



Brewing New Ideas

Hepler's Hardware Uses Unique Past to Attract New Business

Walking into Hepler's Hardware, located in New Stanton, Pennsylvania, you're bound to see customers browsing the store with a cup of coffee in hand.

Owner Rob Hepler says most of these drinks come from the company's coffee shop, the Stanton Daily Grind. Hepler owns and operates the hardware store and new coffee venture with his father, Robert, and his sister, Megan Orient.

The family opened the coffee shop in May. He says the new business is proof that their 75-year-old family corporation, Hepler's Town and Country Enterprises, continues to grow and evolve.

The Hepler family business dates back to 1942, when Albert Karl Hepler, purchased a feed store in Youngwood, Pennsylvania. Soon after in 1947, they purchased the Stanton Mill, an established flour and feed mill located in nearby New Stanton.

Today the milling business is known as the Stanton Milling Co., and although flour, pancake mix and cornmeal production has been outsourced to another mill, the Heplers are the fourth known family to own and distribute the same product line originated in the Stanton flour and feed mill, he says.

The family appreciates the company's history, but they are always looking to build toward the future. Their newest venture, Stanton Daily Grind, offers customers both the aroma of fresh coffee and a taste of the past.

Focusing on the Daily Grind

The family built and opened a coffee shop from the ground up to serve their shoppers and the local community. However, the new establishment also provides an opportunity for the family to pay homage to the business's history.

"Stanton Daily Grind is a nod to our historical role in the community as a flour mill," Hepler says. "With the coffee shop, we wanted to be able to offer a special experience to our town and shoppers."

The coffee shop is found in a building located in the same area that was previously the company's Garden Center Restaurant, which was a popular spot in the 1950s. Now customers can come in to grab a coffee and look at historical murals, photos, old tools and feed sacks from the company's mill store that date back 165 years.

As an owner of Stanton Daily Grind, Hepler has a great appreciation for his company's products. His love for coffee, and the lack of coffeehouses in the area were a big part of why he decided to start his own shop.

"We served over 400 patrons the first day we opened Stanton Daily Grind," Hepler says. "It was awesome to see so many people turn out. What was even more reassuring was observing people in the hardware store drinking our coffee or watching customers leave the hardware store to grab a cup. The two businesses really serve each other well."

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—Rob Hepler, Hepler's Hardware



In April, Hepler's Hardware owners Rob (left), Megan (center) and their father Robert broke ground on the site where the new building for Stanton's Daily Grind would be housed. Rob's and Megan's children will be the fifth generation to be involved in the business.

A Walk Down Memory Lane



After ordering a coffee at the Stanton Daily Grind, customers can often be found looking at historical photos and old tools from throughout the history of the feed mill, which has been part of the community since the 1850s.

Albert Karl Hepler not only bought a farm and feed store, but also the flour and feed mill business from the Stanton family. Albert purchased the patents, formulas and equipment to continue production of the Stanton's unique mill products.

In the 1980s, as farming and agriculture slowed in the area, the family decided to sell the mill building, owner Rob Hepler says. Instead of grinding the grains on-site, the Stanton Milling Co. original pancake mix, flour and cornmeal recipes are produced at another mill. The products are sold at Hepler's Hardware and Stanton Daily Grind, and they are also distributed to stores throughout Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

In the 1950s, the Garden Center Restaurant opened alongside the hardware store and remained a popular spot among locals for 25 years. It was the only 24-hour diner for miles.



Eventually, the restaurant closed, and the Hepler's rented the space to another business until the family opened the Stanton Daily Grind in 2017.

Additional plans for the business are in the works, as Hepler and his family are working on developing a rooftop garden patio.

Full Steam Ahead

The next phase for the family business is to turn Hepler's Hardware into a full shopping center, Hepler says. The company is leasing building space to other local business owners, including a local chocolate shop owner.

The Heplers also plan to create a space on the property for a local farmers market, beginning this fall.

At the farmers market, which will take place once or twice a month, Hepler says they will highlight a local nonprofit organization each time to help raise awareness and funds.

"Back in the early days, the mill and hardware store were the center of this community," he says. "I'd like to think we remain that way and are becoming even more of a local community hub with our future plans, which is exciting to be able to do."

The retail hardware business remains a major part of the company, as well.

The hardware business has tripled in size over the past 75 years, Hepler says. The primary departments today include plumbing, electrical, lawn and garden, screen-making and repair, outdoor power equipment and more.

"I think the reason we are still thriving is because we weren't afraid of changing, and every leader of the business has implemented something to help us remain competitive."

—Rob Hepler, Hepler's Hardware

"People come to us because they can find what they need here or they can have something fixed here," Hepler says.

According to Hepler, looking to the future is something generations before him have done to keep the family business thriving, and he will continue to follow their lead. The next item on their wishlist is a rooftop garden patio.

"I think the reason we are still thriving is because we weren't afraid of changing," Hepler says. "Every leader of the business has implemented something to help us remain competitive." —



Siblings and co-owners **Rob Hepler** and **Megan Orient** worked together to get their new coffee shop, the Stanton Daily Grind, up and running. They honored the company's history in the design of the shop and created a mini-museum about the mill.