

Living off the grid

Claire's Corner Copia

Color conscience

Big business goes underground

Cardboard sculptures



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About 10 years ago when a customer asked Vanguard Packaging's CEO Mark Mathes to report on the company's sustainability efforts, he discovered, "We were severely lacking." That's not true anymore. In the last decade, Vanguard has moved from being a "brown box company" to an industry leader that consistently wins awards for innovation and design for signs, pop displays and retail packaging.

In fall 2010, Vanguard ([www.vanguardpkg.com](http://www.vanguardpkg.com)) won the Greener Packaging Innovator of the Year Award for its new 400,000-square-foot facility and corporate offices in Kansas City, Mo. This unusual location in limestone caves almost 150 feet underground has helped Vanguard do more than just take advantage of the latest sustainable technologies. Last year, during an economic downturn, Vanguard increased its business by 25 percent while decreasing its costs.

Mathes, who bought the company in 2007, says sustainability has to be profitable to make sense. In fact, he has become a leader and a spokesman for sustainability in the industry. "It's the right thing to do," he says. "Early on in our sustainability efforts I did some homework of my own and found out if the whole world rose to the level of consumption of the United States, we would need three planet Earths to supply the resources."

Vanguard's facility is part of the 34-million-square-foot Hunt Subtropolis park in caves left by mining under miles of limestone bluffs, where the natural ground temperature automatically insulates Vanguard's 20- to 30-foot-high rooms at 68 degrees. Then heat radiated by operating equipment, vehicles and people raises the temperature to about 75 without additional heating or cooling equipment.

Lighting, which normally might be the company's greatest energy expense, is provided by high-output, energy-efficient T-5 bulbs, whose light is reflected from natural white limestone walls, creating rooms that feel open and bright. Moreover, lights stay on only when they are needed. If no one is moving in a room, motion sensors turn lighting off, even in offices and in the front lobby, which opens outward at the bottom of the cliff.

Other small changes have added up to cost savings for the company and awards that have brought Vanguard national attention and new business. Vanguard's fleet, for example, includes 11 hybrid vehicles. Moreover, Vanguard employees' suggestion during construction caused the company to avoid using natural resources unnecessarily.

Instead of ordering new light fixtures, Vanguard bought almost all its T-5 fixtures from overruns from other development projects.

In other ways, too, Vanguard and Mathes are demonstrating commitment to Mathes' ideals. The company's Bentonville, Ark., office and distribution facility will soon be located in an old log house and barn that is being renovated with recycled and sustainable materials. And on Mathes' family farm, operations include electric vehicles, geothermally heated barns, and about 3,000 new trees planted in the last two years, as part of a forest management program.

But, Mathes says, in spite of all his knowledge and preparation for Vanguard's move underground, one thing still surprised him: the level of employees' pride in what the company has achieved. Time after time, they ask whether the company has received new awards, and they want to know what plans Vanguard is making for more innovations ahead.

*Vanguard workers spend their days more than 100 feet underground.*



## Under the radar

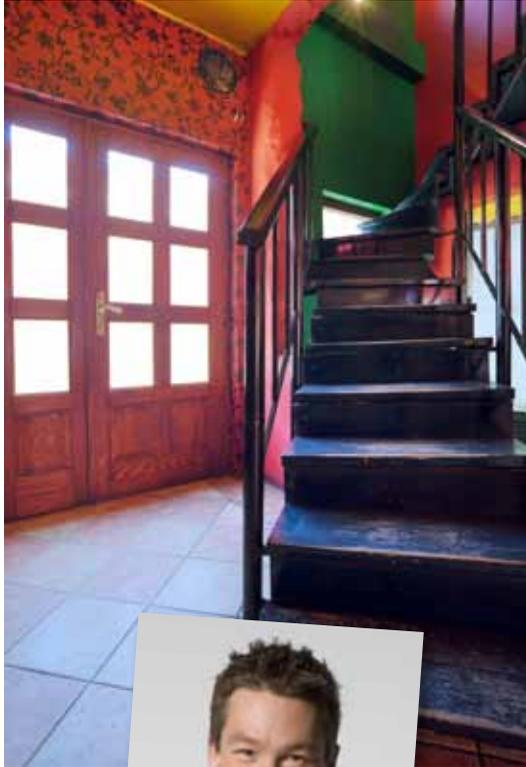
# Color conscience

The use of eco-friendly products is no longer the novel concept it once was. But the way interior designer David Bromstad livens up ho-hum rooms with vivid and, yes, eco-friendly paint colors is, pardon the pun, a stroke of genius.

