

Sunday LIVING

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Sunday, June 18, 2006 • Features Editor Becky Holt 660-1856 or (800) 427-3124



RYAN MERCER, Free Press

Evan Goldsmith, president of Hope For Women, LLC, stands with his father, David, with whom he founded the company that is dedicated to providing a socially responsible business market for Indian women to sell cards they make by hand.

Father & Son

Family business
receives fair-trade twist
with socially conscious cards

By Sally Pollak
Free Press Staff Writer

The staff meetings are Monday mornings at 10:30. The staff can usually get right down to business — Web site, sales reps — and dispense with small talk about the weekend. Chances are, they've run into each other Saturday or Sunday.

The staff are father and son, David and Evan Goldsmith. It's the third generation, 2-year-old Ethan, that typically brings them together over the weekend. Whatever the off-hour gatherings of the extended Goldsmith family might be, dad and son spend their working life together, in the Main Street offices of Hope for Women.

Hope for Women is a business that combines the expert-

ise and interests of the two Goldsmiths. David Goldsmith, 66, is a retired (and reactivated) businessman who moved to Burlington from Chappaqua, N.Y., to join his son in business. He throws around terms like "MSRP" — that's manufacturer's suggested retail price — and "constant revenue stream" and talks about sales projections as if they're facts. In his case, they might be. He said he made his first IPO — that's initial public offering — about 40 years ago.

Evan Goldsmith, 36, is a former high school teacher with experience in nonprofits. He spent two years living in the foothills of the Himalayas in India, working with women and children in need. Through that experience, he came to under-

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CARDS: Father-son build business

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stand and care about the needs of the community, the concerns and priorities of the women. He uses recycled paper, doesn't feel the need to print that attribute on the paper products, and brings his black Lab, Goose, to work a couple of days a week.

About 10 years after Evan Goldsmith left India, he started a company that employs Indian women, pays them a livable wage and offers steady employment. "David knows about business, and I know about doing good," Evan said. "Let's put it together, and make this happen."

Hope for Women makes cards on handmade paper, decorated with pressed flowers. All the work, from picking the flowers to placing them on paper, is done by the women in India. Hope for Women has about 15 core employees, women who produce 1,000 cards a month, according to the Goldsmiths. The company was started mainly as an Internet company, selling sets of eight cards packaged in boxes.

It is poised to shift to single-card sales. This will be advantageous to the women who make the cards, the Goldsmiths say. They anticipate the change will mean a steadier stream of sales and thus a constant income source. People typically purchase cards as needed, rather than in a boxed set.

Today is Father's Day, people will wake up and remember: Better go buy dad a card.

Evan didn't mention a card as part of his Father's Day plan. He's going to give his dad a bottle of wine, he said. They'll be together today, at a family wedding. "I'm going to pull him aside," Evan said, "and give him a private toast and say, 'Thanks for being my dad.'"

For the Goldsmiths, work-



RYAN MERCER, Free Press

Evan Goldsmith, president of Hope For Women, says his company offers a socially responsible, fair-trade market for Indian women who create these note cards.

More information

■ **WHAT:** Hope for Women, a Burlington-based card company whose cards are made in India. The cards feature dried and pressed flowers mounted on handmade paper.

■ **WHEN:** The father-son company expects a shipment of 21,000 cards to arrive July 1.

■ **ONLINE:** www.hopeforwomen.com; The cards are available for order (a box of eight note cards, \$16.95) at the Web site.

■ **MEMBER OF:** Fair Trade Federation, a trade association whose criteria include: Paying a fair wage in the local context; using environmentally sustainable practices; building long-term trade relationships; providing healthy and safe working conditions.

ing together the last few years has added an interesting and valuable dimension to their relationship. It's a facet of their relationship for which they're grateful.

"We are in every sense of the word full-equity partners," David said. "Once we got the word from Evan and (wife) Lindsay that having Mom and Dad in the vicinity was OK, we jumped on board."

The decision to become partners was a "two-way thing," Evan said. "It's got to be."

The two sides even agreed, separately, that it would be best if Evan's parents did not buy a house on Loomis Street, where Evan and his family live, when one became available. What about Brookes Avenue, a block over? they wondered.

In the end, when David and his wife, Lari, moved here in 2003, they bought a place in South Burlington.

Evan says that joining forces with his father was a very practical decision. At Hope for Women, he has a collaborator with proven success in the business world and experience creating and developing companies.

"I have a partner who is

bringing a tremendous amount to the table to make it viable," Evan said.

For his part, David was intrigued with "the idea that you could marry products with a cause and it would resonate with people as a reason to purchase the product," he said. He wanted to learn more about "cause marketing" and "social entrepreneurship."

"I like to play golf, but I am passionate about business," David said. "The energy of constructing something and seeing it blossom into a reality — particularly something that is meaningful to people — that floats my boat."

Beyond that, he was drawn to the idea of teaming up with his son.

"One of the great joys of this whole thing is to work with Evan," he said. "It's the parental motivation. You're watching over your cubby. You want him to be safe and successful."

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