

# YOUR MONEY

Local businesses celebrate  
Earth Day – all year long

## Green equals green



Saudia Davis' eco-cleaning company is planning to launch a line of natural products.

LINDA ROSIER



# Sprouting ideas for eco-friendly goods

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**W**hen Laura Bucko of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce started a committee to nurture New York City green business owners three years ago, there were just ten members.

"We now have 250," Bucko said. "There is so much going in in all different areas whether, it is green energy, green retailing and hospitality, local food and organics or design and construction."

As consumers have become ever more focused on the environment, New York has become fertile ground for environmentally-focused small businesses.

The city has played a role, bringing focus and dollars to promoting a green economy.

One city-funded effort, the New York City Accelerator for a Clean and Renewable Economy, created during the economic downturn in 2009, has become a launching pad for clean tech companies. To date, the business incubator has helped bring six new products to market and has created 125 new jobs.

In all, 13,000 new jobs are expected to be created by 2018, doubling the city's green industry workforce.

"Within the green sector, there are enormous opportunities for entrepreneurs," said Seth Pinsky, president of the NYC Economic Development Corp. "We hear frequently about new green ventures all over the city—from clean tech incubators to wind energy com-

panies. That's good news for the economy and the environment."

The following are three small businesses who've learned how to spin green into profits.

*Phyllis Furman*

## SAUDIA DAVIS GREENHOUSE ECO-CLEANING

**F**ive years ago, Saudia Davis wasn't quite sure New York City was ready for an eco-friendly cleaning service that shuns chemicals and uses only vegetable-based cleaning products.

"I put out a flyer in Fort Greene to see if there was interest," said Davis.

Sure enough, there was plenty.

Davis, who started out cleaning houses on her own, now runs GreenHouse Eco-Cleaning, a

company in Dumbo, Brooklyn, that employs 12 and has provided green cleaning services to more than 1,000 homes and businesses throughout the city. Sales this year are expected to hit \$500,000.

The former film studio public relations exec, who promoted movies like "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," is now preparing to take her green business to the next level and is raising money to fund the launch of a line of GreenHouse Eco-Cleaning products.

"Our mission is rooted in living a healthy lifestyle, working with products that are plant-based and environmentally-friendly," said Davis, 32, whose accomplishments were recently noted by Make Mine a Million \$ Business, an entrepreneurship program that

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spotlights promising women business owners.

Davis, who immigrated from Jamaica when she was 14 years old, said she was inspired to launch a green business after the death of her grandmother in 2006.

The young entrepreneur was convinced that her grandmother, a professional house cleaner, got sick with cancer after years of being exposed to dangerous chemicals on the job. Davis wanted to provide a healthier cleaning service that would benefit customers as well as employees.

"Saudia was ahead of the curve when she opened GreenHouse Eco-Cleaning in 2006," said Karen-Michelle Mirko, director of customer advocacy marketing at American Express Open, which sponsors Make Mine A Million \$ Business.

It hasn't been easy. Running a green company has meant incurring high costs. A machine that cleans floors using only water might cost \$3,000 to \$4,000 more than one that uses chemicals, Davis said.

"How do we stay true to our mission and compete in the marketplace?" she said. "We are wrestling with these things."

Another big challenge for Davis: An onslaught of cleaning service rivals claiming to be focused on the environment.

"I feel like every week there is someone new," she said.

To stay competitive, Davis, who is a LEED professional, a designation that qualifies professionals to advise on green buildings, is moving in new directions, such as counseling clients on developing a healthier lifestyle.

"We are helping people make decisions that are future-friendly," Davis said.

*Phyllis Furman*