The 37-year-old television personality is the season-one winner of HGTV's "Design Star," a top-rated reality competition that led to his hosting HGTV's "Color Splash," a gig that allows Bromstad and his team to liven up those aforementioned rooms on a regular basis, with color as the essence and soul of the transformations.

The show debuted in March 2007, and the following month, Bromstad released his line of eco-friendly paints, an innovative collection for Mythic Paint. He's also an advocate of salvaged materials and has served as a spokesperson for toxic-free paint lines. Bromstad recently traveled from his current hometown of Miami to Chicago to make a special guest appearance at Colori Chicago, an eco-friendly paint boutique. The self-proclaimed artist and painter spoke about the latest trends in color and his thoughts on bending the rules. He has said that there isn't a color in existence that he would be afraid to use and that there is no such thing as a "bad color."

For his part, Bromstad favors lime green, both for its representation of spring and its ability to speak to both genders equally. Acid yellow is another favorite; Bromstad likes to pair it with neutrals such as white and gray, whose versatility and warmth he admires. Regardless of your color preference, color itself is the root of great design, according to Bromstad, and a cheap and easy way to add pizzazz to any room. In fact, he recommends simply painting an accent wall if you're in need of a quick fix.



The energetic star wasn't always able to share his insights so readily. Born in Minnesota, he studied design at the Ringling School of Art and Design in Sarasota, Fla., before becoming something of a struggling artist. He worked as an illustrator at Walt Disney World in Orlando but was ultimately let go. He later started his own company, Bromstad Studio, designing fantasy bedrooms for children.

Soon after, he headed to Miami Beach to pursue the opportunity with HGTV. Recently, the network renamed the show "Color Splash: Miami," which serves Bromstad just fine. The openly gay designer especially likes that he can stay closer to home, as he

no longer has to travel to San Francisco every week for filming. His hometown is one that offers a wealth of international and South American design influences, and his new crew is a group of Latinas and Latinos, which, Bromstad has said, adds spice to the experience.

Bromstad has spoken out previously about the importance of being true to oneself, both personally and professionally. He recognizes that regardless of how comfortable people are in their own skin, others are ultimately going to see them for who they are — and in his case, that's especially true, since he's on television.

On a lighter note, the designer also recognizes that television lets people see him for who he is from a physical fitness perspective. Bromstad's show serves as inspiration for him to stay in shape and he makes it a priority to hit the gym several times per week. Exercise spurs his creativity as well as his physical fitness and therefore remains a passion of Bromstad's, alongside custom art, furniture building (he's a self-taught builder), interior design, which for Bromstad goes hand in hand with sustainability, and, of course, color.

# Life recycled

Environmental concerns continue to blossom into popular consciousness throughout the country and the world at large. As interest continues to grow, everyday individuals make a concerted effort to do their part, from recycling cans and bottles to purchasing items made from recycled paper.

*Unity's* Green issue features artists with a common love for nature and humankind. Their voice of "art" activism is heard through their creative imagery. It is the sincere hope of these artists that viewers will find beauty in their use of reusable items and in paintings of nature that will prompt us as human beings to save the planet on which we live.

## Luis Manuel Soto

Luis Manuel Soto was born in Puerto Rico and is a graduate of the Puerto Rican Culture Institute of Plastic Arts, home to many emerging Puerto Rican artists. In his early adult life, he studied contemporary painting at the Art League in New York City. His experience as a hand crafter and mold maker at Walt Disney World has also shaped his career as a sculptor.

