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Retailer Spotlight **Dunia in Maynard, Massachusetts**

Dunia, nestled in the historic downtown area of blue collar mill-town Maynard, Massachusetts, has been a destination for eco-conscious consumers for three years now. Owner Paige O'Brien sat down with us for a few minutes to chat about her business and how it's evolved in light of the recent green movement.

"In the beginning," says Paige, "our store's purpose was self-serving." Paige and her husband diagnosed a lack of tangible, affordable eco-friendly product in the area and decided to do something about it. When they opened their store, however, they realized that the need for this type of product was farther reaching than just their own backyard. "We realized that there are a lot of people who want to give gifts and make choices that are gentle on the earth," Paige explained. "Our bigger goal then became inspiring our community to leave a smaller footprint on the planet."

Dunia is filled with a delightful mix of eclectic home accessories, jewelery, personal care and even children's items, from bowls made of reclaimed chopsticks to recycled plastic toothbrushes. Despite the variety, every item is linked with one common thread – each has its own special story to tell. "We choose items that are as attractive and functional as they are interesting to talk about," says Paige. She looks for items with good packaging that tells the product's story, like **Design Ideas® EcoTwine™** items, but more importantly, she encourages customers to ask questions so she can engage and educate them. While her clientele has not changed drastically in the last year amid growing awareness of damage to our ecosystem and the green movement, the way she interacts with them has changed slightly. "I don't have to explain things as much anymore," she comments. "Customers who are familiar with the "LOHAS" (lifestyles of health and sustainability) lifestyle have always come to our store as a destination, but walk-in shoppers weren't always as informed about terms like "fair trade" and "sustainable" as they are now.

While Dunia's mission has always revolved solely around an eco-friendly offering, Paige acknowledges the fact that many retailers are incorporating green product into their stores to meet this new consumer demand. "The wonderful thing about 'going green' is that there is such a wide variety of product available now to fit any lifestyle. "'Green' product isn't just limited to recycled or fair trade – it can be sustainable, educational, cruelty-free, reused, organic....there is truly something to fit in every store." The downside to this onslaught of new products is that consumers and retailers must be wary of greenwashing. We asked Paige to offer some expertise to those retailers who are looking to incorporate more green merchandise in an authentic and meaningful way. "The most important thing is to know your sources, she advises. "If it comes from another country, ask your vendor for fair trade certification or for their social responsibility policy." Paige suggests looking online, listening to your customers, and taking recommendations from green industry publications and organizations like the National Green Pages and Co-op America.

For more information on Dunia, visit www.dunia-ecostore.com.

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