

Rural Retreat Built For Scrapbookers/Quilters

Dedicated quilters and scrapbookers mix “business” with pleasure – they love to work on projects and call it a vacation. Their need to get away to take time for hobbies has created opportunities for people to set up weekend retreat getaways.

In Sebeka, Minn., the Paurus family put up a new building designed specifically for hobbyists. Forest Haven Retreat is a 3,000-sq. ft. modular home, including a walkout basement on 60 acres off a busy state highway in central Minnesota. It’s far enough off the road to feel secluded and built near a small environmental lake with winding paths through the woods.

An attached, ground level 1,200-sq. ft. craft studio has tables, electrical plug-ins and good lighting for 16 crafters, who each have their own twin bed in the home’s four bedrooms.

Being large enough to accommodate 16 people helps keep the cost down per person, says Vickie Paurus, owner of Forest Haven Retreat. It costs about \$80/person when groups share the \$1,250 cost for Friday through Sunday. Weekdays at \$300/day are less and fit the needs of retired people who can get away during the week.

“We call it our little slice of heaven. I always dreamt of doing something with that land,” says Paurus, a former county extension agent. Her daughter-in-law, Kristen, an avid quilter, suggested building the retreat. Since she had visited other facilities, she knew what features to include.

Paurus ordered the building from Anderson Homes, where she works.

“Buying a modular saved us time. It’s stick-built in a factory, which made it a

quicker building process,” Paurus says.

She and Kristen adapted the floor plan to accommodate groups. The front entrance has a large roof overhang and is ground level, which is appreciated by guests hauling in heavy sewing machines and totes of supplies. The craft studio is equipped with basic scrapbooking/quilting supplies including a computer, printer, mats, cutters and a design wall for laying out quilt blocks. Two televisions, a Blu-ray DVD player and wireless internet offer guests all the electronic options they want.

With her home economics background, Paurus knew how to equip the full kitchen, complete with a restaurant-style waffle maker. Guests provide their own meals, but Forest Haven supplies all the dishes and items guests need right down to cotton balls and swabs in the bathrooms. There are also plenty of chairs and spaces for guests to have private talks, a cozy game and media room to watch movies, and an indoor sauna. Outside, there is a deck on the back of the house, a grill and a fire pit.

Forest Haven Retreat opened Dec. 2010 and already has groups that book a year ahead to reserve their spot on the calendar. Paurus credits her daughter-in-law for how quickly the business has taken off.

“Kristen said the first thing we had to do, was develop a website to attract people who want to come,” Paurus says. That, a couple of local open houses and word-of-mouth has brought guests from the Twin Cities, North Dakota and from all over Minnesota. During the summer, when bookings are down, the house is also available for families at a discounted rate.



Forest Haven Retreat is a 3,000-sq. ft. modular home built as a weekend getaway for quilters and scrapbookers.

Designing the building specifically for a retreat facility has worked out very well, Paurus says, and the business has become a family affair. Kristen handles the website and bookings. Paurus greets guests, washes the bedding and cleans the rooms. Her retired husband takes care of mowing and maintenance.

If their needs change in the future, the building can be remodeled for another type of business or a home. But for now Forest Haven Retreat is doing very well, and Paurus is enjoying meeting many interesting people.



Crafters each have their own twin bed in the home’s 4 bedrooms.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Vickie Paurus, Forest Haven Retreat, 31625 U.S. Hwy. 71, Sebeka, Minn. 56477 (ph 218 371-6611; www.foresthavenretreat.com).

“World’s First” Mobile Cheese-Making Factory

Small-scale cheese makers are often frustrated because of the hassle and large investment needed to set up a full-size licensed kitchen. Cheese makers in the United Kingdom face the same issues. The Little Cheesery in the U.K. offers a solution with everything needed to make cheese in a compact, efficient box van. The 12 by 5 1/2-ft. trailer has a separate washroom/change area, cheese vat, cheese press, peg mill, industrial sink, draining table, storage cupboards, extraction and air conditioning along with inlet and outlet pipes.

“Not only is the size of our unit unique, we have made sure that everything within the facility is to the same standard as that of a large scale factory,” says Pete Murray, director of MCE Engineering of Derby, who designed and manufactured the unit. “In the past we helped produce larger scale versions with 20 and 40-ft. static containers. These are an excellent way of providing a ready-built factory, however we believed a more compact, mobile unit would create opportunities for a wider audience.”

Entrepreneurs in the U.K. receive government assistance for diversifying. They can receive reimbursement for 40 to 70 percent of the \$55,000 to \$64,000 cost of the van.

“I am looking to come over to the States around March to explore the opportunities there,” Murray says. “We have already

shipped some cheese making equipment to Vermont Farmstead Cheese Makers, who are impressed with our build quality. They are interested in working with us in the future in regards of exporting U.K. cheese making equipment to a wider audience in the States.”

The Little Cheesery processing equipment is made of stainless steel. Milk is piped through the side of the box van into a 66-gal., temperature-controlled cheese vat where it’s heated to start the process.

“While The Little Cheesery can be hooked up easily to a static water and power supply, its real beauty is that it can be taken on the road with only a diesel heater and a 240-volt generator, complete with water storage, which can all be supplied with the trailer,” Murray says. “It can then be parked in the middle of the remotest field and still be used effectively.”

He adds that the mobile unit can be used for many purposes, including training at universities, creating new cheese recipes, or shared by members of cooperatives as well as for private business. In full production, the unit can produce 77 lbs. of cheese a day. It can also be used to make other dairy products such as ice cream and yogurt.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, MCE Engineering Limited, Unit 6, Empire Business Park, Parcel Terrace, Derby DE1 1LY UK (ph 011 44 1332 366228; www.thelittlecheesery.com or www.mcelimited.co.uk).

Coffee Substitute Tastes “Like The Real Thing”

“A lot of people are fooled and think it’s actually real coffee,” says Ellis Percy about his no-caffeine hot drink called “Beyond Coffee”. “Some mix it into regular coffee to cut down on caffeine and gradually change the proportions to little or no coffee.”

Made of a blend of roasted barley, rye and chicory, the hot drink has a smooth flavor, and doesn’t have the oils found in coffee, which reduces digestive problems for some people.

About 16 years ago Percy, who also markets pickles, introduced his coffee-like drink to folks at the Common Ground Country Fair in Maine, which didn’t allow coffee at the time. People liked it so well, he started packaging and selling it.

He spent a lot of time getting the right mix of the grains to create the pleasant flavor. When brewing, Beyond Coffee smells like roasted grains or barley tea. Because there are no oils to go rancid, the brewed drink can be stored in the refrigerator and used the next day. The chicory adds some sweetness.

It’s a good coffee alternative, he says, noting that most other coffee substitutes are made overseas.

“Also this is 100 percent organic, and that means something to me,” Percy says. “I don’t want to drink chemicals.”

He buys rye and barley locally, and uses a 1940’s German-made Probat coffee roaster to roast the dehulled grain and then grinds it in an old supermarket coffee grinder.

He buys the chicory from France, which



No-caffeine hot drink is a coffee substitute that can be mixed into regular coffee.

processes chicory to use as a drink. He blends it with the ground barley and rye, and packages it in pound bags that sell for \$7.50 to \$8, plus shipping.

Percy sells to individuals through his website and wholesale to natural food stores in New England, Maine and Florida.

“Interest is certainly growing,” he says. “I saw 20 percent growth this year over last year just in the New England area.”

He’s very interested in finding distributors in all parts of the country.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Beyond Coffee, P.O. Box 26, Jefferson, Maine 04348 (ph 207 845-2028; www.beyondcoffee.biz).