Soto conveys his concern for the environment through his cardboard sculptures, which he describes as peculiar and uncommon. The *Unity* cover piece, "The Four Horsemen," is Soto's interpretation from the Book of Revelations with each colored horse representing one of the four seals. The bodies and faces of the figures highlight the intricate detail of his work that was 10 years in the making. "Broken Heart" depicts a man crying out of hurt and frustration over a broken relationship. Soto states the inspiration for this piece comes from a popular Spanish singer lamenting love and brokenness. At first glance, this sculpture of corrugated cardboard gives the anguished man the look of metal and his pedestal the look of wood. Closer observation reveals the spectacular use of cardboard from boxes, many used from his move from New York to Florida. Soto states his piece, "Dead Nature," is his illustration of numerous trees being destroyed and the importance of trees to our environment. He deems the act of deforestation as an eventual contribution to the "death" of nature as we know it. Although he uses other recycled materials in his work, Soto maintains that he uses cardboard the most because it is "sensitive," just as life is. "I capture the essence of feelings inherent to human nature. Social environment shows the fragility of life and the power of emotions which inspired me to become an artist."

Soto is resolute that we as human beings have a responsibility to take care of our planet, conserve nature and contribute to maintaining our environment's well-being. "Through my art, I share my experience with God, nature and environment," says Soto. It is his desire to use his art as a conduit to inspire others and future generations to become more environmentally conscious.



"Broken Heart" by Luis Manuel Soto



"Dead Nature" by Luis Manuel Soto

## Christine McCray Bethea

Christine McCray Bethea attributes her love for all things green to her experiences of stripping and restoring an old chair with her uncle, furnishing her first apartment with her grandfather's vintage furniture and perusing flea markets with her father at a young age. She states they were all artistic in different ways and were enthusiastic collectors of history.

Bethea utilizes everything from old chairs to Cadillac hubcaps and prefers working with things that have "lived" before. Her piece, "Folk Art Guy," portrays that preference by presenting it as utilitarian and descriptive. Bethea's clever use of a cheeseboard face, teeth of coconut-shell buttons, one eye



wooden and one part of a lamp, and adorned hair from a musical instrument brings this mask “alive.” “Adam and Eve” pose as sculptural satires on the traditional role of man and woman. “Adam” is made from a toolbox, wine rack and a portion of a Victorian stair banister. His body opens neatly as a CD holder. “Eve’s” hair is an antique butter churn on an ironing board body. Her flour-scoop breast nestles on the ribs made from the other half of Adam’s wine rack. Bethea states, “I see creating art from discards as a lesson for life in general. If you reclaim items meant for landfills and make them appealing and useful again, that philosophy can pertain to other areas of your life.” That is the message Bethea seeks to pass on every time she displays her work.



*“Folk Art Guy” by Christine McCray Bethea*



*“Adam and Eve” by Christine McCray Bethea*

Bethea is active in the arts community in Pittsburgh, Pa. She is also a quilter and her work appears in “A Communion of the Spirits – African-American Quilters, Preservers and Their Stories.”

### Lorna Ritz

Lorna Ritz received a BFA from Pratt Institute and an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art in painting and sculpture. Her mother was a former concert pianist and enrolled her in art museum classes at the age of 6. Ritz says she remembers holding colored crayons and moving them across the paper as if she were a magician.

Ritz uncovers her artistic muse from the scenic view of the Mount Holyoke Range — a range of seven mountain peaks — including Mount Norwottuck. Ritz states that although she welded steel and carved wood for 30 years, it is color and the mountains she is most fond of. Ritz describes “Mt. Norwottuck and Apple Trees” as a 24-year visual documentation from her many drawings throughout the years. The wispy branches of apple orchard trees contrast in the foreground and do not lose their prominence against the mountains that, once a year, turn ruby red in November. “It is the mountain’s gentle, sensuous shapes that are so easy to love,” says Ritz of that piece. She states that her rendition is taken from her view of shadows from fast-moving clouds on any given day, her study of the surrounding light and how the mountains respond to all of these elements. She quickly finds the eclectic mix of oil-crayon colors and then her portrait begins as a constant state of evolution. The lone apple tree stands unwavering, as does Ritz on environmental issues and concerns.

Ritz says, “Art lifts spirits,” and her contribution as an artist is to show individuals they must be true to what gives their lives the most meaning. For Ritz, the mountains and apple-orchard trees help her achieve that trust of self.



