

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.

Small Town Started Its Own Grocery Store

After their grocery store closed in 2016, residents of rural Mount Pulaski, Ill., pop. 1,800, worked together to open a new store in 2020. Despite the challenges of running a small store, the Market on the Hill has been steadily building back its customer base.

The business is incorporated with shareholders and rents a building in the town's square. It became a popular

community project early on.

"The high school class built the shelving and there was lots of help to get it painted and set up," says Bonnie Davis, general manager.

One of the store's goals is to promote and sell locally grown produce and meat. But to be sustainable and attract customers, it quickly became apparent that staples such as canned and packaged foods and bread and milk were important.

"Our real purpose is to have access to food. We partner with other stores to order food to keep our prices down and remain profitable," Davis says.

Market on the Hill has a deli that serves soup, sandwiches and salads, as well as a baker who comes in four days a week to make homemade rolls and other desserts. There are a couple of tables for people who want to get together at the store.

Meat from local producers is available year-round and local produce comes in seasonally. Some people provide honey and salsa.

Local producers interested in processing and marketing products will soon be helped by a separate project in Mount Pulaski. The FarmFed Cooperative sold stock and received grants to buy and renovate a building to include a kitchen and processing facility that will open in 2023. The cooperative is separate from the store, but the store will be able to purchase goods and add even more local products.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Market



Market on the Hill sells locally grown produce and meat as a cooperative.

On The Hill, 125 S. Lafayette St., Mount Pulaski, Ill. 62548 (ph 217-270-0005; info@marketonthehill.com; www.marketonthehill.com).



Verbio is using German technology in Iowa to turn corn stover into natural gas.

They're Converting Cornstalks To Natural Gas

Producers who raise corn in a 60-mile radius around Nevada, Iowa, can earn extra income by selling cornstalks after harvest to Verbio North America, which converts

the stalks into natural gas.

The proprietary technology has been used for about a decade in Germany. The Nevada, Iowa, operation started production in

December 2021 in a former DuPont facility. The facility closed in 2017, and with the sale of the facility to Verbio came 100,000 tons of stover ready to turn into natural gas. It will take care of Verbio's needs until more stover comes in after the 2022 corn harvest. Verbio will need stalks from 40,000 acres in the fall of 2022 for gas production.

Iowa leads the U.S. in corn production, and Verbio is reaching out to producers in the area. Verbio performs all aspects of harvest and transportation; in exchange, the producer is compensated \$8 per bale or about \$25 per acre of corn production. Verbio's goal is to sustainably harvest 50 percent of the cornstalks, leaving enough material that soil health is not compromised.

"It's a new source of revenue," says Ron DeJongh, president of Verbio. "When stover is left in the field in the field, its natural degradation releases carbon into the atmosphere. We capture the released carbon

and convert it into renewable natural gas via Verbio's anaerobic digestion process."

The process appeals to no-till operations and farmers that typically grow corn on corn, as the stalks tie up nitrogen in the second year of production. Another bonus is that the remaining product after the anaerobic digestion process - called humus - is marketed to farmers as a soil conditioner.

"We are the first company bringing the process to an industrial scale. We will produce 7 million gallons of natural gas in the first phase and 19 million gallons in 2023," DeJongh says. "We plan to do this in multiple sites across the Midwest."

FARM SHOW readers in the central Iowa area who are interested in learning more should contact Verbio at 866-306-4777, ext. 3003 or Nevada.Stover@Verbio.us.

Rebuilding Old Equipment Pays Off

Lar Voss likes the satisfaction he gets from giving a worn-out piece of farm equipment a new lease on life, especially when it's financially profitable. Buying a John Deere H manure spreader for \$350 and selling it for \$2,100 makes for a nice profit. All it took was a couple of days, \$200 for new tires and \$125 for miscellaneous parts.

Voss admits that you need to be careful when picking a prospective project. Even an experienced hand like him can be surprised, as he was with the spreader.

"The floor was decent with a few holes to fill in, but a bearing was welded to the axle," says Voss. "I always expect to have to rebuild gears and put new teeth on sprockets, but that bearing was welded in place."

Adding insult to injury, it was a really nice weld, according to Voss, and about an inch deep all around the axle. "It took a lot of acetylene to cut out the weld and the bearing," he says. "Once we got it loose, we drove it out from the other side and did some grinding to get the new bearing in. The bearing on the other side was fine and just needed grease."

Aside from the problem bearing, the spreader fix was straightforward. Voss fabricated a new torsion spring to replace one that was broken. The bar over the beater had been extended vertically for some reason and was bent.

"They had done a good job on it, so

we just straightened it and left it as it was," says Voss. "Otherwise, we patched holes and repainted."

The metal pan on the H was bolted to the side. Knowing any manure getting into the joint would rust it out, Voss sealed it with epoxy. Where the pan had rusted through, he used Gorilla epoxy adhesive between 1/16-in. galvanized steel and the pan. Once the epoxy was in place, he riveted the metals together.

"Then we crawled underneath and sealed up any holes with more epoxy," says Voss.

Making a repair job profitable means not doing anything you don't have to do, like sandblasting away old paint, he explains. "If the paint has bubbled, we grind it away, but if it has just rusted over, we use Corro Seal," says Voss. "It takes away the oxidation and turns the rusted surface into a hard, black material that we can repaint. We sprayed the paint on, so it penetrated any cracks or spaces."

Once the job was done, Voss took it back to the auction where he bought it. It is a round trip he has done many times. Sometimes he encounters surprises he encounters are better than with the H.

"I paid \$2,000 for a Deere Gator that was listed as inoperable," recalls Voss. "We hooked up a battery and used the key from our own Gator and drove it on the trailer. We had to replace bent pushrods at \$4 each and resold it for \$6,000."

Voss is fond of IH belt-drive mowers. He can often buy them for around \$500.

He converts them to a quick-attach hitch, puts a hydraulic cylinder on for lifting the bar, and often resells them for \$2,500.

"Belt drives run at any angle, making them great for mowing ditch banks," says Voss. "With the hydraulic cylinder, it's easy to lower them 30 degrees or raise them almost all the way up while still mowing."

Sometimes he has to rebuild the sickle bar or rework the wobble box if a bearing has gone out. Whatever minor repairs are needed, when Voss

is finished, he has made some money. A piece of farm equipment has had years added to its working life, and a buyer has what he needs for far less than the new price.

"I don't know why more farmers don't do the same," says Voss. "Many of them have the knowledge, the tools and the time during the off-season. It's a double win. I make some money, and someone else gets a good working machine."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Western



Before and after show the profitable rebuild of a Deere H manure spreader by Lar Voss.



Land and Water, 27455 County Road 15, Johnstown, Colo. 80534 (ph 970-204-9300; lar@larvoss.com).