

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](mailto:editor@farmshow.com).

## Recycled Seed Bags Make Colorful Totes

Gretchen Schade attracts second looks when she carries her tote bag into her favorite farm supply store. The colorful birds on the front are the same ones on the sunflower seed bags the store sells.

The Peterson, Minn., woman makes "Gretchen's ReTotes" out of those seed bags as well as other feed and seed bags. The idea isn't new – FARM SHOW featured a Maine woman who makes Tess's Totes (Vol. 33, No. 4). But each seamstress's design is just a little different.

"I created my own pattern," Schade explains. "The bottom is the trick. I wanted to have that flat bottom like a grocery bag."

She picks the prettiest parts of the bag for the front and the back, occasionally using her quilting skills to patch pieces together. The handle comes from the side of the bag. Schade sews French seams, using a technique that sews wrong sides together first before sewing a second seam to enclose it. It makes a smooth edge and nice finish. A roomy pocket inside holds a cell phone, car keys and other items, and Schade adds Velcro fasteners at the top to hold the bag shut.

She sells small totes (about 10 by 10-in.) and medium totes (about 12 by 11-in.) for \$15. Large totes (13 to 15 in. wide by 11 1/2 in. tall) sell for \$18 plus postage. She is also working on a coin bag design.

Schade initially made the totes for gifts,



The colorful birds on these tote bags are the same ones found on sunflower seed bags.

but found lots of people were interested in them. She enjoys working with different feedbags – a "Chick" bag with pictures of chicks is one of her favorites. She's made bags with a variety of animals, including pets, horses and cardinals.

Schade has found the easiest way to clean bags is to cut them open, spray them down with a hose, hang them on a clothesline and wipe them off. Most bags are pretty clean, she notes, though some dog food bags can be quite greasy, and she avoids using them.

Between preparation and sewing time, making totes doesn't pay very well, but the retired teacher enjoys sewing them and is happy she can recycle something.

"They are fun to carry, and I like to show them off," Schade says.

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## Cold Garage Inspires A Hot Business Concept

"My inspiration for this idea came on a 20 below zero January day when I was trying to build a bookcase in my unheated garage," says Tim Watts. "My fingers and toes were freezing and I figured there had to be someplace warm that I could rent to work on this project." It turns out there wasn't. Since that cold January day in 2010, he and his son Sam along with Brian McDonald have put together every man's dream wood shop in Burnsville, Minn.

North Country Woodshop is set up like a health club for woodworkers. It has 9,200 sq. ft. of work area with 42 floor and bench tools, 14 workbenches, down draft sanding tables and a paint room. Rental tools and specialty wood tools are available. The work area is air conditioned and humidity-controlled.

North Country charges a basic membership fee that gives customers access by the hour, week, month or year. Business memberships allow a company to have two people in the shop at the same time. Besides tools and workspace, there's a planning room, a library with resource books, magazines and videos, drafting tables, free Wi-Fi and a break area with vending machines and beverages.

"We researched this business concept real well and couldn't find any place like it in the country," Sam Watts says. "The

idea grew from a basic heated shop into a wood worker's paradise." North Country has a part time staff of expert woodworkers who average more than 20 years of professional experience. They offer advice, mentor people in a one-on-one setting and teach several classes ranging from basic woodworking to complex pen and bowl turning, and cabinet and furniture making. "Our goal is to be a full service wood shop, a 'man cave' for the avid woodworker who doesn't have space in his garage or is missing tools for certain jobs," Watts says.

Judging from their first month in business and a weekend open house, Watts has hit on an exciting concept. "We've had people here of all ages, with all different skill levels. We've had schools call wanting to rent space for industrial arts classes. Even professional woodworkers are renting space to finish jobs, which is a pleasant surprise," Watts says.

Setting up the business cost around \$200,000, Watts said, and a big hurdle was finding insurance coverage for an untested business model. "It all came together in the end, and it looks like we've found a real good niche," Watts says.

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Darrick Luck makes a living tearing down old barns and recycling the wood.

## He Finds Homes For Old Barn Lumber

Tearing down and recycling old barns and buildings isn't just a business for Darrick Luck. It's a calling – something he enjoys so much that he doesn't like to call it work. He calls his business, Old Wood, New Use LLC, and he uses this tagline: Build the future... recycle the past.

"I live for this because I love old barns. I don't like to take them down but if an owner wants to, it's going down regardless. At least if I do it, it's not burned down or bulldozed," says Luck.

All salvageable materials are sold directly to contractors or brokers or stored in buildings on his property. Photos of materials for sale are posted on his business's website and some are listed on eBay.

In his 13<sup>th</sup> year of business, Luck has stayed busy fulltime working within a 4 1/2-hr. radius of his Wisconsin home. He credits his success to advertising and positive referrals.

"I buy most buildings for anywhere from \$50 to \$8,000," Luck says.

He inspects the barn or building to determine the condition and quantity of materials. Sometimes they're worth saving piece by piece to be rebuilt at another location. With a skidloader and basic tools, that process usually takes 5 to 6 days.

"If it's minimal work, I'm going to save the whole building," Luck says. "I have a dozen timber frames (1875 to 1920) and two or three log houses (1850 to 1860) at home now. I have a project now – a barn that's unique, the only one I can find built like it. I want to take it down to save it. I'd like someone to own it, or I may rebuild it at my own place."

Other buildings are farther gone and typically take 3 to 4 days to salvage usable material. Luck's website lists siding, beams, joists, tongue and groove flooring and corrugated tin for sale. His storage includes

half a million feet of lumber plus the incidentals left in old barns, from antique equipment to lightning rods to hay pulleys and milk cans.

When a church purchased a property that had belonged to an old bachelor, Luck and his crew got all the buildings and everything in them – right down to food, clothing and personal items like a Bible, WW II letters and family scrapbooks.

Luck preserves it all hoping to find new uses and new homes for the treasures. Customers include chain restaurants in the U.S. and Japan, large companies such as Cabela's and Bass Pro, and a California company that mills the old wood into sought after flooring.

In addition to farm buildings, Luck has salvaged schools and recently started on a 90 by 100-ft., two-story warehouse.

Besides finding markets, the other challenging part of the job is staying safe. Luck has only passed up a handful of buildings that were just too deteriorated or didn't have material that he could sell. Whenever Luck and his crew start on a project, they inspect it carefully and plan an escape route in case the building comes down "prematurely," which it has in a couple of cases.

Still, Luck can't imagine doing anything else. For some customers, he's removing a liability – a barn that could collapse and hurt someone. For customers on the buying side, he provides old, but valued materials that can be made beautiful and useful again.

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All salvageable materials are sold directly to contractors or brokers.