

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](mailto:editor@farmshow.com).

## Teen Creates Pygora Goat Fiber Business

Audra Otto may be a teenager, but she's already built the foundation of a successful goat fiber business. Otto lives on Blackberry Blossom Farm in southern Minnesota. She makes and sells handspun yarn, batts of fiber, and hand-knitted items like hats and scarves from registered Pygora goats.

The Pygora goats came from a farm in Cresco, Iowa. A friend and mentor introduced Otto to the breed, and she purchased a pregnant doe—the start of a quickly growing herd. "I have 12 does, three bucks, and 11 babies right now," says Otto.

"Each goat produces anywhere from 1/2 to 3 lbs. of fleece, which I then hand process. I'd say that each fleece, once washed and dehaired, can produce at least four skeins of yarn, more depending on what other fibers I blend the Pygora with."

Pygora goats are a cross between Pygmies and Angoras. They're a friendly, versatile breed that produces a luxurious fleece that fiber enthusiasts prize. Unlike other breeds, Pygora fleece stays soft even as the goats age. In contrast, Angora fleece gets coarser as the animal matures. This soft fleece is classified into three types: A, B, and C. Type A is the most similar to Angora goat hair and is known for its length and shine. B is very soft with distinct guard hair. Finally, type C is comparable to cashmere and is fine enough to be plucked right off the animal.

The goats are shorn twice a year, typically in the spring and fall. The fiber then needs to be washed and dehaired. Otto normally sends most of hers to a local fiber mill, though she keeps the soft baby fleece at home for the luxury. The resulting fiber is called a cloud, and it's portioned out depending on its final purpose. The ones that will be multicolor yarn are dyed immediately, while solid color yarn is dyed after it's woven. It's then carded to align the



Otto sells yarn and fiber from her herd of Pygora goats.

fibers in one direction. Otto takes these fibers to her spinning wheel to ply them into yarn. This involves twisting two or more strands of fibers together for a durable yarn.

Otto currently sells through two storefronts as well as vendor fairs and Facebook. Typically, she'll sell 100 skeins of yarn a year and 100 or more batts of fiber. A batt is fiber that has been washed, dehaired, dyed, and carded but not yet spun into yarn. While taking care of the goats takes just 20 min. a day, Otto enjoys excuses to spend time with them. "The most satisfying part to me is seeing a baby born, putting all the hard work into raising and caring for her, and then being able to use this homegrown fleece to make something special," says Otto. "I wish people could see all the hard work and time that goes into one singular fiber product and, therefore, fully appreciate the process. Also, to know how much individual personality each goat has. They're very smart and lovable."

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## He Customizes Farm Toys With 3D Parts

You won't find anything but red in Allen Konwinski's personal farm toy collection of International Harvester and Farmall tractors. But as a custom builder, he thrives on adding personalized details on 1/16th-scale tractors of all colors. Demand for his work is the result of his attention to detail, including finishing touches from his wife and using quality 3D-printed parts.

Farm toys have been a part of Konwinski's life ever since he was the youngest of six kids playing with a few new and several hand-me-down toys. He collected as a teen in the 80s and did some customizing in the 90s. After getting out of it for a while, he started collecting again in 2014. He was attracted to the idea of taking old toys and making them as realistic to the originals as possible.

"I started collecting with no intention

of selling. I took pictures and posted them online, and the rest is history," says the full-time business owner of Al-Kon Custom Farm Toys. "The toy world is booming; there's no slow down."

About half of his work comes from customers sending him toys and photos of real tractors. Because modern paints don't usually match original paints, he typically takes them apart, sandblasts down to the metal, and repaints everything. Like most custom builders, he uses brass for many parts—to connect steps, tank mounts, etc. But in the past few years, he started buying 3D-printed parts.

"It's the direction the toy world is going," he says. "In the past, some plastic 3D parts were made poorly in China. But things have progressed. Now, they use a specific resin that is very tough. I've taken (3D-printed) rims

## Fast-Food Restaurant Uses Locally Sourced Ingredients

Genny McGregor is on a mission to make good, local food accessible to everyone via her fast-food restaurant. Spark's Burger Co. in Manhattan, Kan., has the same foods found in big chains—burgers, fries, and shakes. Customers order from a counter, pay, and are served at their table within about 10 min.

The visual difference is the décor with huge posters of smiling farmers and cows along with signs saying "Know your Farmer. Know Your Food."

The taste difference is in the meat and dairy products purchased directly from farmers within a 120-mile radius.

"I'm in Kansas because people understand the (agriculture) industry and what it's like losing family farms," McGregor says. She sold her Colorado home and moved to Kansas in 2022 to pursue her dream.

Ironically, her diet is mainly vegetarian, though she eats meat occasionally. With her focus on animal welfare, she buys products from farmers who take good care of their animals. She knows because she visits the farms.

Kansas diners appreciate the support Spark's Burger provides for local farmers. Customers like the fact that they can eat out and have affordable local meat, cheese, and ice cream as often as they want and not just at special farm-to-table events.

Burgers start at \$7, and the chefs have taken customer suggestions to create specialty burgers like the Thunder Burger with cheese, sauteed mushrooms, caramelized onions, and Spark's creamy BBQ sauce.

In addition to serving local food, creating a great working atmosphere is very important to McGregor.



The taste difference is in the meat and dairy products purchased directly from farmers within a 120-mile radius.

"I take care of employees through compensation and conscious leadership, so we all love coming to work," she says. Happy employees give quality service, and customer reviews often mention how great the staff is.

At 52, McGregor hopes to add more restaurants in the future, to make fast food/local food more mainstream. The name "Spark's" reflects her hope that her restaurants that support local farmers "take off like wildfire."

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and thrown them on the floor, and they just bounce. Resin prints perfect detail."

He and other custom builders keep U.S. 3D-printing business owners such as Lance Van Der Weerd of Tri-State 3D Customs ([www.tristate3dcustoms.com](http://www.tristate3dcustoms.com)) very busy, Konwinski says.

With Gorilla Super Glue Gel and pins to attach the parts, Konwinski merges 3D parts with his brass work and other personal details that his customers request. One IH tractor had a green toolbox, for example. Another had a unique hook with twine on it.

He adds 3D-printed transistor radios to many of his models and he adds parts that replicate after-market fuel tanks, quick hitches, weights, and stadium lights. The only other parts he purchases are tires, wheels, lights, and decals. Konwinski notes that his wife, Amy, paints fine details, such as lug nuts and other small parts.

Some of his favorite projects are replicating International's 5 millionth tractor auctioned off in 1976. Konwinski starts with a 1066

tractor and tears it apart to add details and repaint it in the correct red and white colors. His version doesn't have a cab and has a 3D-printed quick hitch.

He has also customized 4-WD John Deere 7520 tractors in four colors to replicate the patio series tractors sold from 1969 to 1971.

Konwinski mostly shops online to buy "builders"—tractors that he can customize. He shares ideas and photos with other custom toy buyers and sellers on his Facebook forum—All-Color Farm Toy Custom's.

Quality 3D printing has taken customized toys to a new level, he says. And he knows he's done good work when people see photos of his toys and tell him they look like full-size tractors.

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Konwinski specializes in 3D parts for 1/16 scale model tractors that feature impressive detail.