

SUCCESS STORIES

Facts and Stats on Heron Croft Farm Training Centre

Our June 2010 Success Story is about a new family enterprise in Grey County, Ontario. It's a story about a small business matching its money with action while *going for the green*.

A Fifty Year (!) Family Business Plan

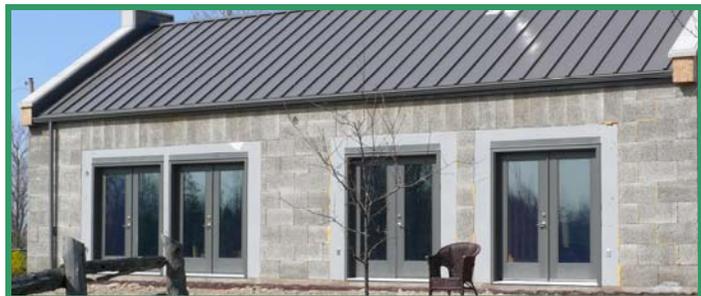
As a relatively new rural resident, entrepreneur Doug Miller had been struck by the challenge to sustain agriculture in rural Ontario. "When the current generation of farmers retire (many without children willing to take up farming), we'll be challenged to produce the food we need." As a businessman, he saw the need to encourage as much innovation as possible in the farm sector to ensure we develop the ideas and skills needed to be successful. He also saw the need to interest and assist a new generation of farmers and rural residents.

Innovation in the farm sector is just as important as it is for manufacturing.

Clearly, one of a number of bright spots in the agricultural field is the growth of the local food movement, and the parallel expansion of organic farming practices. Miller's own market research showed that the "buy local" movement continues to increase through the recession and the choice of "natural" food is well established in a sizeable segment of the population. Not only do these changes in consumer preferences keep more money in the local economy, they support the production of more value-added crops (e.g., heirloom tomatoes, local goat cheese) that in turn improves the attractiveness and rewards of farming as a livelihood.

As a result, the Miller family decided to develop its farm into a research and demonstration site for sustainable agriculture and sustainable living in order to support the local food movement in Grey County, develop and disseminate sustainable methods of production, demonstrate low-energy buildings and systems, and educate and inspire a new generation of farmers and rural residents.

As a first step towards this goal, they decided to build a new passive solar building to house a farm orientation and training room, an office housing the GlobeScan Foundation, a video conference facility, a bathroom for visitors, and a storage room.



Training Centre—under construction.

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In keeping with their local orientation and goals, Miller worked with his neighbour Tim Singbeil of Dasein Homes to design a building that will not only be fit-for-purpose but also will demonstrate the low impact / low energy / high quality rural future that he would like to help foster.

The new building incorporates many innovative features but all have been proven in other installations in Ontario, having been approved by the relevant authorities.



The Room for All Reasons

These features include passive solar heating, Durisol block walls, thermal storage, and healthy building materials including clay wall covering.

Heron Croft's building is a reflection of the Millers' commitment to live and work in a healthy environment—so a biological building made perfect sense.

Unless a building has been designed with Mother Nature's rules in mind, it will not meet her expectations. Dasein's approach and material choices consider how to make a living or working space healthful and ecologically sound, and energy efficient. They have even thought through the chemistry of the building, which is not a common criterion in building projects. *New or renewing, it's worth the investigation.*

What's the one thing you can do to help Heron Croft in their 'going for the green' goal to help farmers?

Actually, there are several simple things you can do.

Let your preference for natural foods be known. Money backs the talk. And it's healthier for you. Young, growing or old—healthy eating fosters better health.

Look for local farm produce either at the gate or at a local market. If your area does not have one, talk to your neighbours and collect commitments to buy. A ready market helps.

Buy foods in season. Buying local can reduce your carbon footprint.

Oh yes, and join the collaboration. Be part of the solution.

Click here to join—www.goingforthegreen.net