

Toys

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space.

"We were out of room for both mowers and toys, and we had been looking for quite a few years," Jason said, noting he had successfully made contact with the CEO and president of Theisen's Home-Farm-Auto about wanting to buy the building. "It was perfect timing for this place."

The Daltons officially acquired the building in October 2022 and began operating well into December, even though there was still inventory to be moved and shelves to install. After the holiday season and their annual toy show in Altoona, Jason and Melissa found a small window to move everything in to the new shop.

"We moved most of this in a week," Jason said. "All the toys. All the shelves. I'd say 75 percent of that we moved in a week."

Melissa added, "Between our kids and our employees, everybody's worked their heads off."

HUNDREDS FLOCK TO GRAND OPENING

Almost 700 people showed up to the grand opening of Mow Power Dalton's Farm Toys on March 25. The showroom was full of folks feasting on pulled pork sandwiches, ice cream and drinks. And a couple times throughout the day they got to see the Hostile Environment Pulling Team's Busch Light tractor.

Of course, the toy room was packed with families and collectors who scoured the shelves for a specific model of John Deere, Case or Fendt tractor, or perhaps one of the 1/64 scale variants or a semi-truck or a crop duster or any other kind of agricultural equipment. Customers had their arms full at the cash register.

Several of them weren't even from Newton, let alone Iowa. The Daltons put up a map near the entryway so customers could say where they're from. There were customers from eight different states at the grand opening. In the past month, there have also been four different groups from Canada who visited the toy store.

"One person literally drove down here from Canada just for us," Jason said. "I've said this a lot, but I almost guarantee we bring more people to Newton from out of state than any other business in town, other than a restaurant or a hotel ... People will drive five to seven hours out of their way to come here on a vacation."

Melissa added, "We always held an open house every year at the old place, and even then we would draw at least 300 people."

FARM TOY COLLECTORS ARE PLENTIFUL

People are driving miles out of their way just to get their hands on farm toys? You bet! Melissa still shakes her head about it. Collectors of all kinds love to



Christopher Braunschweig/Daily News

Mow Power Dalton's Farm Toys has a number of miniature displays made of 1/64 scale models at its storefront at 3362 Highway 6 East in Newton, which is just off of First Avenue and Iowa Speedway Drive.



Christopher Braunschweig/Daily News

Melissa Dalton, co-owner of Mow Power Dalton's Farm Toys, shows off one of the many zero-turn mowers on display in the showroom.

browse the toy tractors and agricultural equipment on display. Jason said a lot of older collectors want to own smaller models of what they have farmed with.

"They want the exact replica," he said. "There are other collectors that try to get every John Deere piece or every Farmall tractor that has ever come out. There are a lot of younger collectors that collect the new stuff ... and the younger generation has tons of people building (1/64 scale) displays."

Of course there are also kids that come in and buy toys that they want to play with, but a large majority of sales are going toward collectors who are searching for rare toys or the last piece of a series. Some are looking for "chasers," which Jason said are rare toys that are of a different color, oftentimes painted gold.

"It's just like Hot Wheels with the Treasure Hunts or baseball cards with an autograph," Jason said. "It's the same thing with farm toys."

ONCE A COLLECTOR, ALWAYS A COLLECTOR

Collecting is about as popular as it was when Jason started the business as an FFA project in 1995, which is great for business. Of course, Jason is a farm toy collector himself, an obsession that

dates back to when he was 5 years old. He has loved them since he was a kid.

"I always spent the summers on my grandparents' farm and just always liked tractors," Jason said inside his office, which is completely outfitted with Ariens and Gravely memorabilia that extends well into the showroom, too. "I have too many collections."

Probably one of his most impressive collections is displayed in a corner of its own, beyond the showroom. Illuminated by two retro appliance store signs is a collection of Maytag treasures. In addition to the preserved washing machine, Jason displays a number of trinkets and relics that rival that of the local museum.

Miniature washing machines, pendants, employee badges, clothes pins, stamps, an unopened jar of motor oil and milk bottles from Maytag Dairy Farm. The massive collection is obviously not for sale, but it gives customers something else to marvel at while visiting the store.

IF YOU KNOW, YOU KNOW

To have hundreds of people show up to the grand opening of the new storefront means a lot for the Dalton family, but neither Jason nor Melissa are surprised to see a big turnout. They were kind of expecting it. The business' Facebook page has more than 67,000 followers, and the Daltons have built a strong reputation.

"It is now — and we can easily say this — the largest farm toy store in the world as far as floor space and toys on display. And we're the second largest retailer of farm toys in the world," Jason said, noting the No. 1 retailer is Outback Toys in Lititz, Penn., which was established in 1990.

Jason is also on the board of directors for the National Farm Toy Museum in Dyersville. The museum publishes a price guide every year, which Jason has been an integral part in writing and updating. The guides themselves are dense and work as a sort of checklist. In one guide, Jason has all but four pieces.

When it comes to 1/64 scale models of farm toys, Jason is one of the most knowledgeable people in the business.

"Everybody knows to come to me," Jason said. "If they find something really rare it'll be, 'Ask Jason Dalton what that is. Ask him if he has it.' My collection of 1/64 is the largest in the world. I have pretty much every piece ever made ... Our name is huge."

WALK-IN TRAFFIC SEES NOTICEABLE INCREASE

The new and more accessible location has certainly been a game changer for the business. The Daltons already see so much more traffic. In the past, the secluded space had its benefits. These days the family is ready for a change, and the larger floor space and higher ceilings.

As a business in Newton, Daltons Farm Toys offers a niche product. But that niche has its benefits by drawing in visitors from all across the state and beyond. Jason and Melissa said what makes their business stand out is the knowledge and niche. Not everyone offers farm toys, nor do they know as much about them.

"If people have questions, it's him they ask or another guy that we're pretty good friends with," Melissa said. "I always tell him he needs to start charging for that."

While the Daltons have a new space to call home, they know it is only a matter of time before their collection of inventory grows beyond their store's capacity. Already, Jason and Melissa are taking bets on how long it will take before a new addition is needed. Jason estimates five years. Melissa isn't giving it that long.

"Well, we have the room now," Melissa said with a laugh.

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TALK

- Talk with your partner **before** having sex.
- Talk about **when** you were last tested and suggest getting tested together.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about your sex life and ask **what STI tests** you should be getting and **how often**.

TEST

- Get tested!** It's the only way to **know for sure** if you have an STI.
- Many STIs **don't cause any symptoms**, so you could have one and **not know**.
- If you're not comfortable talking to your regular provider about STIs, find a clinic that provides confidential testing that is free or low cost.

TREAT

- All STIs are **treatable**. If you test positive for an STI, work with your healthcare provider to get the correct treatment.
- Ask about **partner services** to get your partner tested & treated.
- Avoid having sex until you and your sex partner both **complete treatment**.

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Thank You!
We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all who have prayed for us, sent cards, flowers and memorials in sympathy of the passing of Don Rethmeier. You have all truly blessed our family at this time.
Don will be missed.

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