



Jespersen uses a bus to transport the animals in his "Funny Farm Petting Zoo".

Love of Animals Leads to Business Venture For Enterprising Youth

By Janis Schole

After starting his career operating a petting zoo at the tender age of 12, Jonathan Jespersen of Pickardville, Alberta, has kept up a full schedule of "shows" for the past five years. His biggest commitment is a 2 1/2-month exhibit he puts on at the world famous West Edmonton Mall in Edmonton, Alberta, the world's largest shopping mall.

"The Funny Farm Petting Zoo" makes a profit and gives him the money he needs to support his beloved menagerie of animals.

Jonathan originally began putting together his collection of unique and interesting pets just for the love of them. Then, an acquaintance asked if he'd be willing to put on a petting zoo at a local event. The mobile collection of animals has been a hot commodity at local fairs and community promotions ever since.

Jespersen entertains and educates children and adults alike with his travelling menagerie of up to 100 animals. The collection has changed and become more diverse since he first began with exotic chickens, goats, a lamb, a baby calf, kittens, ducks, hedgehogs, angora rabbits, pot-bellied pigs, a turkey and a guinea fowl. Some of the animals in his current collection include Miniature donkeys and horses, llamas, Fainting Goats, Katahdin Sheep, Barbados Black Bellied Sheep, Jacob's Four Horned Sheep, Miniature Zebu cattle, emu, Dexter cattle, French Lop rabbits, yak, buffalo, and alpacas.

The public display is just a small sample of what Jonathan has at home, so he can rotate the animals he takes with him, placing less demand on the animals and making the experience a little different each time for visitors.

Jespersen has also become a small-scale breeder, raising and selling offspring.

The assortment of zoo stock is contained by a portable 20 by 20 foot white picket fence with a double gate to discourage any escapes. He also purchased three additional pens made from steel tubing and wire mesh, which he sets up along one side of the wooden fence. These steel pens have no public access and serve as observation pens for some of the larger livestock.

He places information cards on the fence in front of many of the more unique animals so people can read and learn more about them.

Jespersen bought a used 72-passenger bus



Children and adults alike are entertained by this traveling menagerie of up to 100 animals.



One of the animals in his collection is this baby buffalo.

to transport animals in. He pulls an 8 by 28-ft. tandem flatdeck trailer with an 8 by 20-ft. barn built onto it. On the front of the trailer, he stores fence panels that set up to form a 40 by 40-ft. enclosure around the barn. The barn contains 15 pens for displaying exotic birds and animals less suitable for public handling.

Jespersen often has up to three petting zoos running at the same time in different locations. In addition, he has developed a "parade version" of a petting zoo by installing a fence on the perimeters of a horse-pulled wagon owned by his family. Their team of draft horses pulls the wagon filled with zoo animals and workers, making a unique parade entry.

"The petting zoo is fun for me, even though it's hard work too, and it's nice to make a little money doing something I like," he says.

As a 2001 high school graduate, Jespersen has no plans to quit his thriving business, and says, at the moment, he will see where life leads him.

Contact: FARM SHOW Follow-up, Jonathan Jespersen, The Funny Farm Petting Zoo, R.R. 1, Pickardville, Alberta, Canada T0G 1W0 (ph 780 349-2776); E-mail: pet_zoo@hotmail.com).



According to local regulations, Shafer's 130-sq. ft. house is too small to be considered a residential building. He got around the problem by putting the house on a trailer.

Tiny 130-Sq. Ft. House "Just Right" For Iowa Man

Jay Shafer lives alone in Iowa City, Iowa. One day he looked around his house and was struck by all the "wasted" space and all the "stuff" he had accumulated. He wondered if he couldn't just live as well with less.

He decided to build a small, efficient house that would simply hold less. "I wanted everything to be functional," he says.

If you want to get an idea of how small Shafer's new house is, just put three sheets of 4 by 8-ft. plywood sheets together on the ground.

The house has one door, one room (he considers it three rooms because of the way it's laid out), and a loft overhead where he sleeps. In total, he has about 130 sq. ft. of living space, not including a porch that's about 2 1/2 ft. deep.

There are cabinets and shelves to store only those things he feels are essential to his life. His kitchen consists of a cooler and a propane camp stove for cooking. A small table that collapses into the wall serves as both desk and dining table. He has one extra chair in case he ever has company for dinner.

He used 2 by 4 exterior walls, with the studs spaced at 24 in. Between the studs, he used polystyrene foam board. He installed double pane windows with argon gas for insulation sealed between the panes.

A propane heater with the look of an old wood stove provides more than enough heat for even the coldest nights, he says. The house has electricity and plumbing.

Shafer's biggest problem was getting a building permit. According to Iowa City regulations, his house is too small to be con-



House is heated by small propane heater with the look of an old wood stove.

sidered a residential building. Shafer got around the problem by putting the house on a trailer. But officials said it couldn't be "permanently" located on a lot in the city, so Shafer ended up buying a house and parking his house - on its trailer - in the back yard. "I'm essentially camping in my backyard," he notes.

If he ever begins to feel cramped in the little house, he now has a larger one to move into - but he doesn't see that happening any time soon.

Shafer spent around \$16,000 to build his little house, including the trailer.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jay Shafer, Box 607, Iowa City, Iowa 52244.

Fence Post Birds Are Eye-Catching

Don and Marlow Krebs of Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, keep some unusual birds in their yard. They require no feed or attention and they're quiet, too. They just sit atop fence posts and greet visitors by bobbing their heads up and down.

The "fence post birds," are made from brightly painted plywood with necks made from spring steel.

"They're simple, but eye-catching," Don Krebs says. "The wind bobs the heads up and down."

They are nailed to the side of post tops along their driveway. The couple's son and daughter-in-law operate a go-cart track next to their yard, and many track patrons get a kick out of the birds.

"They're not hard to make and they don't



Birds on top of fence posts greet visitors by bobbing their heads up and down.

cost much," Don says, adding that he would be willing to make some up for sale if there's interest.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Don Krebs, Box 3448, Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, Canada T8L2T4 (ph 780 998-2051).