

Howard businessmen to open hardware store in August

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Mike and Rick Hiltunen have owned Rusty's Grocery for the past 11 years. Rick Hiltunen said they are hoping to have the hardware store open on Main Street by Aug. 1.

The brothers have been renovating the old hardware store building, which has been vacant for the past 3-4 years. In the next month, they will be bringing in inventory and setting up the store.

Their products will be coming through United Hardware, which is affiliated with Hardware Hank.

Hiltunen said they decided to open a hardware store because they feel there's a need for one in Miner County.

"There hasn't been one for 3-4 years, and that was causing people to go out of town to get their hardware needs," he said.

As the owners of the local grocery store, they are aware that if people go out of town for one thing they also will tend to purchase gas, dinner and other items out of town as well.

Hiltunen said the key to staying competitive with stores in area towns is where they get their products.

"It all boils down to the wholesaler," he said, and being able to purchase products for the same price as area stores.

"We do price comparisons all the time," he said. "We're always right in the ball park."

To provide what people need, Hiltunen said he and his brother have been in contact with area contractors to see what supplies they need on a regular basis, and they have also asked community members what they want to see.

"The key to survival is controlling inventory," he said, indicating they can order what people need if it isn't available.

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— Rick Hiltunen

Hiltunen said they also plan to have additional inventory for the hunters and fishermen.

"One of our passions is the outdoors," he said. "We will try to fill some of those needs."

The store will also include a paint department featuring a computer program that will allow customers to modify digital photos of their rooms and see how new colors will look on the walls.

Other features will also include a small pet area and a clothing area with jeans, t-shirts and winter coats.

"MCCR (Miner County Community Revitalization) was one of the driving forces behind us going ahead with the store, if it wasn't for their help and guidance we wouldn't have got it done," Hiltunen said. "Bob Eastman has also been invaluable for us as far as his help."

