



green business winner

Creative Conservation

Jim Rowe, Cambridge Stoneware Company

Despite the fact that he was operating well within the confines of state law, pottery artisan Jim Rowe knew the big white plume of smoke billowing from his kiln inside his Cambridge Stoneware Company was not something his neighbors enjoyed. A byproduct of the firing of his signature salt-glazed ceramic pottery, the cloud was comprised of hydrochloric acid, chlorine gas, vaporized sodium and salt particulate matter. Although he had a permit to operate the kiln and its output fell within state safety standards, the veteran potter knew there had to be a better way.

Adversity has besieged Rowe, the former owner of Rowe Pottery Works, periodically over the past few years. But his commitment to a greener way to business was equal to his desire to create his beloved pottery. After selling Rowe Pottery Works, he spent two years developing and installing a custom-designed green kiln, which was fired up for the first time in June 2007.

"I felt confident that it was possible to do what I wanted to do," says Rowe. "A lot of people would think that I'd turn the page, let that chapter of the book close, but I knew I could still do it, do it better and have success."

The green kiln operates inside a highly efficient refractory lining, and computer controls determine optimum firing cycles. The computer helps modulate and lower the fuel usage, which reduces the discharge into the atmosphere. Due to the increased cleanliness of the firing process, Rowe now has his kiln and gallery in the same building in downtown Cambridge, whereas both previously were miles away to spare customers the smoke and smell that accompanied the creative process.

"Jim faced adversity head on with the same kind of creative ability he puts into his artistic achievements as a top-flight potter and artisan," says Joan Collins, Joan Collins Publicity, Inc.



Photo by Amy Lynn Schreck

The eco-friendliness of his self-designed kiln is not its only advantage, says Rowe, who discovered there were more benefits to going green than just a cleaner, more environmentally friendly discharge. While the green kiln cost \$86,000 — compared to the standard \$30,000 kiln used by many ceramic artists, but well below a \$285,000 bid from a Pennsylvania manufacturer — the pros continue to outweigh the cons.

"With my past kilns, the cost to operate with older technology and the salt process would be about \$250 per firing. I have fired the new kiln for as little as \$25," he says. "The old-style salt kiln also required an annual shutdown and maintenance of

\$50,000, compared to a current annual cost of \$500."

To date, Rowe has kept the secret of his success to himself as a means to protect his creative process. But he hopes his drive and belief in something better, something greater, will inspire other artist-businesspeople to rethink their own processes and practices.

"It only makes good sense," says Rowe. "The less negative impact one can have, the less there is to be concerned about. It's just that simple."

—Amanda N. Wegner & Michael Muckian

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Environmentalism's unsung heroes are the ordinary citizens who are taking novel ideas and putting them in motion. Many months ago, the staff of *BusinessWatch* decided we wanted to recognize Madison-area business people and places pioneering ways to ease human impact on the earth — and make Madison the birthplace of a cleaner, smarter kind of progress.

More and more businesses are recognizing that it is imperative to change the ways they operate in order to lessen the effects of global warming, dwindling natural resources and the like. Without a commitment to adopt green business practices, the process of globalization and economic growth could be threatened. Many business leaders recognize that they have a social responsibility as well to lead the way and encourage businesses in emerging markets to follow suit.

The purpose of the *BusinessWatch* Green Business Awards is to identify leaders and companies in the area that are striving to improve their business practices and Mother Earth and champion the work they are doing. We hope this will encourage others to follow suit and present clear role models for others.

On the following pages are the three winners for this year's award. We're also offering information on the other nominees as a means to encourage and inspire others to green their business and environment.

Thank you to those companies, organizations and individuals that submitted nominations in our inaugural awards program. You have proven that great things are happening at all levels and that the future holds much promise.



Meet our judges



Amy Gribb is marketing manager for **BT Squared Engineering & Science**. Amy contributes to BT Squared's green business initiatives by using her company-provided bus pass to ride the bus to work and to downtown business meetings.



Tim Johnson helps companies recover profits they didn't even know were missing. Tim is president of **Midas Management Consulting LLC**, a waste and recycling consulting firm in Madison. He can be found on the Web at www.midasmanagement-consulting.com.



Nick Nigro is an environmental engineer and president of **Environmental Chemistry Consulting Services (ECCS)**, headquartered in Madison. ECCS is the nation's largest mobile environmental laboratory provider, offering testing of contaminated properties either in its Madison laboratory or one of its 12 mobile laboratories.



Christian Gridley is president of **Madison Financial**, a full-service mortgage brokerage firm, dedicated to helping clients find the best possible financing solution to meet their unique needs. Find more information online at www.madisonfinancial.net.