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Contact: Brian Skwirut
Development Officer
The Progress Fund
(724) 529-0384

Mervin and Ada Yoder
Owners
Summit Discount Groceries
(814) 634-1735

Grocery Goes from Hobby to History

The Progress Fund helps finance renovation of 19th Century church

Summit Mills, PA – March 29, 2005 - The new Summit Discount Groceries is now open marking the shop's transformation from a hobby into a significant retailer and tourist attraction.

Long known for its inexpensive groceries, the store now also features handmade Amish crafts, including dolls, grandfather clocks, paintings, rocking chairs and children's toys – much of it locally produced. The new location is in a painstakingly renovated church with an exposed interior framework, allowing visitors to view the original beams and trusses constructed in 1846.

Summit Discount Groceries opened in 2000, when Ada Yoder, then a mother of two, needed a hobby. "When I first opened the store, I thought if I got five customers per day, I'd be tickled," says Ada. The Yoders stocked the shelves with salvage groceries – items that were dented or discontinued, but otherwise sound – and featured traditional Amish customer service. The formula worked, and the Yoders were soon surprised to see scores of customers every day, some driving 20 miles or more.

When the Yoders – now with three children – sought to expand, they found an ideal location: a former church in Summit Mills, a few miles from Meyersdale, Pa., in Somerset County. First National Bank was willing to lend most of the cost of renovation. But banks can typically only lend a certain percentage of equity, leaving the Yoders \$75,000 short. Luckily the banker, Lee Newell, had worked with The Progress Fund both as a co-lender and a

borrower for his own small business, Somerset's Italian Oven restaurant. Lee referred the Yoders to The Progress Fund.

The Progress Fund evaluated the business fundamentals and loaned \$75,000. Working with The Progress Fund "was a very easy process," says Mervin. "We really did need The Progress Fund to do this."

Summit Discount Grocery is located just 10 miles from Pennsylvania's highest point, Mt. Davis, and close to popular campgrounds, fairgrounds, bike trails, and hunting and fishing areas. The Yoders expect that their grocery business will continue to attract smart shoppers, while the Amish crafts and the restored building bring in tourist traffic from far afield. The Yoders plan to employ as many as eight people. Once a hobby, the shop is now an economic workhorse.

For directions or interviews, please call 814-634-1735.

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