



Dick Morgenstern, left, and Stewart Hansen of Cultured Log Systems

CONSTRUCTION

BRIGHT IDEA

CULTURED LOG SYSTEMS takes its clues from nature

After forest fires swept through Montana in 2000, Dick Morgenstern wondered: how do you build a home that won't burn down? His answer to his own question was concrete logs.

Morgenstern, a Missoula native, had experience in working with concrete so he started toying with the idea of a concrete log. The first two years he spent in research, and now he and partner Stewart Hansen are working fulltime at their Cultured Log Systems business, which produces a natural-looking log that's being sold around the country as an alternative to real-log construction.

The business is based in Missoula. Much of their work has gone into creating the process that makes concrete look like wood. "When you're selling a log that's made out of concrete, it has to be convincing," Hansen said.

They've sold logs that have gone into 30 homes around the country, and in spring 2008 they finished a 12,000-square-foot hunting lodge in Louisiana. The owners wanted a structure that would provide protection against termites, hurricanes and the general wear and tear from a humid climate, so they turned to Cultured Log Systems. "They wanted something they could walk away from for a few months and it would still be there," Hansen said.

Concrete logs reduce the amount of natural logs that have to be cut down for homes, and though they're not less expensive than real logs, they provide a more consistent building product, according to Hansen. Using cement in the process is not the most environmentally friendly thing, so they're working on using fly ash, a byproduct of coal production, in their concrete production. "We're committed to getting to the point of using 100 percent fly ash or something similar," Hansen said. They work constantly on imitating nature. A client might bring in a log that they want to match, and Cultured Logs will match the color and texture. Cultured Log Systems can make a log up to 28 feet long, eight inches thick and 16 inches wide. Fiberglass pins are used to connect the logs, so they don't conduct heat away from the structure in winter. Cost is about \$70 to \$80 a square foot, including transportation and construction. "It's very competitive with a wood log, but with none of the downside," Hansen said. ■



Concrete logs from Cultured Log Systems are made to look like the real thing.

HOME GREEN HOME

Evolve is Missoula's new eco-friendly home furnishings store. Located on the style savvy North end of Higgins Avenue, Evolve brings a blend of timeless, organic and modern pieces that reflect the tastes of owner and interior designer Robyn Woodhall.

The store's lines balance innovation and sustainability with inspiration and beauty. "I only sell pieces that I love, and I wouldn't sell anything that I wouldn't put in my own home," Woodhall says.

Evolve's mission, Woodhall says, is to offer beautiful, quality furniture and accessories that inspire people to create a comfortable living space and maintain harmony between themselves and their environment. The store's relaxing atmosphere combines soothing earth tones with crisp linens and dark woods with texture. A splash of color is added to create an organic yet timeless feel. Unique chests and tables made with reclaimed Brazilian Peroba wood line the store and merge beautifully with the ultra-comfy organic slip-covered sofas, root lamps and chunky jute rugs. Books, marble trays and candles adorn the pieces gracefully, while linens and hand-stitched pillows are tucked neatly into the shelves. Evolve also offers children's decorative items like Moroccan poufs and hand-knitted stuffed animals.

"I'm trying to do a small part in keeping up with today's quickly changing world" says Woodhall. "Organic is the new modern, and it's nice to offer beautiful furniture that balances innovation and sustainability. It's like giving back to the world while giving to ourselves at the same time."

FINDING EVOLVE: 531 N. Higgins, Missoula/406.542.1917 ■



Robyn Woodhall