Bringing New Life To Old Buildings

By Darren Howson, Technical Representative, Product Finishes, West Yorkshire, England

We had a lot of very old stock that was going to be thrown away. But, because I work with these paints all the time, I knew they were still good. So I looked for a place that could use the paint and found Heeley City Farm.

Heeley City Farm is a non-profit farm that promotes locally grown, organic foods through programs in gardening, healthy eating, responsible animal care, and sustainable energy use. Vocational training programs give teens skills for a productive life, and its energy saving projects help keep the elderly and disadvantaged warm in the winter. The farm also partners with schools to create food-gardens for students and their families in their own neighborhoods.

The main building had paint peeling off the windows, exposing the bare timber. If the windows failed, they certainly couldn’t afford to replace 20 windows at $700 to $800 each! That was just the beginning. Wood timbers used in other buildings, like the stables and the greenhouse, also needed protection. I couldn’t just drop off the paint and walk away because I specialize in finding out what causes paint to fail, and how to prevent that from happening.

I could tell they didn’t realize the problems they had, so I came back with my friend, David Flynn, [production assistant, Product Finishes], and helped them with surface preparation, choosing what paint to use where, and proper application.

It seemed like nothing, donating a bit of old paint, but when we sat down and figured out what the paint was actually worth, it came to about $12,000. Now, those buildings are protected for years to come, and they look nice for the people who visit the farm. What’s more important is that Heeley City Farm can spend that money on people who really need it. With what they’ve saved on paint, they can help more kids, because every penny they make goes back into helping others.

When I finished unloading all the paint, a guy with learning disabilities came up to me and said, “thank you.” It made it all worthwhile.

Above: Darren Howson, his wife, Megan and daughters, Holly [left] and Chloe, visit Heeley City Farm.