

Eco-friendly Design for Healthier Homes

Eco-friendly design is about wellness," explains Robin Wilson, an eco-designer who has built a successful business, Robin Wilson Home, a brand for conscientious consumers. Wilson, affected by asthma at a young age, says she can "smell mold" which is one of the leading causes for illnesses due to indoor air quality. She explains, "The mass consumer is becoming aware of the global eco-system and how eco-friendly design is about your home. Families affected by autism, asthma and allergies want options that do not impact their health. The reality is that the air indoors can affect your health."

Wilson's intention is to provide people with everything from the "foundation to the furniture." Her green towel line will go on sale at bedbathbeyond.com this summer, and she is currently on a book tour for "Kennedy Green House" (Greenleaf, 2010). Wilson was introduced to Mary Richardson and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. 2008 to help them transform their sick home into a healthy space. "They had a major flood in their house one summer when they were away. When they returned there was black mold covering almost all the surfaces up to the second floor," she explains.

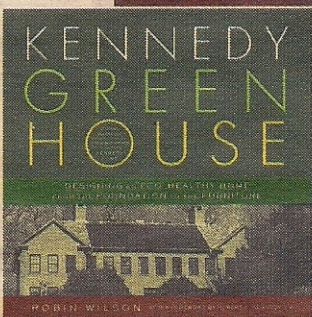
The book chronicles the eco-healthy remodeling and redesign by a green dream team (Blansfield Builders, architects Brooks Washburn and Patrick Croke, and Robin Wilson) for the Kennedy's Westchester County home. The book also has information on how to incorporate the same environmentally responsible and health-conscious changes into your own home. Wilson adds tips on how these changes can be used by any homeowner, from full-scale renovation to common household items.

"My goal is to show consumers that eco-friendly can be beautiful and affordable," says Wilson. The entrepreneur runs a consulting service, speaks nationally and at local venues including the Museum of Natural History, and sells eco-products in The Nest Store, an online retailer. "Every product, manufacturer and retailer is carefully researched and must meet at least one of the company's criteria - sustainable, recyclable, reusable or non-toxic."

Regarding our eco-system in New York, scientists believe that indoor air quality can be five to 10 times worse than outdoor air. "If your indoor air quality is poor - due to lead paint, furniture that has formaldehyde glue or your windows are hermetically sealed



The eco-conscious kitchen (above) features cabinetry produced with no added urea formaldehyde, LED Energy-Star appliances and countertops composed of post consumer waste.



windows open and the air circulating.

There are many things you can do to make your home more eco-friendly. Wilson recommends that you do at least three things from this list for a month and see if you notice a difference in your health.

Wash your pillows. "You sleep one-third of your life," notes Wilson. "If you don't wash your pillow, it's like wearing the same (unwashed) pair of pajamas for three years." She recommends cleaning your pillows every six months and giving them to an animal shelter after three years. Next time you buy bedding, go for hypoallergenic pillows and mattress covers.

Remove your shoes in the entry area. Don't track dirt or pesticides (the kind they spray in parks or your yard) into your living space.

Change your light bulbs to energy efficient options such as CFL or LED light.

Lower your stress, lower your bills. When not in use, unplug non-essential electronic appliances including your mobile phone, PDA charger, computer

bathrooms and kitchen, you create a toxic soup," Wilson claims. It's not like the old days when we kept our win-

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they use "phantom" power. One simple way to unplug; put your electronics on a power strip and turn off the circuit when not in use.

Limit your land fill waste. Take reusable cloth bags to the market instead of using plastic ones.

Close your toilet lid when you flush. It has been scientifically documented that flushing creates a two to four foot spray of particles in your bathroom. You don't want those particles landing near toothbrushes or face soap.

Dust your home regularly to prevent allergies, wheezing or sneezing. Even if you don't see the dust - it can be microscopic - run a cloth across surfaces at least twice a week.

If you have a choice, use rugs instead of wall-to-wall carpeting. Vacuum or shake out your rugs frequently as flooring is the largest dust collector.

Use affordable non-toxic cleaning products. Wilson's favorite is Method, available at outlets including Target, Safeway and Costco.

For more information, visit www.RobinWilsonHome.com.

- Holly Reich



Eco-smart bamboo flooring, vintage chair and ladder made from reclaimed wood.

About Big Town **Going Green**

Big Town Going Green is a series of articles showcasing local companies and initiatives that support the environment through innovative "green" programs or services.