

Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income

If you're looking for new ways to add to your bottom line, take a look at the money-making ideas featured here and on the next page.

If you've found or heard about a new income-boosting idea, we'd like to hear about it. Send details to: FARM SHOW Magazine, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 800 834-9665) or email us at: editor@farmshow.com.



Chapel in the Pines offers a variety of types of wedding services in a rural setting. Howard and Donna Petersen built the chapel on their small farm in Illinois.

Rural Chapel Turned Into Profitable Business

When Donna Petersen asked her husband, Howard, to build a chapel on their small farm near Sycamore, Ill., she had no idea it would lead to a full-time "hobby business" of hosting weddings.

As soon as the steeple went up in 1994, people started stopping by to ask if they could get married there. Fifteen years and 1,200 weddings later, the chapel has become a popular destination for local couples.

Seating was expanded to 100 people in 1998 and Howard built a gazebo and restroom/changing building with a live feed monitor so the bride can see what's going on in the chapel.

Donna says they often serve couples who don't have church affiliations, but have past religious connections and want more than a civil ceremony at a courthouse.

The Petersens work hard at making the wedding special, from beautiful landscaping on the 7-acre property, to always being available to give chapel tours and plan weddings any day of the week. Though they can schedule up to four weddings on a Saturday, the Petersens make sure "that no bride sees another bride."

"It has to be a passion," Petersen says. "You have to absolutely love people." The Petersens have experience working with people, first cleaning homes with ServiceMaster, and then having more than 4,000 guests when they had a bed and breakfast in their home. They've always opened their door to visitors - exchange students, local college students, and guest speakers at the local museum.

To meet local regulations, the Petersens followed ordinances regarding parking, installing restrooms and business zoning.

"There are lots of hoops to jump through

in some counties," Petersen says, as well as marriage license policies to deal with. In Illinois, couples must buy the license in the county that they'll be married, and it's good for 60 days starting the next day.

Many of the Petersens' clients buy a license the day before, get married in the chapel and then leave for their honeymoon. "We've had people fly in from North Dakota, get married and then go to a Cubs game," Petersen says.

The Petersens simply provide the wedding site and perform the ceremony (Howard and son, Jeff, are licensed to marry couples). Couples receive a book with local vendors that offers accommodations and other wedding services.

The Chapel in the Pines offers a variety of types of wedding services. Prices start at \$350.

Word-of-mouth testimonials and a website have attracted couples from all over the country and even overseas.

When the Petersens married 45 years ago, they had no idea they would end up helping others get married. Since they were teens, family members questioned whether their marriage would survive. It has not only survived, but also thrived. Howard finished the chapel as a gift to his wife in time for their 30th anniversary.

Now they hope they're starting other couples on a lifelong journey.

"I want them all to stay married," Donna says. "I tell them all, 'I wish you the best life together.'"

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Howard and Donna Petersen, The Chapel in the Pines, 15165 Quigley Rd., Sycamore, Ill. 60178 (ph 815 895-4797; www.chapelinthe.pines.com).



This 160-year-old, 40-ft. long woolen mill still produces quality batting for quilts. Elaine Hendrickson uses the machine in her farm-based fiber business.

Farm-Based Fiber Business Uses 160-Year-Old Woolen Mill

If you want quality wool batting for your latest quilt or want to refurbish the batting in grandma's old quilt, "Tess" can help you out. Tess is a 160-year-old, 40-ft. long woolen mill located in a building on Phil and Elaine Hendrickson's Cambria, Wis., dairy farm.

"I call her Tess, because she tests my patience a lot," Elaine Hendrickson explains.

The big old woolen mill works best in high humidity and high heat and has lots of rollers and chains that need plenty of grease. It cleans wool and opens up the fibers, lining them up parallel to produce quality custom-size batting for quilts up to 108 in. wide. That's different than other mills, which wind up batting like toilet paper that needs to be stretched to size.

Elaine is comfortable with the big machine now but she was pretty nervous when Tess arrived in seven pieces in 2000. They spent a lot of free time that summer putting Tess together with the help of a couple of experienced welders who made needed parts. They also put up a building for her.

Tess may be the oldest working mill of her kind. Last year, Hendrickson hired a consultant who has fixed mills for years in the U.S. and England, and he told the Hendricksons he had never seen an operating machine that old.

Hendrickson's venture into running a woolen mill began in the 1980's when she purchased two male llamas and became fas-

cinated with fiber arts. She learned to clean and process wool and fiber.

"If you want to use any wool or fiber, you need to make it marketable," she says. "I'm the go-between person between the farm and market stage."

Hendrickson doesn't use any harsh chemicals for cleaning and has discovered a growing interest in wool for batting because it's natural and lasts a long time. Many customers send her old wool battings, which she adds wool to if needed and fluffs them up by running them through Tess.

Hendrickson buys her wool from local farmers, but she also cleans and processes other fibers into pencil rovings ready for spinning.

"I can process mere ounces," Hendrickson says, explaining some customers send her hair from their cats or dogs. She also processes alpaca, llama and other unusual breed fibers.

Hendrickson charges by the pound for washing, carding, dyeing and batting rejuvenation. She charges \$20/hour for cleaning debris from the wool or fiber. She sells wool battings from crib to super king sizes that range from \$14 to \$70.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Elaine and Phil Hendrickson, N6787 Cty. Rd. B, Cambria, Wis. 53923 (ph 920 348-5594; finefiber@centurytel.net; www.coedmawwoolenmill.com).

Farmstand Signs Attract Customers

Al Humble believes he's selling more okra and other farm produce since he started putting colorful and informative signs on his farmers' market goods. In fact, he watches people pass up other vendors and come to his table - and he believes it's due to his signs. Made of paper stock covered with a heavy grade of lamination, the signs are washable and durable for years of use.

They worked so well for him that he and his family started a sideline business making signs for others including crafters, tractor and trade show exhibitors, and roadside stand owners.

Signs they've made have included information as basic as "Eggs For Sale" or "Sweetest Corn In The World." But the Humbles also use them to tell customers nutritional values and how to cook or preserve the fruits and vegetables they sell.

That's been especially helpful in selling okra, not commonly eaten by many of their New Mexico customers.

Besides their quality signs (sturdier than those made at office supply stores) the



Al Humble and his family started a sideline business making washable signs such as the one shown above. He says they boost business at busy farmer's markets.

Humbles offer custom artistic design and layout.

The 11 1/2 by 17-in. signs cost \$14 (plus postage), with discounts for six or more signs. Smaller signs are also available.

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