

ECO-FRIENDLY BUSINESS

Going clean ... and green

ESTHER FUNG

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MR COLIN Pudsey started having chest pains and watery eyes after instructing

his weekly maid to clean his home more thoroughly, and wanted to ask what kind of cleaning liquids were used.

"They weren't sure what they were using, and that really scared me," said

Mr Pudsey, a British national who came to Singapore about a year-and-a-half ago.

The then IT infrastructure consultant went on to do some research online and found that many cleaning companies in Singapore use standard all-purpose cleaners on the job. These may contain toxins that can be absorbed through the skin or inhaled, like glass cleaners that contain ammonia, a poison that can irritate skin, eyes and the respiratory system.

"I was horrified to learn the side effects household cleaners can have," he added. "It inspired me to offer a healthier option in Singapore."

Mr Pudsey, who has a resume dotted with environment-focused projects in the United Kingdom, Australia and Singapore, said he quit his job and started Green Cleaners with a partner last November.

"In Singapore, there is a severe lack of expertise in environmentally-friendly practices or concepts."

The health-conscious here are demanding eco-friendly cleaning services, and to date, he has a team of 12 staff servicing the homes of about 50 regular customers.

Mr Pudsey said: "We have many enquiries from parents with new born babies, worried about the effects of toxic products on their child's health and also from pet owners, worried about their dogs and cats."

He added: "It's a nice job to be in, improving people's health, for instance, helping the children reduce allergic reactions or improve their asthma condition. It's satisfying."

Green Cleaners is also expanding to the commercial sector and is hoping to take over contracts for some buildings.

"To clean 'green', it's more than just using eco-friendly chemicals," said Mr Pudsey. "The people using those chemicals need



Mr Pudsey says he receives many enquiries from parents worried about the effects of toxic cleaning products on their children's health.
GREEN CLEANERS

to be eco-conscious. They need to understand why they are using the eco-chemical alternatives, the benefits of the chemicals to themselves and the environment."

The company charges a premium for its services but declined to give specifics. It justified it by using only green labelled products. It also imports products from the UK and Australia, which have to be non-toxic, biodegradable and manufactured without the use of petroleum.

Mr Pudsey said he trains his staff on how to use the detergent and water in an eco-conscious way. Some detergents may be labelled green, but if the cleaners are not careful in the way they use it, they would just inflict the same environmental damage as any other detergent, he said.

"I don't want us to be the biggest, but to be the best. We're building a family of customers and looking after them," said Mr Pudsey.

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