carpet collects everything from carpet to packaging for recycling.

Sergenian's green directive extends to the showroom floor. "If you walk into our showroom, you'll see in the foyer, a whole green story that talks about product and we show bamboo and cork on the floor," he said. The store also features a pad made of 80 percent post-consumer material.

"We hope that this gives us a competitive edge but in reality, it's just what we do," said Garner. He added that he has just returned from Florida where he is looking to expand with four stores there. He said the intention is to apply the company's green efforts there as well.

At Carpet Bonanza in Zeeland, Mich., some 98 percent of all carpet is going into a trailer and being recycled. "We recycle everything," explained Dave Machiela, owner. "Before, we had to be careful because if it wasn't 6 or 6,6 nylon, we had to be cautious as to what we would say." The company also bails cushion for recycling.

The challenge, he said, is that flooring retailers only see the customer about once every 10 years. But in stores like groceries, the consumer is "bombarded every week with the green message. That's a problem," he said, adding, "We've always done little things — changed out all of our lighting throughout the whole store. We recycle paper and don't use Styrofoam cups. We look for things we can do all around." **FCW**