

the HC

Life in Hendricks County

WOOD
WORKERS
give the gift of
IMAGINATION



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**SHOP
SMALL
GETS
BIG**

A photograph of a rectangular cake decorated with white frosting and blue icing. A circular sign on the cake says "SHOP SMALL". Next to the cake is a small white snowman figurine wearing a brown hat.

**Q&A
WITH DR.
CHARLES
THOMAS**

A photograph of a plate of food, possibly a sandwich or burger, with two glasses of red wine in the foreground. The background is slightly blurred.

**NEW LOOK,
SAME SAL'S**





WOODWORKERS give the gift of *IMAGINATION*

By Melissa Gibson
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In 1948, the Home Craftsman Forum organized a club for people interested in carpentry or working with wood.

Today, 105 members belong to the newly named Central Indiana Woodworkers (CIWW). Members come from all over the state and some even reside out of state.

Bank presidents, sales managers, cabinet makers, and an assortment of other professionals make up the unique group that meets once a month for education and companionship.

Mick Keller, vice president of Charitable Activities, explained, "We have a twin focus: educating woodworkers — anybody on anything — and giving to charitable activities."

The charitable activity focus has local organizations and clubs talking.



Top: Central Indiana Woodworkers president Charlie Johnson, vice president Mick Keller and member Paul Grant are proud of the work they've been able to donate for underprivileged children.

Above: The Central Indiana Woodworkers organization has 75 members regularly contributing toward the toy making and distribution.

In 2013, the CIWW donated 8,611 toys to underprivileged children.

Seventy-five men and women work on toys throughout the year, and the CIWW works with more than 30 charity organizations to distribute the items.

"We look for agencies that have been approved by United

Way, with a 'B' rating or better for two consecutive years," Keller said. "We also look for member recommendations and for organizations like the Avon Optimist Club that can recommend organizations like Sheltering Wings."

The CIWW recently donated tissue boxes with animal cut

outs to Sheltering Wings in Danville. The organization supports women and their families who are escaping from domestic abuse.

Keller explains the power behind the simple gift.

"After building the tissue box with a mentor, the child (ren) can present the gift, saying, 'Here mommy, I've seen you cry lots of tears. I want you to know every time you pull a tissue out of here, we're thinking of having our own home again.'"

It's those emotional responses that the CIWW are accustomed to hearing after many years of toy making.

"We're so glad you're here again this year. The toys you brought last year are the only ones that aren't broken," are just a few of the comments the men have heard throughout the years.

Not every member of the group makes toys and to



Dubbed pick and pack day, the CIWW members gather to assemble donations. This marks the first year some charity organizations will pick up their donations versus having them delivered.

become a new member of the CIWW, toy making is not a requirement.

The group meets in Indianapolis on the third Wednesday evening of each month.

A typical meeting includes coffee and cookies, announcements, and 'show and tell' where members bring in work they're proud of or a project that has them stumped.

That evening, the group will brainstorm together suggesting ideas for the specific project and attempting to solve the dilemma.

This time is followed with an approximate 30-minute educational session.

Charlie Johnson, president of the CIWW, explains, "We get educated about what's available or new to the industry."

Members of the public are always welcome to attend the meetings with no pressure to join.

Education is always a key component to the CIWW meetings. Members are willing to help anyone with anything.

"No question is stupid," Keller said.

Johnson remembers a woman

that arrived at a meeting some time ago and told them that her husband had passed away. She wanted to learn how to use the tools he had and wanted to know if we'd teach her.

The CIWW looks forward to those occasions when they are able to help others.

"We are a really accommodating group of people that are willing to share," Keller said.

Each meeting also addresses a toy of the month. A variety of toys are brought to the distribution each year, as there are many children that receive a toy every year from the organization.

Almost all of the members work in their home shops and there are five individuals that open up their shop for a half a day a week to work on the toys together.

In a given week, the donations vary.

"We might get 20 cradles, 1000 animal cutouts, 50 airplanes and 200 treasure boxes," Keller said.

Volunteers are needed on all fronts of the organization.

Solely based on donations, the 501c3 non-profit looks to

individuals willing to donate wood from a tree cut down or a cabinet discarded.

In-kind donations allow the CIWW to produce pamphlets and information for the group and others.

The organization is always looking for workshop space, a place to hold group work sessions and events, and financial donations.

If interested in woodworking and making the toys, the men say it wouldn't take an individual an evening to learn how to make one of the basic patterns.

"If you have an interest in knowing more about it, than you have part of what it takes to do this," Johnson said.

Keller added, "Part of the stereotype we're trying to overcome is that this is something that takes a lot of time and something you shouldn't look into until after you're retired to get you out of the house."

Johnson agreed and added, "We're trying to [invite] young adults and teens. Pick what meeting you want to come to and nothing else is required of you."

Paul Grant, a long-time member of the Avon Optimist Club and five-year member of the CIWW, said finding people with similar interests and working on various projects is truly inspiring.

"I started working with wood when I was 8," he recalled. "Long about my 10th birthday, I wanted a jigsaw. My dad bought it. It was \$29.95, which was a lot of money in the '50s. He gave me a drill with a sanding pad on the end and I made things for my mom."

Today the giving continues and the gift is imagination.

The CIWW participate in an event for underprivileged children, featuring toys donated from various organizations. Patrons receive tickets to "purchase" a gift for their child(ren).

"[Parents] will come and pick up two cars because they want their child to be able to race," Keller said. "They use two thirds of their coupons to give their kids imaginations."

For more information regarding meetings, membership, or donations to the CIWW, visit the website at www.ciww.org.