

Green Bean Insulation

Key innovation: eco-friendly, high-performance spray foam insulation

Biggest client: Kallas Properties for the Cleary Condominiums

Where they're based: New Orleans

Top executive: Kurt Buchert, founder

Year introduced: 2006

2006 sales: about \$20,000 per month

Kurt Buchert, a New Orleans native and founder of Green Bean Insulation, was sitting in a coffee shop in Dallas after Katrina trying to figure out how to return to his city and open a business.

"I remembered a massive Uptown rental property where I had used spray foam and loved the product's performance," Buchert said. "My tenant's energy bills were averaging \$90 per month compared with \$250 for other properties that size."

The foam used on his rental property pre-Katrina is only half the density of the product Green Bean Insulation uses now, Buchert said.

Buchert found two manufacturers — BioBased Insulation of Arkansas and Apex Foam Industries of New Orleans — that make "green" foam products using soybean and sugar cane and less petroleum during manufacturing.

"I established a relationship with these companies, found some experienced installers and went to work," he said.

The company now has three installation crews, a blow-in cellulose crew and a project manager, Mark Comardad, who assists with sales and operations of projects, which generate roughly \$20,000 in gross weekly sales.

Green Bean Insulation offers open- and closed-cell spray products that provide double the insulation value and increased structural support compared with most foam products.

Open-cell foam is soft, like the packaging material that protects fragile objects. The cell walls are broken and air fills all of the spaces in the material.

Closed-cell foam resembles inflated balloons piled together in a compact configuration. The cells are full of a special gas selected to make the insulation value of the foam as high as possible.

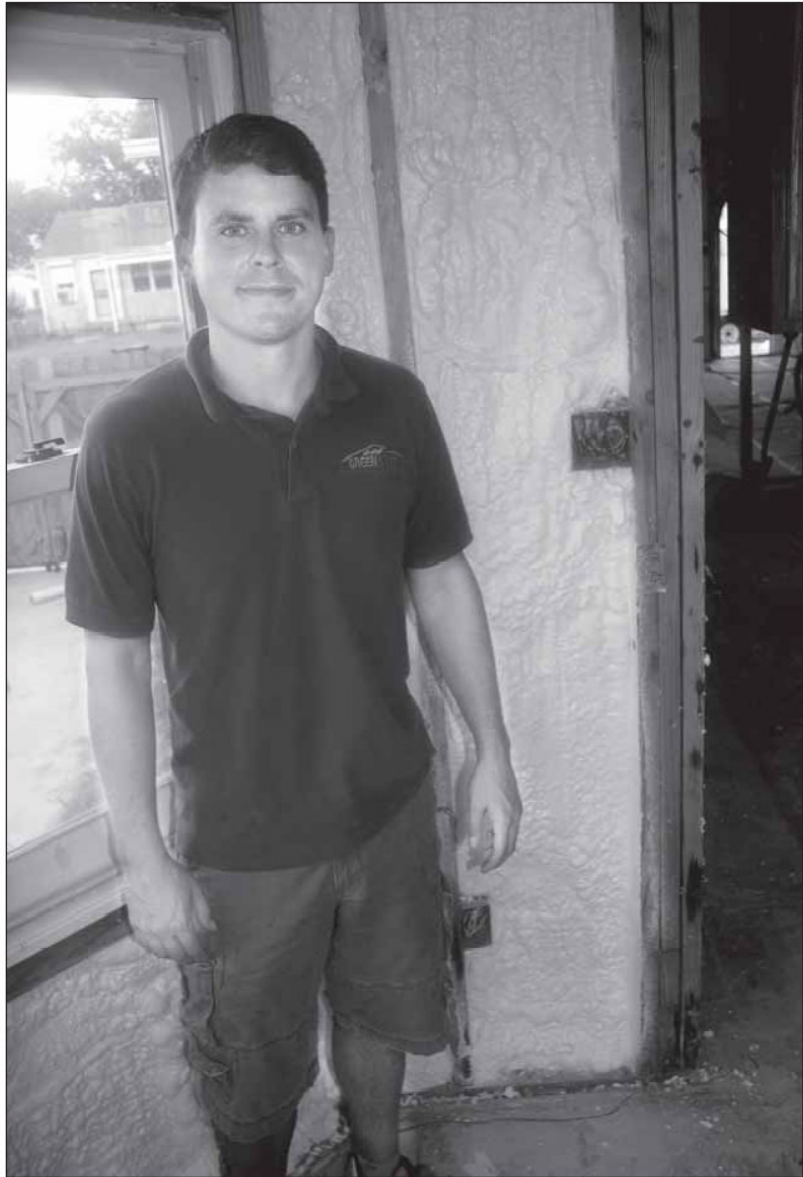
Buchert said Green Bean Insulation products reduce monthly utility bills by up to 60 percent by protecting buildings from heat, cold, moisture, mildew, mold, airborne fibers and pests.

As another selling point, the company advises owners and builders to take advantage of tax credits tied to energy efficiency upgrades.

With work in New Orleans, the North Shore, Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Houma, the company keeps its employees busy.

"I believe New Orleans is the best market in the world right now," Buchert said. "There's a huge number of uninsulated homes and raised homes in a hot, humid climate." •

— Thomas Leggett



Kurt Buchert, founder of Green Bean Insulation, said his environmentally conscious foam spray helps lower energy bills from \$250 to about \$90 a month.