*“Mt. Norwottuck and Apple Trees” by Lorna Ritz*



*“Mt. Norwottuck and Apple Tree” by Lorna Ritz*

## Seasonal splendor, one morsel at a time

Chefs Clark Frasier and Mark Gaier understand that when fresh herbs and vegetables are combined with gourmet dishes, the results are delicious. At their restaurant, Summer Winter, inside the Burlington Marriot in Burlington, Mass., Frasier and Gaier utilize an on-site greenhouse to grow these ingredients. Implementing this “garden to table” philosophy has helped them garner many accolades, including 2010’s Best Chefs in the Northeast James Beard Award. Frasier’s passion for cooking and fresh ingredients evolved during a trip to China to study Chinese.

There during the harsh winter, the only vegetable available was dried, salted and pickled cabbage. “By the end of winter, we students were ravenous for vegetables, and would go anywhere and pay anything to get them,” says Frasier. “I learned from that what the season meant and why food tastes so good when it is in season.”

Frasier went on to serve as chef tournant in the famous kitchen of Stars Restaurant in San Francisco. There he met his future business partner, and fellow chef tournant, Mark Gaier. Gaier had been cooking since he was 14 and began working at Stars after receiving his basic culinary training. The two chefs found they shared a similar vision for fine dining and decided to branch out on their own.

Summer Winter is the third restaurant these innovative chefs have opened. The menu consists of many favorite New England entrees including plank-roasted fish, duck and chicken, plus an extensive salad selection and oyster bar. Frasier and Gaier have tapped gardener Sallie Scribner to manage the greenhouse and produce their signature ingredients. “I am inspired by how agricultural sustainability is at the philosophical core of Summer Winter restaurant,”



Chefs Mark Gaier and Clark Frasier

says Scribner. “I am a firm believer that homegrown tastes best, and I am excited about growing delicious organic vegetables, fruits, herbs and edible flowers in the greenhouse and garden season after season.” This seasonal approach allows Summer Winter restaurant to provide the freshest possible ingredients. The winter harvest includes vegetables grown for their leaves or roots. In autumn, some crops include spinach, radishes and beans.

Concern over mass-produced vegetables and other crops that are exposed to harmful chemicals continues to grow. Frasier and Gaier’s “garden to table” philosophy gives patrons of Summer Winter the satisfaction of knowing that what they are eating has been grown organically at the restaurant. The award-winning cuisine and spectacular ambience are added bonuses.

### Warm Brussels Sprout Salad

Courtesy of Chefs Mark Gaier and Clark Frasier

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 cups Brussels sprouts, core removed and leaves separated
- ½ cup chicken stock
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a very hot sauté pan, melt butter and allow to brown. Add the Brussels sprouts and sauté until they begin to brown. Add the chicken stock and season with the salt and pepper. Cook the sprouts until soft, approximately 6-8 minutes.





## Roasted Smokey Onions and Sweet Potatoes

Serves 4

1 extra large onion or 2 large onions, cut in half, then each half into thick ribs, separated

2 large organic sweet potatoes, cut into half, then each half cut into 4 wedges

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
5 tablespoons water

1/2 teaspoons smoked sweet paprika  
1/4 teaspoons smoked hot paprika, optional

Sea salt to taste

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Spray a large glass baking dish or sheet pan with olive oil spray.

Place the onions and the sweet potatoes into a bowl. Drizzle the olive oil and water evenly over the top and toss to coat the vegetables. Sprinkle the paprika and sea salt over the vegetables, and toss to coat.

Turn the vegetables into the prepared pan, and use a rubber spatula to scrape the bowl of all the juices and spices, and to spread the vegetables evenly.

Bake in preheated oven for about 50 minutes, occasionally stirring the vegetables to cook evenly, until the potatoes are tender and the onions soft and caramelized.

Add sea salt to taste.

## Culinary goodness, with a side of consciousness

and nutrition. The restaurant has garnered attention from the Michelin Green Guide to New England, Yankee Magazine, Connecticut Magazine, Women's Day, MSNBC and others.

