

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.**



Ginny and Kent Ferguson operate one of the largest custom fiber processing mills in the U.S., making use of antique equipment.

Fiber Mill Runs Antique Equipment

"We've processed everything from wolf fiber to buffalo, yak, cat and even dog hair. All kinds of strange things," says Ginny Ferguson, owner of Ohio Valley Natural Fibers (OVNF), one of the largest custom fiber processing mills in the U.S.

She and her husband, Kent, started with a small carding mill in the early 1980's to process fiber from their own sheep and angora goats. They soon bought bigger equipment and started helping other producers. Kent died in 2010, but Ferguson has continued the business with five employees. She looks forward to the time when she can leave her job as a computer science teacher to work full time at the business.

At OVNF, fiber is washed, dried and picked clean before being run through a 1907 carding machine. Many customers hand spin the fiber from there. Others want it spun and made into yarn on the company's 1920 spinning machine.

OVNF has gained a good reputation for its roving. "The way we take our roving off the machine it stays fluffier and loftier for hand spinners," Ferguson says. "We also produce batting, which can be used for felting, or for quilts."

She sews batting inside a cheesecloth casing for people making comforters.

Felting is also growing in popularity, and people use a roving batting to make everything from clothing and accessories to sculptures.

Unlike some mills, which charge according to the weight they receive, OVNF prices are based on the end weight - \$12.95/lb. for roving or batting, for example.

That makes it easier for customers to calculate their costs, Ferguson says. About 90 percent of her customers are small producers. Someone may send a couple of alpaca fleeces, for example, that will net about 15 lbs. The customer hand spins it into yarn to make scarves that she sells or gives to family and friends.

Art studios and art institutes also buy material from Ferguson. In addition she sells dyed yarn, a line of books, and spinning, felting, locker hooking, knitting and weaving supplies.

Ferguson and her employees are always open to new challenges. For example, one customer brought in her own hair to blend with some of Ferguson's fibers. The woman knitted a hat from it, so her husband serving in Iraq would have part of her with him.

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Equipment includes a 1907 carding machine and a 1920 spinning machine.

How To Publish Your Own Book

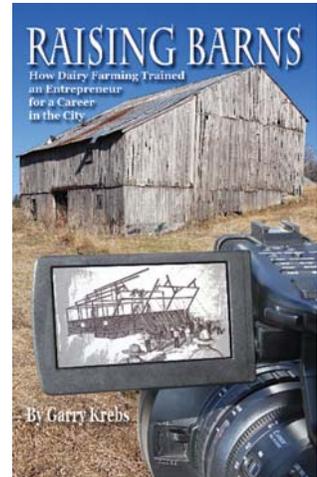
Garry Krebs was raised on a dairy farm in central Wisconsin. Sharing memories of farm life has always been fun for Krebs, and over the years, more than one listener suggested he should write those stories down. Two years ago he started writing. Just before Christmas 2010 he self-published a book titled "Raising Barns".

"I was surprised that it would only cost an upfront fee of about \$100 to get my story in print," says Krebs. He used a service called Create Space, which is a division of Amazon.com. Krebs produced the book layout, including the cover and photos, on his computer. He e-mailed the documents to Amazon, and now the book resides in their electronic files.

"When someone orders my book on Amazon, it's printed 'on demand' by a high-tech copy machine, bound and shipped within a few hours," Krebs says. The book lists for \$12.99 and Krebs receives a payment of about \$4.50 per sale. "Anyone can publish a book the same way, but don't keep track of the hours you spend because it takes a tremendous amount of time."

Krebs said the hardest part of developing his book was editing the text to make it better. That took him more than a year, and he ended up hiring an editor to help. The random stories about growing up were eventually woven together with his business experiences to create a book about life lessons.

His many analogies include how barn-building crews master teamwork, how milk cows don't especially like progress, and how seagulls gliding over a plowed field understand planning. He reveals how yesterday's telephone 'party lines' and today's social networks are very much alike.



Using a service called Create Space, which is a division of Amazon.com, Gary Krebs self-published a book titled "Raising Barns".

Krebs doesn't have any idea how many books he might sell, though he hopes a few stories in his hometown paper and some e-mails to friends and acquaintances will create a buzz. "I gave 10 copies of the book to friends, family and relatives, so my original mission is accomplished. Beyond that, everything else will be a bonus," he added.

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He Puts "Farm Art" On Ceramic Tile

"I have a small business where I put images on ceramic tile. It's a great way to bring images of the farm into the home," says retired farmer Greg Trickey of Crane Hill, Ala., about the homemade "tractor art" he made for the game room in his basement.

As an example of what he can do, he made a mural of 6-in. tiles showing the grille of a Farmall H. He mounted the tiles on a cement board formed with redcedar and fitted with pool cue holders. It mounts in his basement game room.

"I get a lot of compliments on it," says Trickey. "I came up with the idea after I retired from farming in Minnesota in 2005. The last piece of equipment I kept was my 1946 Farmall H tractor, which I had restored."

Trickey uses a process called sublimation printing, in which he puts photos or portraits on everything from T-shirts to coffee mugs to ceramic tiles. He used a Nikon D80 camera to take the photos, then processes them on his computer.

"It lets me enjoy memories of my tractor without worrying about a dirty carburetor or tires going low," says Trickey. "The ceramic tiles give it extra depth and detail. The yellow background around the tractor grill actually came from a photo of my last wheat field. I also plan to make two smaller 12 by 18-in. murals of my Dad's 1942 H tractor and his 1962 Case 830. I spent a lot of time on those tractors as a boy."

He does custom work using photos that the customer supplies. "Digital photos work best, but I can also work with non-digital photos.



"It's a great way to bring images of your farm into the home," says Greg Trickey, who does custom work putting "farm art" on ceramic tile.

The price depends on how much work the image needs," says Trickey.

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