

Schoolhouse Earth

Deep Creek Lake

A Unique Experience



The Johnstown School, circa late 1800s was at the location of the current Schoolhouse Earth. This original area was called Johnstown but was later changed to Hoyes.

Sales Associate, Mandy and owner Stephen Rodeheaver, with canine helper, Sebastian.

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Traveling two miles from Deep Creek Lake brings visitors to a small group of shops that host Schoolhouse Earth, a business founded by Nancy Graham in 1986. Purchasing the rustic buildings offered Nancy an opportunity to start a business based on the philosophy that shopping should be a serene experience that transcends the typical work-a-day world. Schoolhouse Earth has become that experience for thousands of visitors because it incorporates Garrett County's scenic beauty with selected merchandise.

Nancy Graham purchased the tract of farmland with the dream of creating a unique enterprise. On the property were several buildings, including one that was used as school house in a bygone era. The rural landscape and a small cluster of buildings blended perfectly with her belief that we learn and draw experiences from the earth. What better place to combine philosophy and business! Using determination and talent, Nancy Graham opened Schoolhouse Earth where visitors can appreciate the quiet surroundings while acquiring unique items.

Nancy Graham's passing several years ago meant that Schoolhouse Earth came under the direction of Stephen Rodeheaver, friend of Nancy and former Home Division Manager of Neiman Marcus, the famed department store. While the founding philosophy remains the same, Stephen decided to implement several changes to the business. "We made the store more open and a little less rustic than it was originally. We also included quality jewelry selections, gourmet food, and a larger selection of interior design oriented merchandise. All of our items are carefully selected and thoughtfully displayed in the spirit of the original business. We are always striving to bring customers the most unique shopping experience in the region."

Browsing the three separate buildings reveals an eclectic selection of items that are not likely to be found elsewhere in the Tri-State area. Children's toys, books, stuffed animals, games, and a large selection of collectibles

are complemented by a Baby Department that offers blankets, tableware, and clothing. Gourmet food selections include soups, grilling sauces and marinades, pastas and sauces, dressings and pestos, jams and jellies, and seasonings. Decorative ideas for summertime are offered in the Pottery Shed while the Christmas Shop offers one of a kind ornaments, tableware, wreaths, garland and tableware for the holiday season.

Stephen summarizes the selection of goods by noting, "In the three shops you can find almost everything. It is difficult to describe unless you have had the experience of coming to our location."

And it is the location that makes Schoolhouse Earth special. "Our customers' experiences wouldn't be the same if the shops were located in an urban setting. The rural setting of Garrett County provides a serenity that complements our business beliefs."

Integrated into the setting is a Petting Zoo where animals are not just pretty faces; each has a name and is appreciated by staff and visitors. According to Stephen, "The Petting Zoo is a big attraction for adults and kids. We have many repeat visitors who stop by to see our friends."

Has Nancy's idea of combining shopping with a rural landscape been successful? Stephen believes it has worked out extremely well. "We have been here since 1986 and many positive comments from our customers affirm the business philosophy of Schoolhouse Earth. 'This is the best shop I've ever visited,' 'What a great idea,' 'You should open a shop near where we live,' and 'This is great!' are some of the comments we hear on a regular basis."

To experience Schoolhouse Earth, turn onto Route 42 at the Maryland State Police Barrack located in McHenry. Continue to 1224 Friendsville Road. The shops are open daily from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm every day of the year except Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. See **schoolhouse earth.com** or phone **1-800-223-4930**.