

GREENWICH BUSINESS



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Think Green. Save Money. Save Lives

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A recovered addict, Steve Feldman has decided to give back to the center that saved his life, and in the meantime, do his share in saving the world one kitchen and one bathroom — just about anything with a high resale value — at a time.

Green Demolitions is a non-profit charitable organization that was created as an alternative to traditional fund-raising in 2001 during a time when the economy was not at its best.

What Green Demolitions does is take donated items, which can include kitchens, countertops, appliances, bathroom fixtures, heating systems, air conditioning and generators, and resells them for 50 to 70 percent off retail value. The charity also accepts home décor, antiques, rugs and recreational vehicles like boats and cars — what Feldman calls, “the good stuff.”

The proceeds from sales on greendemolitions.com and showroom sales — there is a 5,200-square-foot warehouse in Homesdale, Pa. — go toward the Answer to Addiction, a non-profit organization that aids an addiction recovery center in Catskills, N.Y. The center, which offers free help to addicts of all kinds, also helped Feldman recover from drug and alcohol abuse.

Here's his personal story:

“At age 16, I was a star athlete,” explains Feldman, 49. “I was the number one cross country runner at Arlington High School in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. I was a good student. I came from a good family. I started smoking pot. I started drinking. And within a year, I was a total juvenile delinquent.”

He was driving around 90 miles an hour and almost killed himself and his friends a couple of times, he said. “Should have died; should have been arrested, but neither of those two things ever happened.”

Feldman had his first bout with suicidal depression when he was 19, and then another when he was 30, as a result of the drug and alcohol abuse.

“At that point,” he said, “I met the co-founders of this recovery center and I got a miraculous recovery from depression.” That was in 1988.

From Radio to Fund-raising

Feldman's career in radio was growing. He worked on the Imus in the Morning show in Providence, R.I., where he began as a disc jockey. He then moved up the ranks to become senior marketing manager.

After his radio business took off in 1993, when the station was the first in the country to syndicate “Imus in the Morning,” Feldman realized that it was time to give back. (Don Imus is a former Greenwich resident.) So, he became a major donor to the addiction center.

In 1998, he received a call from the center asking if he would lead its fund-raising efforts. “At that time I was 40 years old and I thought, ‘Time for a life change.’”

But the world of fund-raising was a real shock for Feldman. So, after reading a *Forbes* magazine article, “The Workaholic,” about Glenville resident Bruster Kopp, Feldman decided to contact him.

Kopp, a busy man, didn't meet with Feldman at first, but after he received some materials on the center, a long letter and 10 loaves of organic bread from the center's co-founder, Tom Powers Sr.'s organic food store, he agreed to a meeting.

“I called him up and said, ‘Mr. Kopp, did



GREENWICH CITIZEN photos / Amy Mortensen

Steve Feldman, aboard the 26-foot Green Demolitions truck at a job in Riverside last Friday, has helped raise money for addicts in need, save the environment and encourage others to do the same with his non-profit organization.



Andy Smith, left, and Alex Smith carefully remove kitchen appliances from a home in Riverside. The appliances will be resold at 50 to 70 percent off their retail price.

Proceeds benefit the non-profit organization the Answer to Addiction.

you get my package?”

“He said, ‘You know, I'm eating this peanut butter sandwich on this raisin bread and it's good. I'll meet with you.’”

That was in January of 1999. Kopp said that he would introduce Feldman to some wealthy philanthropists in Greenwich, and he did.

But the economy wasn't booming as it was in the late '90s. Feldman realized that traditional methods of fund-raising weren't going to work. So, after dabbling in non-cash donations, it wasn't until seeing the 10,000-square-foot Greenwich Rockefeller estate of Farah Diba leveled in March of 2001 that he thought of Green Demolitions.

What began as a pilot project, Green

Demolitions expanded by word of mouth and became a full-time venture that was officially launched in Greenwich last year. Its first event was Go Wild!

A Year in Review

In the first nine months of this year, Green Demolitions was able to generate \$210,000. Feldman explains the purpose of the organization is to provide funding for the 77-acre center, which will furnish the family addiction prevention program, the outreach programs and the job development program.

In addition to serving the addiction center, Feldman also has goals of making Green Demolitions self-supportive. For the last 60 days, he said, it has been.

In the future, he hopes to launch a national outreach program. The charity is currently seeking one-time seed money to do so.

“The idea is, once a person is recovered, then they will be able to give back,” he said. “And it works. I am just one of many, many, many people who are giving back.”

With the charity only employing four people and a dozen or so sub-contractors, Green Demolition has begun to make its mark.

A member of the Homebuilders and Remodelers Association of Fairfield and the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA), Green Demolitions was awarded “Recycling's Newest Face” last year by Greenwich Green and Clean.

By taking someone's unwanted kitchen, baths or anything else for that matter, not only is Green Demolitions saving the donor roughly \$12,000-\$14,000, estimates Feldman calculating tax savings, labor savings and dumping fees, but reducing landfill waste and associated energy costs.

According to Feldman, it costs about \$200 million to move the garbage of construction debris in the Northeast to a landfill. That statistic just encompasses fuel costs, he said, and is a couple of years old.

In addition to that, Green Demolitions can provide huge savings for the consumer.

“Our motto is 50-70 percent off retail price,” said Feldman. “If you like it, buy it, because it won't be there tomorrow.”

And it's true. The Web site has a “24-hour Club” featuring kitchens that sell within 24 hours of being posted.

Over the past year, top donations include:

- The Kaali-Nagy Co., of New Canaan, the charity's longest and most loyal donor, donated all of its studio displays from Kitchen Design Studios.

- A 14,000-square-foot Tudor mansion in Greenwich.

- A 4-year-old kitchen valued at about \$90,000 from R.S. Granoff Architects in Greenwich.

“It's a win-win situation,” said Sarah Sullivan, expeditor for Hobbs Inc., based in New Canaan. “And it's for a great cause.”

The charity is also now receiving national donations, including displays from the fifth largest trade show in America — KBIS, Kitchen/Bath Industry Show and Conference.

With a new 26-foot truck and a grand opening of a second store slated tomorrow in Bethel, N.Y., the site of Woodstock, Green Demolitions is just getting started.

While Green Demolitions is based in the Catskills, a majority of the work done is in Fairfield County — Greenwich, New Canaan, Westport and Darien — and Westchester County — Mamaroneck, Rye, Scarsdale and Bedford. Feldman, who has been living part-time in Riverside for the past two years, is looking for a home base for the charity in town.

“Addiction touches everybody's life,” said Feldman. “If people realized that they can help themselves financially, help the environment and help the addiction problem in this country, that gets them excited, and that's what gets them excited to donate.”

For information, visit greendemolitions.org or greendemolitions.com.