

Guild of Oregon Woodworkers relocates to Multnomah Village

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

Ian Wilson, a local resident, owns a just a few woodworking tools and wants to build raised garden beds for a non-profit agency that focuses on sustainable gardening.

He is the first student to arrive this cold December morning at the Guild of Oregon Woodworkers "Green Card" class. It's called that because after passing the course, it allows you to work safely and correctly in the woodshop with many of tools.

Whether you're a beginner or an expert, the guild can help you improve your skills. There is an extensive and free library; monthly meetings, classes, and seminars; and volunteers work together side-by-side sharing their knowledge and camaraderie with each other.

Founded in 1978, many of the projects have helped other non-profit groups

with collaborative labor. In 2011, the guild donated 1,800 volunteer hours creating shelving units for the new Clackamas County Library.

Currently, students are finishing solid beech chest drawers for a 32-studio apartment unit in Vancouver which helps individuals get off the street and into homes and job skill classes.

When one first meets Gig Lewis, the president of the guild, one gets the impression that he means business and knows what he is talking about. He exudes a presence that makes anyone sit up and pay attention.

Lewis stresses safety and cleanliness: eye shields, ear plugs, and a mask to filter out wood dust particles. There is absolutely no food or drink allowed in the workshop.

A former Marine, Lewis is over six feet tall, with straight posture, crisped pressed shirt and slacks, and a clear, distinct and commanding voice. He makes sure everyone understands his

instructions and philosophy.

"All students in the Green Card class must first take an exam," Lewis instructed.

"Approximately 80 percent pass and you can take it over and over again until you pass."

The guild received a state-of-the-art Saw Stop™, donated by Roy Underhill of Tualatin, the inventor of the latest technology in table saws. These saws stop in 1/1000 of a second if coming into contact with a finger.

"Since 1978, we have had not one serious accident," Lewis said. "Sure, there have been a few sanded knuckles and minor scrapes that a Band-Aid couldn't take care of, but not one emergency room visit."

This morning the beginning class has approximately 25 students, 10 percent are women; the rest mostly older men, except Wilson. Membership is approximately 450 with 30 percent professionals, and 70 percent amateurs and hobbyists of various skill levels.

Membership starts at \$45 per year and grants students with a green card a set amount of hours to utilize the shop outside of class during the year.

Guild members have a variety of woodworking interests, including furniture design and construction, cabinet making, antique furniture restoration, turning, carving, and sculpture. This year there will be over 100 classes offered.

High school students under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

The woodshop space is donated by Greenline: a fine woodworking



Gig Lewis instructs new students on the safety and proper use of a table saw at the Guild of Oregon Woodworkers' new shop in Multnomah Village. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

business. Located at 7634 SW 34th Ave behind the Starbucks in Multnomah Village, the shop is immaculate with routers, jointers, table saws, sawdust vents, and sanders.

Wilson said he was nervous on test day and therefore didn't pass. "I plan on retaking it and become a member so I can help fulfill my goal in helping develop raised beds for those in need," he said.

"I have full confidence Mr. Wilson will pass the next time," Lewis responded. "We're here to help and learn from each other."

More information on the Guild can be found by contacting Gig Lewis at giglewis42@gmail.com, 503-646-7056, and www.guildoforegonwoodworkers.org.

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The most successful year to date in the history of the program was 2012, with 400+ registered cleanups, 92,500 volunteers nationwide, 3.5 million pounds of trash removed from American waterways, and 39,000 miles of waterway cleaned. The group is hoping 2013 will turn out to be another record year for the program.

CONTACTS: NRDC's "How to Clean Up Our Water," www.nrdc.org/water/pollution/gsteps.asp; American Rivers' National River Cleanup, www.americanrivers.org/take-action/cleanup.

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