



*This is a **Student Profile** from Antioch University New England's Department of Organization & Management. For more information visit ANE's web site at: www.antiochne.edu.*

Silk Purses from Sow's Ears

Green MBA Student Sue Patroliia Repurposes Waste to Help Children in Need

Sue Patroliia has been thinking about sustainability issues for a long time. "I have always had an environmental slant to my life. My Dad recycled everything except rubber bands as far back as I can remember. Those rubber bands would drive him crazy!" It's hardly surprising that she should find herself combining her business acumen with her commitment to reducing waste in order to pursue an MBA in Environmental and Organizational Sustainability ([ANE's Green MBA](#)).

Sue has been a buyer at a large department store, started a retail store, which is still successful twenty-three years later, and been a real estate agent. She is now the product manager for a firm that imports woven upholstery fabrics, handling design, marketing, and product development.

The road that led her to Antioch New England began tragically in Africa:

In January of 2006, my sister-in-law was killed on a family vacation climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro. There was a rockslide and the guides all mentioned how strange it was that there was no ice along the path -just loose rock- not enough snow that year. There was a series of disasters the prior year, a tsunami, earthquake, hurricanes, etc. (over 97, 000 people died in natural disasters in 2005), and I just remember thinking it was all caused in some way by what we are doing to our earth and that sooner or later, it's gonna get personal. Mary was killed on January third. That was it. I decided I had to find a way to do something so I started researching and quickly found there were not many internships available for people twenty-five plus years out of college. I sent all the opportunities along to my nieces and nephews who were kind of rudderless without their Mom. One day my niece called and said "Auntie Sue, why don't you get your Green MBA?" I was at the grocery store at the time. I left my cart, went home, googled Green MBA and six months later, I was at Antioch.

Sue is now in her second year of the program, part of its first cohort. The group has a real entrepreneurial bent; there is a marked desire to turn learning into action. “This program has laid out all the problems, possibilities, options, and opportunities for me,” she says. “I have never once left a weekend at Antioch New England when I didn’t say ‘That’s what I want to do!’”

She is already combining the ideas and skills embodied in the Green MBA. She founded [SWIFT](#), the Sample Waste Initiative for Furniture and Textiles, to explore ways to keep discarded fabric out of landfills. One of their projects is called GIFFT, Green Initiatives for Furniture and Textiles, and finds ways to reuse leftover fabric in quilts, wheelchair bags, and other things designed to help children in need. The program, which teams a recycling company with an organization devoted to making quilts for children in hospitals, was awarded first place in [Net Impact’s](#) 2008 Green Challenge.

Looking ahead to her practicum project, Sue hopes to find a way to work with small businesses to help them operate in more sustainable ways. “Many small business owners don’t have time to focus on anything but keeping the doors open, so I want to give them the inspiration and tools they need. I believe small business are the little engine that keeps our economy going and that they can be great change agents in their own communities.”

There is no doubt that she will find a way to put her desire to help into successful practice, both in her academic project, and in whatever she decides to do after completing her degree. Speaking of the series of jobs she’s had and her current studies, Sue says, “This is actually my third mid life crisis, I think.” If more mid-life crises played out like hers, the world would indeed be in better shape.

More about [Antioch New England’s Green MBA](#)

Students of Antioch New England’s Green MBA programs learn what most will expect in an MBA program, plus the unexpected. The ANE Green MBA curriculum considers not only sustainable business practices, economics, and finance, but also the natural environment, leadership, systems thinking, and collaboration. The programs prepare graduates for a variety of roles in for-profit, not-for-profit, public-sector organizations, and their own businesses while emphasizing organizational and environmental sustainability and corporate social responsibility.

Students can choose from weekend or accelerated options. [The weekend option](#) works best for those who need to fit getting their MBA in with a tight work schedule. Classes meet five intensive weekends (Friday through Sunday) per semester, and for one intensive week each summer. [The accelerated option](#) (16-month completion) works best for those without 9 to 5 responsibilities.