

Business Highlight



Erica and Dave have turned their Hidden Acres Farm into Wood-n-Knots – selling eggs, pens, furniture, vases, bowls and jewelry.

The Crafty Crishers

by Kristen De Deyn Kirk

Dave Crisher stood out at this summer's Farmers Market in Smithfield. His booth was over on the right side, toward the back, but no one could miss him. Among corn, cucumbers, seafood and baked goods, Dave's carefully crafted wood pens, vases and bowls caught passersby's eyes.

So did his wife's work –glistening jewelry perfectly placed on the table tops. Earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and key chains all sparkled.

And nearby a rooster attracted lots of attention. He's the family's hobby, too: They're creators of all sorts of things – beautifully-colored (light blue, soft green and faint brown) eggs (well, they don't lay the eggs themselves, but

their chickens do!); jewelry made from crystals and beads and wooden objects shaped into writing utensils, flower holders and various other too-gorgeous pieces.

Dave's father is a talented photographer, and Dave definitely has his attention to detail and appreciation of nature. Erica jokes that she has no idea where her talent comes from – no one in her family is particularly crafty or artistic.

"They don't know where I got it," she says.

"It" is her ability to spin yarn and knit and string jewelry. With a 3-year-old at home, she doesn't do much spinning these days ("too dangerous," she says), but she does plenty of knitting and jewelry making.

Someday, the couple would like to turn their part-hobby-part-business into a full-time business and that's when Erica will sell more of her knitting. The plan is to move from Carrollton and back to Michigan (where Dave grew up) after he retires from the Navy in four years. They've already checked out a property with 60 acres and a work house that they could use.

Four years ago, they started work on the idea. They rented a booth at the Farmers Market. They just brought their chickens and eggs and some plants, though. Then, they slowly added their crafts and got a great response from the public.

"At first, we were lucky to make enough money to cover our booth fee," says Dave. "Then it started to take off."

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Dave's workshop is behind his house. He spends many evenings and weekends working away.

Erica credits their work – and the fact that they started accepting credit cards.

“It makes it easy for everyone,” says Erica.

Dave knows, too, to be patient and to make the most of any situation. His father, who is legally blind but still practices the art of photography, taught him at a young age to go with the flow.

“He said a mark of a good craftsman isn't how many mistakes he makes,” Dave shares, “it's what he does with those mistakes.”

Dave says he never knows what he'll make when he goes into his workshop.

He's grateful that people give him free wood because it keeps his costs down and he can “play” with his designs.

“He'll go in (to the workshop) for an hour or so every night,” says Erica.

“An hour?!” teases Dave. “More like five or six hours.”

His son, David, checks his work and usually gives it a big thumbs up. He likes to tell Daddy, “It's perfect.”

Little David also helps Mommy with her jewelry. He hasn't yet taken on the task of matching colors together or deciding which beads might complement each other but he's in charge of quality control: He yanks at each piece to ensure that it's going to hold up to any tugging its eventual owner might do.

“There's no better test,” says Erica.

Their daughter, Sierra, has also gotten involved with the business a little bit, making her own jewelry. Some of her work is featured at their web site, www.woodnknots.com.

Sierra hasn't knitted yet, but Erica does often. She pulls out a pair of stunning wood knitting needles to show off her work – and Dave's. She's making a scarf right now with needles that Dave made for her.

“I make her so much, that table there, that one there and there,” says Dave, “and that yarn bin, and I get no reaction. I make her those knitting needles and she cries.”

“They're like knitting with air,” Erica explains.

She's a contemplative person – spending lots of time looking at her beads and deciding just what colors would make the perfect piece of jewelry. She finds that lots of customers like the crystal pieces but she tends to like beads – especially for earrings.

“I have a thing for earrings,” she says. “I can't stop buying them.”

But she's not allowed to buy furniture.

“We've been fighting over that table there,” says Dave, pointing to his kitchen table. “We need a new one and she wants to buy one but my pride won't let her.”

All that's standing in the way of Dave making that table is his business: He and Erica are getting more and more work – which is good news for them, except when it comes to finding a better place to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner.



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