

DANE BUY LOCAL MEMBER PROFILE

Madison Green Box

Small, independent, locally owned and operated businesses are the backbone of the American economy. They are also an essential component of a sustainable community. The Madison area has many independent businesses and many of them are members of Dane Buy Local. Every month the Sustainable Times profiles a Dane Buy Local member business. The Sustainable Times is also a Dane Buy Local Media Partner.

by **GEORGE ZENS**

Moving from one house or apartment to another is a time-consuming and labor-intensive undertaking at the best of times, but it can quickly become an exercise in frustration if one has to worry about having enough cardboard boxes to pack everything, or has to buy new boxes, and then, after everything has been unpacked, try to figure out how to dispose of the boxes or where to store them.

Well, not to worry, Lori Carlson and Michael Bleker have a solution. In July of this year they started Madison Green Box, LLC, a company that provides “a sustainable, ‘green’ alternative to the time and effort wasted buying, building, gathering and disposing of cardboard moving boxes”, according to the vision statement.

As Lori Carlson, who was an audiologist in her previous professional career, tells it, Mike Bleker, her partner in business and in life, came up with the idea when, as a property manager, he was getting tired of having to deal with dumpsters overflowing with discarded moving boxes.

“They were unsightly and expensive, and he thought that there must be another way.”

After researching the idea they found the solution in the form of sturdy, durable and reusable plastic boxes.

“I was especially excited about the green aspect,” says Lori Carlson.

Each GreenBox can be used and reused hundreds of times before it’s finally recycled, which means that it has a much smaller carbon foot-



Photo by GEORGE ZENS

Lori Carlson is co-owner of Madison Green Box.

print than the hundreds of cardboard boxes it replaces.

“Down the road we hope to be able to find boxes that are already made of recycled material,” she adds.

The primary staple is a 2.5 cubic foot heavy-duty green plastic box with a lid. When empty, the boxes can be stacked inside each other, so they don’t take up a lot of space, and when full they can be stacked on top of each other with the lids closed. Ergonomic handles make for easy lifting (unless you filled them to top with books) and carrying.

While these boxes are sufficient for most household items, Madison Green Box also offers larger wardrobe boxes with Velcro enclosures to move clothes.

Besides the two types of boxes, customers also get a moving dolly,

and they can buy zip ties (100% recyclable) to secure the boxes and recycled packing paper for cushioning and wrapping.

“Our customers like the eco-friendly aspects of the boxes, but they especially appreciate the convenience,” says Lori Carlson. “When people rent the boxes, we deliver them to their old home and pick them up in the new one. There is absolutely no hassle.”

She also points out that their rental boxes are very competitive price-wise:

“We compare favorably with new cardboard boxes, especially if you also take the amount of time into account that it takes to buy them, assemble them and later dispose of them.”

Their website guides would-be movers to the right number of boxes

they need depending on the size of the house. Package pricing starts at \$59 for 15 boxes for one week (the recommended number for a studio) and goes up to \$169 for 75 boxes for a week to move a four-bedroom house. Custom rentals are also available.

Madison Green Box works with private households, as well as with rental property owners (including T.R. McKenzie and Axiom Properties, which offers a base package box rental as a free incentive to incoming residents) and moving companies (including Capital City Transfers).

Madison Green Box is available to residents in the Dane county area.

Madison Green Box
www.madisongreenbox.com