

Jim Childs

Fabric Covered Building offer Facilities for a Variety of Purposes

It's white, dome-shaped, and has a lot of open space. It's not Dome World either.

It's a Fabric Covered Building, a new concept facility used by a range of businesses from farms to manufacturing. Al Kaptein, president of A.K. Equipment, Inc., is a dealer for fabric-covered structures in Michigan.

In the summer of 1997, Kaptein was working next to a fabric covered building manufacture's booth at Michigan State Agricultural Expo. After doing his own research and looking at five or six buildings in other states, he set up a Steel Framed Fabric Covered building at A.K. Equipment, Inc., and started marketing the buildings in Michigan.

"The agricultural market is a strong point because of the need for storage of agricultural equipment, and we've been selling a lot of the buildings, especially to customers of A.K. Equipment, Inc.," Kaptein said.

Kaptein said in the last few years, Fabric Covered Structured Buildings business has been growing, and has sold hundreds of these structures throughout the state.

Kaptein said Fabric Structures buildings are selling well because they are permanent buildings that can also be viewed as moveable structures.

The buildings can be used in a variety of ways including manufacturing factories, barns, as indoor sports arenas, rodeos, barrel racing and roping arenas, amphitheaters, storage areas for materials such as road salt or vehicles, and air plane hangers.

Andrew Brummel, accountant for A.K. Equipment, Inc., said that the buildings set on concrete pads, which are not moveable, but can be re-poured when or if the structure needs to be moved.

Kaptein said there are many advantages to the Fabric Covered Structures as opposed to traditional buildings.

First, the "skeleton" of the Structure is made of ViperSteel tubing and a triple coated corrosion barrier, he said. This combination is said to provide a service life three times longer than galvanized steel tubing.

Second, the cover of the buildings is made from DuraWeave II, which Kaptein said is strong and requires minimal maintenance. The DuraWeave II covers are made from a double-stacked 16x22 weave, which provides the strength. A special coating provides UV protection, waterproofing and scuff resistance. The covers meet special fire retardant specifications.

The third advantage to a Steel Framed Fabric Covered Structured building, according to Kaptein, is that they provide natural light to come into, so it feels that workers or animals are outside.

Kaptein said the University of Wisconsin has done research that indicates that animals that live in fabric covered buildings are more productive because herd food intake is higher by three to seven percent; milk production increases by three to five percent and the animals are generally healthier.

Kaptein said this is due to the fact that the buildings are heated, the atmosphere is bright and the buildings are much cleaner than conventional barns because dust doesn't collect as easily.

The buildings have a life expectancy of 25-27 years and, unlike many other structures, can be erected in a matter of days.

One example of the uses for these buildings took place in Sault Ste. Marie at the Soo Locks. While workers were doing repairs on the locks, they covered the area with the structure. Every three days the building was moved as the workers fixed the locks. According to Kaptein the project usually took two years, but with the fabric covered building keeping the elements out, the project was completed in one year.

Byron Township, MI

Riding Arena Size 120' x 280'

Built By AK Equipment Inc

Contact us at

800-787-1862

akfabricstructures.com

**By Becky Phillips
South Advance
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Jim Childs, owner of PrinTech has a Fabric Covered building at 9330 Homerich Ave. in Byron Township. Childs saw the building at a Milbrook Tack and Trailer presentation and decided to buy one. It was set up in five days last September. Childs uses his building as a horse arena and he has horse stalls in the building.

"I love it. In terms of space it's awesome. It has all natural light and the horses feel like they are outside," Childs Said. "It doesn't look like a normal barn, but it is cleaner because it doesn't collect a lot of dust, and there is more height and ventilation. They are cost effective too because you get more building for your money and they don't deteriorate like conventional barns. I think these buildings are the next wave of barns."

"We are excited and we are having fun with it." Kaptein said. "When I'm at a sales presentation for the buildings, you can see the excitement build in the room because people start to see all the ways they can use the buildings."

"I see these building as a new concept, except they are more versatile than most buildings," Brummel added. "They are one of the best-kept secrets out there. There's so many uses, they are blossoming and a lot more people are asking about Steel Framed Fabric Covered buildings."

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