

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).

## New Way To Become A Beginning Beekeeper

Always wanted to set up a few beehives? Thanks to Penn State University, you can now take an entry-level Beekeeping 101 course online.

"We used to offer beginner beekeeping classes in January and February, but there were always people who couldn't fit it into their schedule or couldn't get to all the classes," says Tom Butzler, extension horticulture expert. "Now people can participate online and review the material whenever they have time."

Butzler and Maryann Tomasko Frazier, entomology expert, are presenters for the class. Initially they gave it live, then transitioned to webinars with simple graphics and pictures. Finally, they added videos they made.

With the help of Penn State's public television station WPSU, the entire course is now available online with more than 80 high-quality videos and animations. Viewers can scroll over a picture on the computer screen and see details such as the different body parts, their role and function.

"We launched it in July 1, 2012, with no marketing or promotion so we could work out the bugs," says Butzler. "We started promoting it in November and now have people all over the U.S. and the world who have signed up to take the course."

Registration for the course is \$189. This allows registrants to access all the coursework for a full year. The course covers bee biology, behavior, hive management, swarming, equipment, bee products and more.

There are 10 sessions in all with a self-assessment at the end of each



**Penn State University offers an entry-level Beekeeping 101 course online.**

session. Registration also includes access to a discussion forum where people share questions and information with other students and the instructors.

"The self-assessment helps people identify what they've learned. If they didn't learn it the first time, they can go back and review the information before going on," says Butzler. "Questions in the discussion forum often go beyond what we cover in the course."

Butzler emphasizes the course is just an overview. He encourages his students to join local beekeeping clubs, noting there are more than 25 of them in Pennsylvania alone.

One sign of success with the course is that he's now getting questions about doing a followup course, Beekeeping 102.

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## Chinese Tractor Owners Unite On The Internet

Nowadays there's an association or forum for just about everything, including people who have an interest in foreign-built tractors. FARM SHOW recently came across an organization called the Chinese Tractor Owners Association (CTOA) that seems to have a fairly large following. We received information from Hal Mandelman, the fellow who set up the organization.

CTOA is a website-based group whose goal is to "Help Each Other With Knowledge". For a \$15 lifetime fee, a person can become a member and have access to Chinese tractor owners throughout the country, locate dealers who sell tractors and parts, and participate in forums discussing all aspects of Chinese tractors.

The site carries in-depth articles on topics such as lubricating oil, treating pistons in an overhaul project, mounting a backhoe, adjusting valves, tending

to the 4-wheel drive, dealing with cooling problems, and identifying the correct torque for engine head bolts. As of January 2013, CTOA had just over 1,000 registered users.

In addition to providing useful maintenance information, the site lists seven dealers located around the U.S. A 150-word description tells viewers what equipment and services the dealerships offer.

John Barrett of Global Marketing, a dealer in Rhode Island, has imported and sold Jinma tractors for several years and says his company has an ad on the site that generates leads for new tractor sales and service.

Ron Macon, of Ranch Hand Supply in Virginia, says he got a fair amount of leads from the site before the economic downturn a few years ago. Those calls have mostly dried up, but he still has people emailing and calling with mechanical questions.

The Chinese Tractor Owners Association's website is [www.ctoa.net](http://www.ctoa.net).

## Rural Women Followed Dream To Create Farm Books For Kids

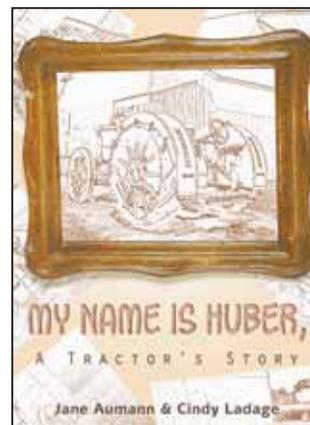
By Cindy Ladage

When Jane Aumann and I met, she was the editor of an antique tractor magazine and I wrote for her. As parents with young children, we both noted that there weren't many children's books about farming. We decided to do something about it and, in 1999, started our first children's farm book titled *Tucker's Surprise*.

Our first book took shape as we met at restaurants, cutting and pasting our revisions. We stayed so long at one diner they told us we had to leave. Once the story was done, revision after revision took place until we felt ready to publish. The story line followed Tucker and his Grandpa who both shared the same birthday. Tucker tries to find the perfect birthday present for his grandpa. Most of the story is about the bonds formed between a boy and his grandpa on the farm.

In 2003, we stepped up to the plate with our next book, *The Christmas Tractor*. Famed tractor artist Charles Freitag agreed to collaborate with us on his first children's book. He created paintings for each page bringing the story of Allie to life. The Christmas Tractor depicted a family that bought back the family tractor at an auction. After the tractor got home everyone helped restore it to its former glory, everyone that is except for little Allie who was told "You are too little to help". Allie found her own way to contribute creating her own Christmas surprise.

Our latest book, *My Name is Huber; a Tractor's Story* focuses on a 1927 Huber tractor that rolls off the factory room floor and tells his own story. Huber works on his farm through the Depression and World War II offering insight into farming practices of that time and place. After being replaced by newer, faster equipment, finally the farmer's



**Cindy Ladage and Jane Aumann's latest book focuses on a 1927 Huber tractor that rolls off the factory room floor and tells his own story.**

grandson restores Huber to like-new condition so he gets to share his story with a new generation. The artwork for Huber is taken from actual photographs.

Our mission is to preserve agricultural heritage. We sell our books primarily through ads in publications that fit our audience and writing articles or speaking to groups about our stories. We are just two women that have found a story we want to tell. Believing in yourself and what you want to accomplish is the most important key we have found.

The books sell for \$10 apiece plus \$2 S&H. Available at Amazon.com or contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Cindy Ladage, Roots & Wings, 35216 E. 5th Rd., Virden, Ill. 62690 (ph 217 741-9509; [cindy.ladage@royell.org](mailto:cindy.ladage@royell.org)).

## He Turns Grass Clippings Into Logs

"Most commercial logs have petroleum products for energy value and to get the fire going quickly. We use all natural materials," says Syed Imam, senior USDA research chemist at the ARS Bioproduct Chemistry & Engineering laboratory in Albany, Calif., who spent a couple years developing fireplace logs made out of grass clippings.

Freshly cut grass is spread out, air dried to less than 5 percent moisture, and mixed with soy wax as a binder. Imam also experimented with adding oils such as lavender, peppermint and eucalyptus to add pleasant aromas to the logs.

"Our biggest challenge was making a product that compares with other commercial logs that use chemicals. We had to find the process that allowed optimal densification. The major thing that drives burning is air pockets. You have to use the right force to get the correct density," Imam says.

In independent lab testing, grass logs were compared with other commercial brand logs. The grass logs burned longer, cleaner and had a better flame property, but also had more ash.

Because there's no petroleum in them, the logs are lighter and smell better, Imam says.

Estimated cost for materials to manufacture each log is 22 to 33 cents - not considering the equipment, energy and labor costs.

Besides logs, Imam creates fire pellets and fire starters with grass clippings. Logs include 60 percent grass clippings, and



**Because there's no petroleum in them, grass logs are lighter and smell better than other commercial fireplace logs.**

the pellets and starters use a smaller percentage.

As a USDA-ARS employee, he did the research in a cooperative agreement with New Venture Ideas, Inc., in Pittsburg, Calif., which may use the research to develop products for marketing.

The USDA and the New Venture Ideas, Inc. jointly hold the patent, but nonexclusive licenses may also be considered for other entrepreneurs to bring the technology to market place. There has been plenty of interest in the U.S., Imam says, and from Europe as well.

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