

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.



Lori Zietlow specializes in custom painting signs that show your house, farm, or even a favorite dog or other animal.

Custom Painter Puts Your Life Into Artwork

Lori Zietlow's wooden signs are custom-painted to show your house, farm, or even a favorite dog or other animal.

Coated with a weatherproof sealer, the wood-backed artwork can be hung anywhere — in the house, barn, on the porch, or at the end of a driveway. Zietlow's art is popping up all over the U.S., Canada and even Argentina. In addition to signs, she paints colorful customized award plaques for livestock shows, fairs and other events. Many customers have her paint signs with their farm's name to hang on stalls at various shows.

"Most sheep, cows and dogs are pretty easy for me to paint," says the self-taught artist, noting, however, that some breeds — such as Jacob sheep with horns — can be more challenging.

Some requests are unusual, such as an alligator in front of a Florida home and Bucky Badger with a cheese-eating garden gnome in front of the University of Wisconsin-Madison field house.

The sign venture started several years ago when Zietlow's sister asked her to paint several signs to display in her store. Then a customer asked for a painting of a grand champion steer in front of their barn.

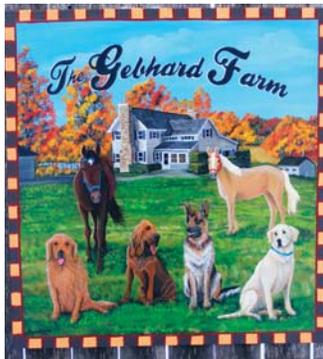
"Others saw it and wanted their champion cattle painted, too. Then others asked, 'Can you paint pigs and sheep?'" Zietlow explains. "It's taken off. I filled a niche that no one was doing."

A favorite sign she created was for a woman who asked her to paint an old photo of the century farm that the family ended up losing. It brought tears to the father's eyes, and the siblings appreciated the prints that Zietlow had made of the painting.

Zietlow, who works as a graphic artist for a commercial printing company, started her sideline business in 2004, and it's been growing ever since — in part because of satisfied customers who ask for her business cards to help spread the word.

Since the single mom taught herself, she wasn't even sure what style to call it until an art college professor wrote her that it "was the best new form of Americana art" she'd seen.

The process starts with photos customers send Zietlow of the building and animals they want in the picture. She creates a mockup for approval, then paints it on 1/2-in. thick boards that she has sanded and primed.



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"I like wood. It ships better. It's inexpensive," she explains. "I sand it smooth, and it makes it easier to do the details." She coats the painting with Deft, a non-yellowing sealer — using interior or exterior depending where it will be hung. For driveway signs she uses 1-in. marine plywood.

The artist offers specific sizes starting at 11 by 21-in. for \$85 (plus shipping), but she makes signs of all sizes. Birch wood award banners start at \$12 for a 3 1/2- by 6-in. size.

"I have been keeping my prices down to make them affordable for the average person. People are so proud to give them as a gift," she says.

Photos of signs and awards she has made can be seen on her website.

"I like that I can get real sentimental with them," Zietlow notes. "The thing people like is that they are so personal. There's meaning to them."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Lori Zietlow, 105 E. Wisconsin Street, Rosendale, Wis. 54974 (ph 920 872-2875; www.zietlowcustomsigns.com).



Bruce and Merleen Gussiaas turned a pair of wooden, octagon-shaped grain bins into this beautiful garden cottage.

Wood Bins Turned Into Rustic Garden Cottage

Two wooden, octagon grain bins once held grain. Now they are filled with laughter, clinking wine glasses and the calming sound of a front porch water fountain in the midst of a colorful garden.

The 1950-era bins are the focal point of Dakota Sun Gardens, a rural Carrington, N. Dak., getaway for people conducting informal business meetings, garden or birding clubs, or groups who just want to spend a relaxing evening or afternoon in the country and meander through 30 flower beds on the farm by owners Bruce and Merleen Gussiaas.

It started when Merleen heard about a free 1,100-bushel bin on a radio ad that an elderly owner wanted to give away. Not far from the man's farm the Gussiaases found a second 800-bushel bin for \$100. The 14-ft. wide structures were sturdy and hauled easily on trailers for the 75-mile trip home.

Bruce says the bins were built in the 1950's and were provided by the government for a nominal fee. The bins were delivered in sections by train. Farmers used metal straps to put the fir walls together and the floor came in sections. The cedar roof also came in sections and was commonly covered with tarpaper.

Bruce wanted to preserve the natural state of the bins as much as possible. After cleaning out pigeon droppings he found that the floors were in decent shape. He placed the bins on a cement slab, cut out sections of wall on each bin and added connecting walls. They're open to the pond and gardens.

There was enough wood from the cut bin walls to replace the few rotten floorboards as



Grain bin cottage is furnished simply with comfortable chairs and tables.

well as fill the space between the bins.

Windows from an old schoolhouse bring in light from the front and the grain doors also add light and ventilation. Bruce used mostly salvaged items to finish off the cottage. His main costs were concrete, metal roofing and the two cupolas he purchased on eBay. One was made in the 1780's and the other in the 1860's.

Furnished simply with comfortable chairs and tables, the couple kept their grain bin cottage natural and rustic.

The Gussiaases grow and sell rhubarb, honeyberries, black chokecherries and other fruits and are licensed to make wine, which they sell locally and through their website.

"Women who see the grain bin cottage all want to have one," Merleen laughs. "I'm glad we were able to preserve a piece of history."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dakota Sun Gardens, 955 73rd Ave., N.E., Carrington, N. Dak. 58421 (ph 701 674-3316; www.dakotasungardens.com).



Portable bunkhouse measures 8 by 20 ft. and sleeps 6 people. It can be skidded onto a gooseneck truck for hauling down the road to remote areas.



Portable Bunkhouse For Hunting

Trent and Christine Sexton of Anchorage, Alaska, take people on caribou hunting trips into the wilds of Alaska. One way they make their trips attractive is by providing a clean, safe and warm portable bunkhouse that sleeps 6 people.

The bunkhouse, which is 8 by 20 ft. in size, can be skidded onto Trent's gooseneck truck for hauling down the road to remote

areas. The well-insulated bunkhouse has a skylight and a wall window and is heated with a high-efficiency oil heater. Oil is supplied from a tank that mounts on back of the building.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Trent & Christine Sexton, P.O. Box 143433, Anchorage, Alaska 99514 (ph 907 748-4341).