Making vegetarian and organic food popular, however, is just one of the ways Claire's Corner Copia has raised its sustainability profile. From the beginning, the restaurant used only paper containers, instead of plastic, for takeout orders. These days wood-based paper has been replaced by biodegradable bowls and cups made from corn and printed with soy ink. In addition, other sustainable practices range from Energy Star lighting and a low-water dishwasher to natural kitchen cleaners made from such old-fashioned ingredients as baking soda and vinegar.

For the Criscuolos, sustainability also means supporting their community. The restaurant's name came from a Yale student (who won weekly ice cream sundaes for the next year). The restaurant routinely raises thousands of dollars for charities. And its employment practices support the community by assuring "fair wages, health insurance and paid personal days."

Altogether that philosophy has paid off. Generations of Yale graduates who first experienced the restaurant as students continue to return with their families to enjoy the Claire's dishes they remember. The overwhelming favorite: Claire's now-famous Lithuanian Coffee Cake, which is included on Connecticut Magazine's list of "the 100 foods you must eat before you die."

Even those who don't live nearby can become Claire's Corner Copia fans. Claire's recipes, nutritional information, menus and more are posted on the restaurant's Website ([www.clairecornercopia.com](http://www.clairecornercopia.com)) and Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/Claire'sNewHaven](http://www.facebook.com/Claire'sNewHaven)).



Owners Claire and Frank Criscuolo



# Declaration of independence

In today's society, the phrase "go green" has become synonymous with our country's effort to conserve energy. However, a growing number of Americans are introducing another term into the conversation — "off the grid."

Families who live off the grid own autonomous homes: They do not rely on public utility services such as water, sewer, gas or electric. While some families elect to go without electricity at all, others use solar panels or wind turbines

Having an independent energy source is just one of the many advantages of living off the grid. We have all experienced the inconvenience of power outages. Favorite television shows are missed, heating and cooling units shut down and depending on the time of day, the darkness in your home can be frustrating. Homes equipped with off-the-grid technology, however, continue to function during these power outages. Families living off the grid also enjoy helping the environment.



to power anything from lamps to flat-screen televisions. Depending on the location of the home, water sources can include a well, stream or a lake. Rain water can also be harvested. Many of these techniques are being implemented in "green" corporate buildings in urban areas as well.

The off-the-grid lifestyle requires a lot of "give and take" philosophy. Individuals who consider adopting this lifestyle have to ask: How much am I willing to sacrifice in to order reap the benefits? One of the cardinal rules of off-the-grid living is that you cannot use more energy than you can produce. So if you're someone who falls asleep with the television on or leaves the lights on when you leave the house, off-the-grid living might not be for you. However, if the idea of having fewer bills in your mailbox sounds enticing, then changing those habits might be beneficial.



According to Nick Rosen, author and creator of [www.off-grid.net](http://www.off-grid.net), there are approximately 750,000 off-the-grid homes in America. Rosen estimates that this number is increasing 10 percent per year. "There's much more competition for the amount of fossil fuel available: Prices will go up, availability will go down. So it's right to prepare for that era," Rosen explains. "Going off the grid is like ensuring yourself against a time the lights may go out."

Some of the sacrifices that come with off-the-grid living include start-up costs and the location of the home. The solar panel and wind turbine technology that makes off-the-grid living possible is expensive. Units can cost \$35,000 to \$45,000 to power most conventional homes. Over time and after tax credits, however, the savings from producing their own energy allows off-the-grid families to see a return on their initial investment. The options for locations of off-the-grid homes are limited. Areas in which solar panels can't obtain sufficient access to the sun — such as urban settings — are not the most optimal locations.

While some off-the-grid homes are modest and relatively inexpensive, others adapting this lifestyle construct lavish and technologically advanced abodes. "In the 1970s

you had a lot of old-style hermitlike survivalists. But these people are different. This isn't the Stone Age anymore; you can live a quite comfortable life," says Rosen.

There is still much debate amongst environmentalists over how much families that adopt an off-the-grid lifestyle can alleviate issues such as global warming and pollution. However, as the number of off-the-grid homes in this country continues to rise, it is only a matter of time before this way of life begins to change the way we look at energy conservation.