

“There are a lot of customers who genuinely care about the environment and their impact on it.”

particularly, that have come out with bamboo or recycled fibers and they are just starting to be known. It's going to take years to get people to really embrace the idea," she conceded. "To be honest, environmentally friendly and recycled products are expensive. They do cost more, but to me, you either pay for it up front or you pay it in the end. If you value what you're using, you might use less of it, or you might care for it a little better—it's a real on-going education for ourselves and for our staff and for the customer." The response to their efforts is already paying off.

"We are finding that there are more of us out there," Jeri said. "There are a lot of customers who genuinely care about the environment and their impact on it. Every single day, I hear someone come in and say, 'Oh it smells so good in here,'" she added. "The wood smells nice—it doesn't smell like chemicals, it doesn't smell like paint, it doesn't smell like petroleum. It smells good in here. That's a nice feeling."

The Jacksons have gotten a lot of local and regional publicity about their "green building." They say that people come in just because they heard or read about it and wanted to see it. Tri-County is also a smoke-free building, which is a gutsy move in a tobacco-growing state. The Jacksons have also won awards for using eco-friendly materials and for their handicapped-friendly building design and floor plans. Customers often ask them for advice about eco-friendly builders and materials to use in building barns and stables.

The first six months in their new location has been exhausting, exasperating and exhilarating for the Jacksons, but they say they are thrilled with the results and believe the prospects for their newly expanded business look good.

"I wouldn't want to be so shallow as to say that we live in a recession-proof area, because we don't," observed Jeri. "There are a lot of people around here who see these horses as their children. That customer base probably isn't going anywhere, so it's just a question of how do we adapt and help those one- and two-horse owners. How do we help bring along the dog-owning market, which is huge in this area? We may have to change up our product mix a bit, but I don't think either one of us is concerned about not keeping the doors open."

Six months after the grand opening event, Bill and Jeri are beginning to plan the 30-year anniversary of Tri-County Feeds, Etc., which will coincide with the first anniversary of the grand opening of the new facility.

"We're planning that now. It'll be our '30/1 anniversary event.' Those tent sales and events like that take a lot of planning and effort," Bill said, adding that he's thankful that they aren't also having to open a new store again. But he added with a wry grin, "It seems like we're opening something else every day." 🐾

Tri-County Feeds, Inc.
PO Box 458
Marshall, VA 20116
(540)364-1891
www.tricountyfeeds.com



The Jackson's have found pet products to be a growing category for Tri-County. Here, they provide dog owners with everything from feed to toys and grooming items to home accessories.