



Green Jobs Profile: Sage Companies of Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Soy Biobased Insulation Used After 2008 Floods Makes Buildings Better Than Before

Pat Shey's road to creating green economic opportunities winds through Washington, D.C. where he served as a legislative advisor on Capitol Hill and back to his home state of Iowa where Shey practiced law, was a state prosecutor as well as a state representative. While this might seem like an unconventional path to opening a green business, Shey sees it is where the nation is going.

In 2007, Shey launched [Sage Companies](#), a name he chose for being both wise and green, to offer soy biobased spray foam insulation. "I think the world has changed, and I think you are going to see more people interested in buying locally whether it is food or other materials...More people are interested in the history of the products they buy and use, and whether they are friendly to the environment. I think it's something that its day has come."

For many of Shey's customers, including several described in this newsletter, the summer 2008 floods that hit the Midwest made his company's offerings all the more timely. Cedar Rapids, the second largest city in Iowa, was hard hit. Shey serves on the city council and is well aware of the flood damage to 300 city-owned buildings as well as 2000 homes and hundreds of businesses. The reconstruction is a long process since city buildings had to be cleaned and feasibility studies completed. "A lot of the homes that were flooded were poorly insulated and expensive to heat...As we rebuild, we intend to make sure everything is built better. We aren't doing anyone favors by building cheap homes that no one can afford to heat and cool," says Shey.



Sage Companies owners from left: Ron Heggebo, Pat Shey, Tom Podzimek are insulating the Iowa State University entry in the U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon that will be on exhibit in Washington, D.C. in October 2009.

Today, his company employs eight people and has a positive multiplier effect to the business community. "We are seeing more and more businesses and consumers willing to invest in spray foam over cheaper alternatives like fiberglass since--in the long run--it will result in lower energy bills, reduce our dependence on foreign oil and support American farmers. I think it is remarkable that people are willing to look beyond higher 'initial costs' of spray foam--and are now more interested in the long term 'life cycle' costs. More and better insulation--while costing more up front -- ultimately cost less in the long run with lower heating and cooling bills."

Those benefits could soon grow larger as interest in how soy biobased insulation fits in other green and visionary efforts. For example, Iowa State University just selected Sage Companies to insulate their entry <http://www.solard.iastate.edu/project/> in the U.S. Department of Energy's 2009 Solar Decathlon — a competition in which 20 teams of college and university students compete to design, build, and operate the most attractive, effective, and energy-efficient solar-powered house. Teams transport their houses to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and rebuild them on site where the public can see and learn from them in October. <http://www.solardecathlon.org/about.html>.

Read more about how biobased companies are creating [green jobs](#).

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