



Dave and Shelly Speedling operate a business making concrete statue “heroes” as well as farm livestock. The statues are sold to retail, internet and wholesale customers, as well as cities, homes and businesses.



Hero statues of military firemen, paramedics and policemen are particularly popular for local memorials or monuments.

## They Create Concrete Heroes And Farm Livestock Statues

For the past 20 years, “heroes” and livestock have filled Dave Speedling’s shop that once housed his farm repair business. They represent just a few of the more than 2,000 concrete statue designs that he and his wife, Shelly, offer customers through their business, SVJ Creative Designs.

The statues are poured, finished and sold from the Kellogg, Minn., business to retail, internet and wholesale customers. They purchased molds from a former North Dakota statue business. Hero statues of military, firemen, paramedics and policemen are particularly popular. A small female soldier and kneeling male soldier (copyrighted by the Speedlings) have become more popular recently. Cities, fire departments, police departments and Legions are the typical customers who purchase the life size versions (\$3,500) for memorials. Schools purchase mascot and bench statuary. Individuals order smaller statues for homes and businesses.

Besides the popular stock molds they pour twice a week, the Speedlings take custom orders, such as a fireman tribute for Superior, Wis., and are also working with board members of Poseidon’s Playground for an underwater memorial for divers in Gulf

Shores, Alabama.

Their most famous sale was life-size hero statues and eagles to Don King, the prizefighter promoter.

“Shelly talks to customers to get exactly what they want. She gets measurements and all the details to be able to give them accurate bids and pricing,” Speedling explains. “She also handles freight and project estimates.”

He admits he is very fussy about details, so the couple only works with one sculptor and a couple of mold companies in the U.S. that they know do quality work. Employees (Don, Norm, Sandy, Joe and Pete) are very knowledgeable, too. Statues are made strong, 6,000 psi, with rebar and fiberglass reinforcement, to withstand freezing and thawing cycles in cold climates, which is above the strength made by most concrete businesses in the southern states.

“People choose concrete for longevity and northern-made concrete is good,” he says.

He credits a FARM SHOW article he read more than 20 years ago for helping him design and build an I-beam overhead hoist to flip over 1,500-lb. life-size concrete-filled molds.

The Speedlings offer a variety of finishes



A variety of livestock statues are available that can be painted as different breeds.

including hand-smoothed to two-toned to detail-painted. They design and make molds for simple items like stepping stones and memorials. Prices start at \$12 for stepping-stones and go up to \$5,000 for detail painted, life-size statues.

In the midst of farm country, they offer a variety of livestock statues that can be painted as different breeds. Among the painters are Shelly and a retired police chief.

“Statuary has been popular for gift giving, for weddings, birthdays and Christmas. Customers can paint their own statuary if they choose, purchase from our stock models, or

custom order months in advance,” Speedling notes. “Bears, eagles and wolves are top sellers.”

You can check out the inventory on SVJ’s website, or stop in and wander through the yard and the 5,000-sq. ft. shop filled with statues, Speedling says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, SVJ Creative Designs, 62099 Hwy. 42, Kellogg, Minn. 55945 (ph 507 767-3039 or 877 767-3039; www.svjcreativedesigns.us; info@svjcreativedesigns.com; www.facebook.com/svjcreativedesigns).

## Glass Sculptures Preserve Loved Ones’ Remains

A California glass blowing business offers a way to keep the memory of a loved one close. Memory Glass® encases a tiny amount of the ashes (from 1/8<sup>th</sup> to 1/4<sup>th</sup> teaspoon) in colorful glass pendants, touchstones, or globes. The thin white line of ashes embeds into the glass when heated to 2,000-F degrees and can be shaped into swirls, ribbons and other patterns in a variety of colors.

“People either love the idea or don’t,” notes Nick Savage, owner of the California company, which started in 2001. The seed for it was planted when his father, Craig Savage, received a clear glass-blown keepsake with his best friend’s ashes in 1995. He treasured it and saw the potential for a business. When Nick graduated from college he entrusted his son with the idea.

“At the very beginning we thought we’d hire glassblowers,” Savage recalls. “But we realized the sensitivity of dealing with someone’s ashes. It’s a huge trust issue, and we need to have control over everything.”

So Savage and his business partner took classes to learn the skill and set up the company to make Memory Glass pieces. It’s grown by leaps and bounds as each year more and more people (currently close to 50 percent) choose cremation over burial.

“Our service is available from nearly 2,000 funeral homes in all 50 states and we have representation in Canada, the UK and Australia,” Savage says.

Clients can order through funeral homes or contact Memory Glass directly and request a Welcome Kit that contains a sterilized vial and details how to place an order. All orders are carefully tracked, and remaining ashes are returned, Savage emphasizes.

“The most important thing we have is our security procedure,” he says.

Clients also like the color and style choices, starting with the pendants at \$225 to large orbs at \$500.

About 20 percent of business is from pet owners who have had their beloved animals cremated.

“They have a pendant made and never take it off. Or they hang it from the rearview mirror because their dog liked to ride in the car,” Savage notes.

Savage adds that the business has a patent on a new service – laser-engraving fingerprints, paw prints or nose prints on pendants and orbs. It gives an option to customers who choose burial instead of cremation.

In addition, Savage notes that soil can be



used like ashes in a sculpture to commemorate a farm, burial plot, or favorite vacation spot.

Memory Glass options, information and a video of the process can be found on the business’s website.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Nick Savage, 325 Rutherford St., Suite E, Goleta, Calif. 93117 (ph 866 488-4554; www.memoryglass.com; info@memoryglass.com).



A California company encases a tiny amount of your loved one’s ashes inside colorful glass pendants, touchstones or globes.

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