

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.



Nick Utrie turned an unused tool shed on his property into a mini concert hall, where musicians from all around come to play.

Musician Turns Farm Shed Into Concert Hall

By Jim Kniesel

What do you do if you're a musician who moves to a rural area and you have an unused tool shed on your farm property? Nick Utrie did what came natural. He opened up a mini concert hall in his backyard.

Utrie had always wanted to create a family oriented place to play. Rather than setting up in a smoky bar, where folks come for drinking more than listening to good music, Utrie envisioned a down-home musical venue where he and others could bring their children and the musicians would find an appreciative and attentive audience.

Thus, Utrie's Small Theater was born in a 16 by 40-ft. tool shed behind his house. In 2000, Utrie started booking musical acts – first local, then regional and even national touring groups – to play in his renovated shed. It's more of a hobby than a moneymaking proposition for this music lover, but he's thinking about someday expanding into a bigger building and working full time at it.

Having been a professional musician for several years, as well as a small-scale musical promoter, Utrie settled on a simple plan to get his mini concert hall off the ground. He says anyone with an empty barn or shed could do the same.

First, Utrie cleaned out the tool shed and built a wooden stage on one end. Then he bolted about 60 old movie theater seats to the shed's wood floor. A cast iron wood stove keeps it warm, even on chilly winter nights. The acoustics are so nice that a few bands have recorded albums in the shed. Total cost of the renovation was about \$500.

To book the talent, Utrie communicates with bands and promoters, offering a place for them to play when they're passing through his area between tour dates. He said singer-songwriter musicians or small groups will play for modest sums if you schedule them on off dates, usually Sunday through Wednesday nights, and promise an audience interested in seeing the performance. After a few years of putting on several shows a year,

Utrie has gained a reputation for audience hospitality, and the musicians often work for a share of whatever he collects in good will offerings.

"It's pass the hat," Utrie explains. "I make a speech at the beginning. I understand what the artist needs to make as a minimum, so I'll say something like, 'It's a sliding scale donation. Everyone who can drive a car, give \$5, \$10 or \$20.' If you get \$10 from 30 people, that's a great gig for a singer songwriter."

Utrie also often performs as a warm-up act – doing music or magic. He likes to recreate an evening of Vaudeville-style entertainment, presenting two or three acts to offer variety. The music is a broad mix of jazz, folk, classical – he even booked a local tuba player once. And when need be, three or four burly guys haul the piano out of his house and carry it to the shed for a performance.

The events usually run about 7-10 p.m. to accommodate families, and there's always a campfire burning outside and a swing set nearby for the kids. Food and drink are strictly bring-your-own or pot luck, and parking is on the grass behind his house. Over the years, the Small Theater audience has grown into a good-sized list of friends and neighbors and their friends who come out several times a year. If you want to attend, you have to call and tell him you're coming.

For folks who want to start their own backyard concert series, Utrie recommends starting by giving local performers a place to share their talents. Then start with friends, family and Facebook to build an audience.

"People are there to hear the music, so it makes the bands feel like they're in Carnegie Hall," he says of the Small Theater. "All eyes are on the artist, and it makes them pull out huge performances."

Contact: FARM SHOW followup, Nick Utrie and Small Theater, 3240 Eaton Road, Green Bay, Wis. 54311 (ph 920 468-6696; www.thesmalletheater.com).

Rope Machine Takes The Height Out Of Climbing

"Schools are taking ropes out of their gyms because they're concerned students might fall," says Darren Kamp. "I climbed rope when I trained for wrestling when I was in high school, and my sons were wrestlers, too. I wanted them to be able to train by climbing rope, too."

So Kamp and his brother, Kelby, invented and patented a rope climbing machine called "MtEverClimb" where the climber never gets more than a few feet off the ground.

The 10-ft. tall machine uses pulley wheels and looped rope in a heavy-duty, tubular-steel frame. The machine takes up 52 by 34.5 in. of floor space. It has an automatic safety shut-off sensor. Speed, power and rope direction are controlled by a variable speed drive mounted on front of the machine.

"You can set it on a slow speed starting out, and as you progress, move to faster speeds," says Kamp. "If you have a partner, he can change speeds as you go."

Marketing of the machine has just gotten underway. Kamp donates the use of a machine to his old school for wrestling season. Machines have already found homes with the Pittsburgh Steelers and several fitness facilities.

Kamp expects his major markets to be fitness centers and school sports departments. However, some individuals also may want to buy the machine. It is priced at \$7,985 and carries a three-year warranty. An up/down timer option is \$495 and a 6-in. platform extension adds another \$195 to the cost. The MtEverClimb can be ordered in custom colors and in custom heights. Kamp requests a 50 percent deposit at order with the remainder



Darren Kamp invented this 10-ft. tall rope climbing machine in which the climber never gets more than a few feet off the ground.

due before the machine is delivered 4 to 6 weeks later.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, MtEverClimb, P.O. Box 435, Frostburg, Md. 21532 (ph 866 282-5402; info@mteverclimb.com; www.mteverclimb.com).



Fundcraft Publishing makes it easy for you to publish your own attractive, fundraising cookbook.

How To Publish A Fundraising Cookbook

Since printing their first cookbook in 1908, members of Chris Bradley's family have printed thousands of cookbooks for families, church groups and organizations through Fundcraft Publishing. Farmers who sell direct to customers have also had books printed, for extra income and to promote the products they raise – from artichokes to zucchinis.

The third-generation, family-run business prides itself on making it easy for customers to turn out attractive, useful books.

Fundcraft has videos on its website (www.cookbook.com) and offers a free information kit that takes customers through the process. The kit includes sample letters to send to collect recipes and sale tips to market ads to local merchants.

Standard packages include color covers and dividers and pages for information about the church, charity or family putting together the cookbook.

Fundcraft offers high-tech and low-tech options. They have easy-to-use software for

typing in recipes and a way for contributors to post recipes online. The company also accepts typed and legible, handwritten recipes.

A price chart on their website shows the cost per book and offers suggested retail prices. For example, 100 books of 150 recipes cost \$4.30 each and sell for \$8 to \$12. Buy 2,000 books, and the cost drops to \$2.10/book.

Recently the company has started printing books for farmer's markets. It gives the market something to sell, and it includes recipes by participating growers to show buyers how to cook the vegetables they sell.

Cookbooks are typically finished within 7 to 40 days after Fundcraft receives all the recipes.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Fundcraft Publishing, P.O. Box 340, Collierville, Tenn. 38027 (ph 800 853-1363; www.fundcraft.com).