

Guilt-free remodeling

By **Rachel Lebeaux**/ Townsman Staff
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Gesturing toward the wood cabinets, kitchen appliances and unhinged doors stacked in the garage of the Kinch family's Eisenhower Circle home, contractor Mark Archambault nodded in approval and noted, "That would be half a Dumpster right there. Instead of being trashed, they'll reuse it."

"They" is greenGoat, a nonprofit organization that works with architects, contractors, manufacturers and homeowners to recycle gently used building materials into other structures and donate larger appliances to families in need. The Kinch family is one of the latest homeowners to work with greenGoat to arrange for such donations.

"We have decided to be a conduit for people with a lot of gently used materials to families that really need them," said Amy Bauman, who founded greenGoat in 2001. "Building materials make up 40 percent of landfill capacity nationwide - that's a lot of blue bins. If we're able to help a contractor divert materials from an entire commercial building that's being demolished, then that's a lot of saved material."

Bauman, of Somerville, launched the greenGoat concept after

learning that the state was planning to ban certain building materials from landfills, including asphalt, brick, concrete, wood and metal. She had worked at Fidelity for more than a decade doing cost-benefit analysis. "I specialized in finding the piece in the process that could be automated, so my approach to the building industry is like that," she said. "[Reusing materials] makes financial sense to everyone, as well as the community and the environment."

Bauman estimates that 80 percent of building materials could be reused, as they all need to be processed or recycled in some way. "If we got our way, everything would be reused as is," she said.

Boston's Neighborhood Development Services works with greenGoat to place building materials and appliances with families who cannot afford necessary housing upgrades.

Upon visiting a project site, "We catalogue whatever is coming out of the project, material-wise, and place it," Bauman said. "It feels great to work on the residential level - it's very grassroots, and you get to shake the hand of the person who benefits."

Bauman said that greenGoat tries to be very flexible in arranging how items are removed from the project site. Often, recipients pick up their own items as they are already getting them for free or at a bargain rate.

greenGoat has worked with larger-scale developments and on residential projects in Newton, Arlington and Weston. A number of architects in the area have become aware of greenGoat's mission and have recommended them to their clients.

Jack and Linda Kinch found themselves in just that position. Two weeks ago, they embarked upon a renovation/addition to their home, which six months from now should include a new kitchen, mud room, laundry room, bedroom and bathroom.

"I really liked my old kitchen, it was quite nice, and we weren't even sure we were going to [redo] that when we started the project, but it seemed like the thing to do since we were ripping the house apart," Linda Kinch said. "Many of the appliances were fairly new and the cabinets are nice."

Assessing the home, Kinch's architect, Lisa Abeles, noted that many of the materials could go to greenGoat. **"I contacted Amy Bauman and she came right out and explained the process to me," Kinch said. "She was really willing to find a home for everything we could give away."**



Linda Kinch, her son Willy, 8, and contractor Mark Archambault stand in front of the cabinets, appliances and other building materials that will be donated through the nonprofit organization greenGoat.

(Staff photo/David Gordon)

The family plans to donate their appliances, cabinets, light fixtures, some wood flooring, doors and windows. "We had a lot of nice windows that the people who lived here before us had added on a small breakfast room," Kinch said. She also said that the family is "phasing" their donations a little, and expects to donate the refrigerator and perhaps other appliances in the not-too-distant future. "You feel good knowing that the appliances and cabinets are being put to use instead of put in the landfill," Kinch said.

The Kinch household materials will be going in a couple of different directions, Bauman said. The cabinets and stove will likely be going to a family of Russian immigrants living in Needham who just bought their first home. "They are redoing everything because the home is in shambles - you name it, they need it," Bauman said.

Kinch said that she has already recommended greenGoat to a friend who is redoing her own kitchen, and Archambault said he "absolutely" plans to inform his clients as well.

Last but not least, in addition to the environmental and community-minded benefits, there are also some financial perks to greenGoat's approach. The homeowner gets a tax break in exchange for the donation, and "You also save on dumping fees, another plus for a homeowner," Kinch said.

Said Bauman with a laugh, "There's no reason not to embrace our Yankee frugality."