

Funny Farmer Turns Humor Into Cash

People laugh when Jay Hendren stands up to speak. But that's okay with him. It's what he wants.

The Johnstown, Ohio farmer says having a sense of humor was necessary when growing up in a family of farmers. He's always had a quick wit and has been able to see the humor in even the most dire situations. And sharing that in front of a group never bothered him. Just ask his high school teachers.

Hendren started doing stand-up comedy performances at a nearby comedy club in 1996. Evidently, people liked what they heard when Hendren was on stage. He was voted the funniest person in Columbus a couple of years later. He says eventually he even started getting paid to do it.

He draws from his own experiences, so most of his act centers on farming. He believes one of the reasons for his success is it's good, clean fun, with an appeal to audiences of all ages.

Hendren sees his comedy act as a sideline business to his farming. While he still enjoys doing comedy clubs, he's recently found there's quite a demand for speakers who can relate to farm crowds. "It's good to talk to people who know that a John Deere isn't a

letter you get from your dyslexic girlfriend," he quips.

"I've been doing customer appreciation days, annual producer meetings, and the like," he says.

Whether he's performing in a church basement or in front of groups like the National Pork Producers or the American Soybean Association, his message mixes humor with motivation and inspiration. He tells touching stories, too. "Just the other night, I was standing with my Dad watching the sun set on our farm. He put his arm around my shoulder and said, 'Just think, son. One day this will all be ... houses.'"

Hendren is available for banquets, business meetings, fund raisers, socials, and especially for those functions where he gets paid in advance to speak to an audience that would be too embarrassed to leave once he begins.

"There may be a couple other guys out there who do what I do, but I don't look at them as competitors," he says. "In this business, we need all the humor we can get."

So if you think you're funny, call Hendren. He wouldn't mind giving advice to other farmers, young or old, who have a penchant for seeing the lighter side of farm life and

Jay Hendren does stand-up comedy, drawing from his own experiences growing up on a farm.



would like to the opportunity to do what he does.

His first bit of advice is to work hard and save as much money as you can, because it might be a long time before somebody likes you enough to pay you. "Seriously, if you'd like to do stand-up comedy, look for open mike or amateur nights at a local comedy club. It'll give you a chance to test your material and you'll find out whether you like

doing it. There's not a much lonelier feeling than when you're standing in front of a crowd and you're the only one laughing at your best joke," he warns.

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Pedal-Powered Combine Big Hit With Kids

Frank Miller, Mott, N. Dak., recently sent FARM SHOW photos of a pedal-powered combine he made that's patterned after a Deere 9600. A child sits in the grain tank and pedals and steers just like he would with a conventional pedal tractor.

Miller built the pint-sized combine entirely from scratch. The frame is made out of tubular steel covered with sheet metal. The front wheels are 12 in. high and the rear wheels 6 in. The pedals chain-drive the front drive wheels. Steering linkage extends from the steering shaft to the rear end of the combine, where a T-shaped unit is used to shift the

wheels from side to side.

The bottom part of the grain tank is hollow. The rider sits on a seat borrowed from a pedal tractor. The seat is positioned low enough that it doesn't show from the side. The reel does not rotate. "I thought that a rotating reel would be too big a load for the driver to turn the pedals. If I did this project over I'd probably install a small gas motor to rotate the reel," notes Miller.

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Kids love to ride Frank Miller's pedal-powered combine. Driver sits in grain tank and pedals just like with a conventional pedal tractor.



An unusual ability to communicate with animals prompted Sheila Ryan to start her own business, in which she solves animal behavior problems.

She Communicates With Animals

Sheila Ryan says she can make training horses and other animals easier by using her unusual ability to communicate with animals.

Ryan grew up working with all kinds of animals and has always had a keen ability to understand their needs and emotions. Her ability to understand animal behavior "problems" and recommend solutions became so well known, people started coming to her with their problem animals.

She has established a business called HorseSense to offer her services to animal

owners and to train others in her methods.

She says the mission of her company is to communicate with and help as many animals as possible. She frequently conducts seminars and also sells books and videos that detail her methods.

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Fenced-in hayride wagon is equipped with fold-out steps. "These wagons are much safer for riders," says Robert Luther.

Fenced-In Wagons For Hayrides

Several years ago, Robert Luther, Richfield, Ohio, built four bale kicker wagons for catching small square bales while baling hay. He used cyclone fencing for the sides.

Luther also grows pumpkins and conducts hayrides in the fall for school and church groups. By putting bows across the top of the wagons, and stretching a custom made canvas over the bows, he created what he calls the ultimate hayride wagon.

He put steps in front of the doors on one side of each wagon. "The steps are mounted to the wagon with a hinge at the top, so they fold up in front of the door when we're using

them for hayrides.

"These wagons, with cyclone fence siding and tarps on the top, are safer for the riders than wagons with no sides. With the fence, people can't fall or jump from the wagon. I've had a lot of rambunctious people over the years try to pull the hay from the bales and throw it off. That's hard to do with the chain link fencing for sides," he says.

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