

Toy factory: Ken Wolf of Canton works on a fun woodworking project creating and painting one of several toy cars for children at Children's Hospital in Detroit. Each year volunteers from the Michigan Woodworkers Guild create hundreds of toys for the children. Wood 2001 helps the Guild raise money to purchase wheels and other supplies to build the toys.



Woodworkers
carve out
relaxation,
along with
toys and
furniture

BUILDING BEAUTY

BY KEN ABRAMCZYK • STAFF WRITER

Quiet, relaxing and rewarding, these are the things Ken Wolf of Canton likes about wood-

working.

He has built everything from a doll's bed to shelf units for

stereos, kitchen cabinets and storage chests.

"(Woodworking is) a pleasant change of pace from the pressures of day-to-day jobs," he said. "You come home and get away from the computer and meetings."

Wolf eventually joined the Michigan Woodworkers Guild and its 300-plus members who enjoy transforming blocks of wood into works of art or play.

They'll show off their craftsmanship and projects at the "Wood 2001" show noon-5 p.m. Sunday, March 11, at the Livonia Senior Center.

The woodworkers will display curio cabinets, hutches, grandfather clocks, woodcarvings and other items. Furniture displays will reflect different time periods, styles and types of wood. There is no admission charge, and parking is free.

Creative release

Bill Rigstad, president of the Michigan Woodworkers Guild and a Canton resident, said many retirees enjoy woodworking, but it acts as a release for working people.

"A lot of people do it for the relaxation," Rigstad said. "They get home from the office and work for a couple of hours to relieve the stress."

"These guys get raw lumber, they plane it, and when you end up with a piece of furniture, there's a lot of pride in that."

Woodworking is "great for people just to engage themselves in that activity," said John Sanchez of Dearborn. The show helps promote the group and helps obtain new members.

"Sometimes we'll get 20 or 30 new members who want to work with wood and need that push to join the group," he said.

Building your idea

Ed Stuckey of Detroit won an award in 1996 from American Woodworker magazine for his 18th Century secretary desk.

"It's relaxing to me and creative," Stuckey said. "I can design and build what I want." Stuckey has built beds, a table, coffee table and clocks.

"It provides a social avenue for woodworking, because it's a solitary hobby, and the guild helps you meet with other woodworkers," Stuckey said. "I enjoy sharing that knowledge and tips with other woodworkers."

Some woodworkers even turn the hobby into a business, Rigstad said. "You may be looking (at woodworking) to create a diversion, and there is an opportunity for retirees to do as much as they want or as little as they want," Rigstad said.

Toys hold a special place in woodworker's hearts. Guild member Tony Pietrzak initiated the toy program about 10 years ago.

In late summer and early fall, the woodworkers build hundreds of toys for patients at Children's Hospital in Detroit. Last year they delivered about 500 toys.

The woodworkers work at developing more efficient and productive methods. Last year Wolf created a master template. "That's so we could create more cars," he explained.

Sanchez added: "The sanding process is very critical because you don't want the kids to get splinters. It

is very time-consuming to sand it. We use acrylic paints that will be absorbed in the wood."

Rigstad remembers delivering the hand-crafted wooden toys in December.

"It's very gratifying," he said. "We started working on them in August, and to take them down and present them, it was very gratifying."

"You see a lot of sick kids and a toy can brighten their day a little bit."

A silent auction of toys and raffles of woodworking items Sunday will help the guild pay for axes and wheels for toy cars, buses and tractors.

"It's great because the kids will benefit," Wolf said. "And the other thing about the show is the fellowship with the other woodworkers of the Guild. We learn from each other."

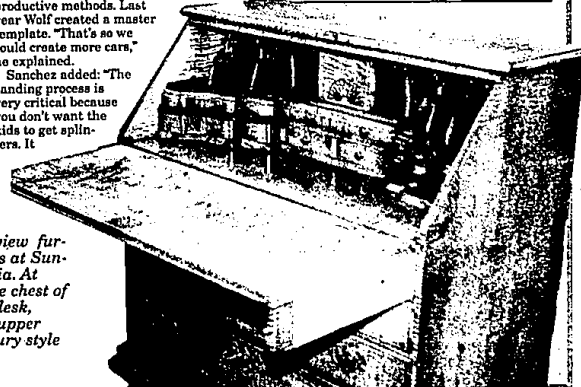
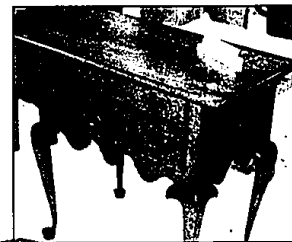
What: Wood 2001, a showcase of custom woodworking presented by the Michigan Woodworkers Guild, a non-profit organization. **Where:** Livonia Senior Center, 15228 Farmington Road, between Schoolcraft (I-96) and Five Mile Road, Livonia. **When:** Noon-5 p.m., Sunday, March 11. **Admission:** No charge. **Parking:** also is free. **Highlight:** A silent auction of toys will benefit Children's Hospital. Raffle tickets for \$1 will be available for prizes each hour. **■ The guild meets once a month in either Livonia or Royal Oak. Call Bill Rigstad at (734) 459-3374 for more information.**



Have a seat: Dan Reahard highlighted his two chairs with soft curves and decorative cuts and carvings.



Finishing touches: Visitors can view furniture created by guild members at Sunday's Wood 2001 show in Livonia. At left, Paul Doelle created this fine chest of drawers, Al Omand detailed a desk, right, and Ed Stuckey's table, upper right, also shows the 18th Century style he prefers in his furniture.



INSIDE



JOE GAGNON

Dishwasher explodes

An explosion on a U.S. Naval base had investigators looking at hydrogen, which sometimes collects in unused hot water systems.

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MARTY FIGLEY

Picking plants

The National Garden Bureau has declared 2001 the year of Basil and Centaurea.

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HOMETOWN LIFE:

Chili Cook-off:

First-time entrant Tom Smith won the 6th annual Chili Cook-off Sunday at Pages. See HomeTown Life, page 5