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## SVJ Creative Designs Turns Concrete Into Works of Art

KELLOGG, MN - In the United States, one can find the Statue of Liberty in New York, the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., Peanuts characters around the Twin Cities, and the list could go on and on. Statues may depict the latest trend, religious belief, or piece of history.

Statues are made up of many forms, but one of the strongest, longest lasting are concrete. Embark on a drive in southeastern Minnesota near Kellogg, and on state Hwy 42 you will come across SVJ Creative Designs, a 17-year-old concrete statue manufacturing business owned by David and Shelly Speedling. Over 1,000 traditional and new statues in concrete are found here in many different finishes.

"We find it very amusing the differing tastes people have. What one might find unsightly is the next person's vision of beauty," stated Dave Speedling. Over the past 10 years, concrete lawn ornaments have gone from being viewed as trashy to works of art.

"Our customers range from millionaires to the common Joe. We have freighted 500-pound lions to Texas, shipped an 8' bear silhouette to Michigan and shipped a huge pig, cow, deer, and horse off to Chicago.

"We don't have an ordinary job. That is what makes each day pretty spectacular," says Shelly. "Many local people have no clue what we do, or what I do for the business. My husband laughs because people think he is the sole business person and I am at home baking pies! Although I do make good pies too, I am behind the marketing, bookwork, and painting and everything that falls in between. We both admit that we could not operate this business without each other's talents."

SVJ began as a farm welding business in the 1980's. Dave developed allergies and asthma as a result of working near farms. Shelly encouraged him make metal garden plant hangers, but he

wasn't sold on that idea, Dave continued with his farm welding, taking inhalers, at the end of the day, he would weld the pieces for her. From there Shelly would spray paint them and place them out front for sale. Soon Dave was welding more hearts than he had time for! Design patents were awarded to the Speedlings on their heart designs and they were soon in a different line of business.

Noting declining plant hanger sales Dave got the urge to start-pouring concrete. After all, many of his customers sold or produced statuary, so he had an insight into what it took. "I never thought this stuff would sell and my wife can laugh at me now!" says David. We have over two acres of concrete statues for sale along with two 52'x96' sheds, one for manufacturing and one for retail/storage at our Kellogg location and another huge retail lot at our Lake City location. Dave and the employees create the items in one shed, and Shelly finishes in another.

The work is not always the easiest, but the Speedlings are happy to work side by side all these years and raise their three children, whom the business is named after: S for Shauna, V for Valerie, J for Jeffrey.

SVJ Creative Designs is known for quality decorative ironwork and railing work. Many local establishments like the AmericInn of Wabasha, LARK Toys of Kellogg, and inside Dos Amigo's Mexican Restaurant of Rochester have railing work created by the Speedlings

SVJ Creative Designs gives group tours by appointment showing the manufacturing and finishing phases of the business. Afterward, there are two different gardens to stroll while viewing statues and ironworks. The latest color catalog is available for \$25. Visit the web site for more information: [www.svjcreative.com](http://www.svjcreative.com).