



Meet the families of Fireworks Unlimited

By David Lias

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In the middle of the first week of July, with the Fourth of July quickly approaching, Tom Taylor noted that he and everyone else associated with Fireworks Unlimited in Vermillion were "being pulled in four directions at once."

All of that hard work by Tom, his partner, Dennis Anderson, and their family members who help run the local fireworks business, paid off Thursday night, as the Vermillion community was treated to, once again, another spectacular pyrotechnic show about an hour after sundown July 4.

"We've got different towns picking up their orders right now, and we're busy with our store, and we're getting ready for the upcoming show," he said in an interview July 3. "It's been a good year, though. We've had more rain this year, compared to last, and that's helped."

Tom and Dennis and their families opened their current Fireworks Unlimited business location – a large building east of Vermillion on Highway 50 – in June 2006.

The two men, however, first began working together at selling fireworks decades ago. This summer marks Fireworks Unlimited's 32nd "selling season" as Tom describes it.

"I would hope we're kind of a permanent fixture here now," he said, laughing.

The larger, permanent headquarters for Fireworks Unlimited symbolizes the two men's tenacity at the business – and their success at



growing the business.

"Dennis and I started out with a little 16-foot walk-up stand, where you walk up to the window," Tom said. "We did that for a few years, and from there, we went to a trailer house, right up at the fence line. We did that for a couple years, and then we went to a bigger trailer house."

That trailer house was eventually replaced with a doublewide trailer.

"We had that doublewide for a long time, and then we built the first building in 2005," he said.

The creative and driving business nature of the Taylor and Anderson families soon made it necessary to construct a second building near the first – not for fireworks,

but for a new business, New 2 You Consignments, operated by the two men's spouses, JoAnn Taylor and Patsy Anderson.

"They started that a few years ago, because our showroom sat empty 11 months out of the year, and they decided we should be doing something with that space, and that business just grew," Tom said.

New 2 You first operated out of the same building as Fireworks Unlimited. That meant moving all of the fireworks inventory out to make room for the consignments business.

When the first fireworks season approached with New 2 You in place, the

fireworks inventory had to be moved in while the consignment store's inventory was, at the time, temporarily moved out.

"We said to ourselves, 'we'll never do that again. If every year we're going to do this, I don't care what – we're building another building,'" Tom said, laughing, and soon a second building was constructed. New 2 U has taken over the first structure built in 2005; Fireworks Unlimited is in the newer building. "It's amazing, the choices you make, after you do all that work."

Tom and Dennis share more than a business partnership.

"Dennis and I have been best friends our entire lives," he said. "As soon as we were old enough, we started running a fireworks stand. Actually, the first year, there was someone else out here and I ran his stand for free, just to get the feel of it, because we already knew that the next year we were going to do one."

"The next year, that guy had moved to a different community, so there wasn't any hard feelings, and we bought out his existing inventory and Fireworks Unlimited was born," Tom said. "Dennis and I have been business partners in that ever since, and we're still best friends."

The Taylor and Anderson families play a key role in the operation of both Fireworks Unlimited and New 2 You.

"Our family is all grown now and married," Tom said, "and the Anderson kids are all grown, and everyone all comes back and works fireworks every year."

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