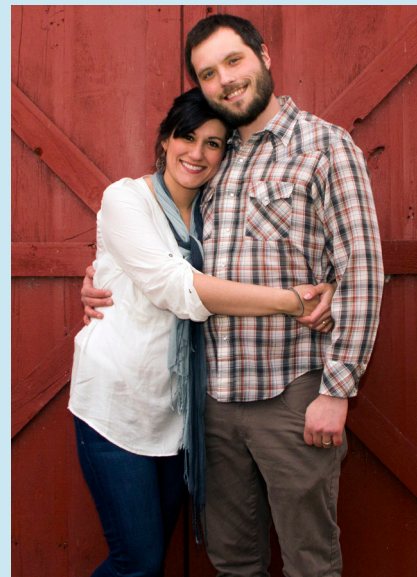


# A SUSTAINABLE

lifestyle is one that attempts to minimize an individual's or society's use of personal resources as well as Earth's natural resources. This idea was especially important for Josh and Mary Larson, who throughout their lives have always tried living environmentally conscious, including using reusable bags instead of plastic bags, line-drying clothes, composting and gardening. However, making the decision to live this type of lifestyle required a lot time and dedication.

"We chose to live a sustainable lifestyle because we know we're doing something good for the society," Mary said. "When you sit down and think about the small changes we've made in our daily life, it's incredible the difference we're making, and we wanted to share the same feeling with others."

The two have spent the majority of their lives calling La Crosse home and have always had an entrepreneurial mindset, with Mary earning an associate's degree in supervisory management and Josh opening and managing several businesses with his family.



Mary and Josh Larson used the SBDC to manage all of the "puzzle pieces."

It wasn't until late 2012 that Josh came across an article in *Popular Science* that sparked the couple's interest in owning their own company and making a difference in the La Crosse community. In the comments section of the online article, someone wondered why major retail chains didn't refill commonly used products since it would simply take a different method of manufacturing to accommodate refilling.

After reading the comment, Josh and Mary couldn't help but take into consideration the waste that could be eliminated in their own community, should the option to refill exist. Even with Josh's prior startup experience, the two knew they would need extra assistance to launch their enterprise. It became immediately clear to them that to successfully manage all of the "puzzle pieces," they would have to wear many hats. Following some online research, the couple was attracted to the free and local resources the SBDC of UW-La Crosse offered and began working with Terri Urbanek upon opening Full Circle Supply in September 2013.

According to Mary, Full Circle Supply "offers the community sustainable products, aimed at reducing waste." Situated in the historic downtown region of La Crosse, the company sells numerous types of United States- and Wisconsin-made eco-friendly products, ranging from refillable personal care and cleaning products, to even offering baby shower or wedding registries. Full Circle Supply also realizes how much time it takes to reduce your footprint, as it offers items such as reusable snack and garbage bags, cloth diapers and organic cotton clothing options.

The products carried at Full Circle Supply are thoroughly researched to ensure they are created in a sustainable matter, use fair labor practices, use recycled materials and use minimal packaging. In addition, the company's eco-friendly home and baby products all center on reducing waste, and virtually all of them giving back on a community or global level. For example, Smile Squared donates one toothbrush to children in need for every toothbrush sold in the Larsons' store. Also, Full Circle Supply sells Vermigold, made by a local nonprofit, which uses the food waste from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

## FULL CIRCLE SUPPLY

### Accomplishments with the SBDC of UW-La Crosse:

- Created business plan
- Developed financial statements
- Opened larger location
- Launched online sales

*"Honestly, I don't know where else I would turn in times of need. I trust (the SBDC) completely to give me accurate, easy-to-understand information and advice."*

- Mary Larson

Since opening two years ago, Full Circle Supply has already made significant impacts in its community, refilling more than 6,000 plastic bottles, which equates to approximately 1,125 pounds of plastic waste. The Larsons attribute a majority of how their company is run to the SBDC, as Urbanek helped with budgeting, forecasting, creating profit-loss statements, establishing contacts throughout the community and even hiring an employee. Full Circle Supply, through Urbanek's connections, is now connected with many local organizations that have similar missions.

"Honestly, I don't know where else I would turn in times of need," Mary Larson said. "I trust them completely to give me accurate, easy-to-understand information and advice."

Big growth is in store for Full Circle Supply in 2016 as Josh and Mary look to expand its business-to-business sales, offering cleaning solutions that are safer for employees and customers. Indeed, the SBDC's tools and advice have clearly paid off, as the Larsons recently moved to a larger location and launched online sales in November.