

## Couple finds 'repurpose' in life Larry and LuAnn Hutson of Sparta have taken their love of old buildings and turned it into a thriving business

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All their lives, Larry and LuAnn Hutson have enjoyed finding new uses for old things, but neither one of them expected it to become a way of life.

But in 2008, when they used the lumber that once made up the grainery that sat on Larry's family farm when he was a boy to help create their new home, it opened the door for what would eventually become a business – Used Anew.

Since then, the Hutsons and their deconstruction team have taken down dozens of old barns and rustic buildings, salvaging everything they can, and giving a new life to boards, beams and everything in between.

The materials are salvaged from the sites and kept at their shop in rural Sparta. From there, carpenters, interior designers, do-it-yourselfers and crafters from all over the Midwest hand pick the lumber that is perfect for whatever its creative destination.

"A lot of times, the older woods are more attractive than the new woods," Larry said. "They have character, and so there's an enjoyment of the rustic look. You see the nail holes, and it gives you a sense of its previous use, or its history."

"It's all very personal," LuAnn added.

The couple agrees that each and every job they do provides a valuable lesson. Over the years, they are grateful to have been able to expand their network and markets enough to find increasingly creative uses for the building materials, making it a win-win for both them and anyone looking to have an old building removed.

"The service we provide, we think, is doing a really good job for the landowner and leaving as little as possible for them to do afterward," Larry said.

This eventually led to the development of another facet of the business, the retail and creative side.

Used Anew has a retail space that is open by appointment, and is filled with antiques, home décor, collectibles and random upcycled projects.

Brian Heiller, who has worked for the Hutsons for three years and has been dubbed the "thing maker", creates custom table tops, picture frames and home décor pieces among other projects when he is feeling inventive.

"Pinterest is really big," Larry said. "They bring us something on their phones, they pick out their lumber and we usually can put it together."

Larry says he feels they have been so successful because of a number of recent trends.

"I think it's a combination of going green, using a combination of awesome materials, and being creative while they're doing it," he said. "It's a fun time I think for people, and it's a fun thing for us. We just really enjoy it. We enjoy the creative aspect of it."

But the Hutsons' ability to recognize beauty and opportunity goes beyond barns and other rustic structures.

With the exception of two employees, Used Anew hires adults with disabilities through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

"So many of the guys, I think, have been teased or put down or ridiculed in other job situations or in school or whatever," Larry said. "And for them to come out and be respected for what they're capable of and be appreciated and be part of something – it's fun to see the progression and the growth, and their enjoyment that they have in being a part of something."

They agree that their decision to provide these opportunities is personal, too.

"We have our own disabilities," Larry said, adding that LuAnn had epilepsy and that he suffers from depression. "That's another reason, I guess. We kind of understand."

For more information about the projects and products Used Anew offers, see [www.usedanew.com](http://www.usedanew.com), or call 608.487.0547 with questions or to make an appointment to see the shop.

Larry and LuAnn Hutson own Used Anew in rural Sparta.

Used Anew employees Jarred Osley of La Crosse, Nick Langseth and Frank Brabant of Sparta and Josh Koehler of Cataract work on deconstructing a barn in rural Cataract. The lumber and other building materials will be salvaged and used for other building projects, crafts, home décor or rustic interior decorating.