

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.



Life-size sandhill cranes look like the real thing, but they're really made out of wool. Artist Rhonda McClure uses needle felting to make her sculptures.

Sheep Producer "Felts" Wool Into Art

We recently spotted a photo of a life-size sandhill crane in a magazine. It looked like the real thing so we were surprised to read the bird was made out of wool.

Artist Rhonda McClure explains that she makes her sculptures with needle felting, an art form she's been perfecting for several years. She and her husband, Don, have a 90-ewe flock and process the wool themselves.

The McClure's Nebraska farm is a good example of breeding sheep for a specific purpose – a range of fine fibers in a variety of natural colors suitable for spinning or felting. McClure notes that the only wool dyed for the cranes was the patch of red on the head. The rest is all naturally colored.

To create figures, McClure starts with a wire base – using everything from pipe cleaners to No. 9 wire. She packs wool inside to create a solid core, then finishes the outside by "poking the heck" out of the wool with a 4-in. barbed needle with a diameter similar to a toothpick. The barbs mesh and tangle the fibers to create felting.

McClure says she figured out felting on her own (both needle felting and wet felting), but didn't know if she was doing it right. She entered a couple of pieces in the Black Sheep Gathering (www.blacksheepgathering.org) fiber arts show and took first and second places in two divisions. Since then she has won the 3D needle felting division 5 years in a row and won the top award, the Black Sheep Cup, in 2011.

McClure's first pieces were sheep and

dogs, because she was most familiar with their muscular structure. Since then, she has done all types of animals and people – many customized for clients based on photos.

"I'm very particular and want them to be realistic and get the proportions right," she says. "It helps to know every aspect of the animals you are doing."

After creating an 18-in. buffalo, she was asked if she could make cranes for last spring's "Cranes: Taking Flight" exhibit at the Museum of Nebraska Art in Kearney.

She made a smaller set of birds and took her time to shape the life-size versions. The size – 6-ft. wingspan on the crane coming in for a landing – was challenging, she says, but she successfully pieced it together.

Most of McClure's art, sold through her business Ewe and Us, is smaller in size. Sheep that are 4 in. tall start at \$35 and small matted needle felted pictures (8 by 10) start at \$60. McClure sells in local shops, privately through her website and on Etsy.com. She also takes custom orders.

McClure also teaches classes on the farm and at wool festivals, covering everything from spinning and dyeing to needle and wet felting.

"What draws people to my pieces is the fact that I'm involved with every step of the process," McClure says.

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Curt Richter specializes in finding new homes for turn-of-the-century timber frame buildings. He tears the buildings down carefully to preserve their historical character.

He Finds New Homes For Timber Frame Barns

Curt Richter won't buy your old barn, but if it fits the right criteria, he will try to find a buyer for you and tear it down carefully to preserve its historical character. Likewise, if you are interested in buying and preserving an old barn – or cabins and other log buildings – Richter wants to hear from you.

The mechanical engineer emphasizes he isn't interested in barns for materials. His niche is turn-of-the-century timber frame buildings (assembled with wooden pegs) in good condition, which can be reassembled. He is primarily interested in buildings in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Buyers can be from anywhere in the U.S. Thanks to his website, Rustic Innovations, Richter has relocated Midwest barns to states such as Texas, California and Washington.

"I won't take a barn down until I have an end user," he says. "We are looking for those individuals with a similar drive to live in something that is unique and full of character."

Richter discovered his passion for preserving old buildings when he built a timber frame home in 1998. He joined the Friends of Minnesota Bams and the Timber Framers Guild.

He explains that the ideal preservation is to restore the barn on site with traditional materials and design. The next best thing is to update it with modern materials.

But for many people those options are too expensive and the building doesn't meet their needs. Richter feels his service – relocating the building – is the next best way to go. Though he would prefer to relocate them in the woods and near the lakes of Minnesota and Wisconsin, he's discovered

most interested buyers live in other states, such as Montana where old barns are in demand.

He sets up a yearlong marketing agreement with building owners to try to find a buyer. Sellers don't usually make much on the sale, he emphasizes, but they prefer to preserve the building and not have to pay demolition costs to have their old building end up in a landfill.

Richter adds that half his business is doing barn repair in his area, and that he sometimes reassembles buildings on new sites for his customers. Most out-of-state customers hire someone locally to put up the timbers or logs, which Richter meticulously tags when he takes buildings down.

The Rustic Innovations' website includes photos of barns and log cabins Richter is trying to find buyers for. There is an urgent need to preserve, he says, and he hopes his marketing services help.

"I think people need to be cautious about getting rid of their barns. Some give up too early. No one I've talked to regretted putting money into it, but many have regrets for losing their barn," he says. "The older barns are going down so quickly. I think in 20 years an old vintage barn will be considered an asset and valuable on property. Like those old baseball cards we threw out."

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Where To Buy Clamshells

Selling at farmer's markets or at a roadside stand? Clamshell containers help keep produce fresh and boost sales by making shopping easier, says Kurt Zuhlke, Jr., president and CEO of Kurt Zuhlke & Associates, Inc., a Pennsylvania packaging company that sells a variety of clamshell packaging at www.producepackaging.com.

A 2-compartment clamshell sells for \$66 for a case of 440. To help first-time buyers, the website lists commodities from herbs to apples and then suggests the right type of packaging. Everything is sold in case lots.

Zuhlke points out the clamshells are made of 100 percent recycled PETE (Polyethylene terephthalate) and can be recycled over and over. He notes that his company was the first in the industry to start the recycling trend when they first switched to 50 percent recycled plastics in 1994.



Zuhlke clamshell containers are made from recycled plastic.

The online store also sells other packaging products such as trays, soaker pads and bubble containers.

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