



## Making sawdust? Remember woodshop's motto: 'If you make a mess, clean it up please'

By **Jolene Guzman**  
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — LeRoy Rempel said there has been talk of opening a hobby center — a woodshop — at Dallas Retirement Village (DRV) for not just years, but decades.

He said his brother worked in maintenance at DRV years ago and tried to establish a center, but there was never enough space.

"They've wanted one for years, but they never had a location," said Rempel, a DRV resident.

This month, that's changed, thanks to donations and the tireless effort of Rempel and fellow DRV resident Russ Thommen.

Recently, the DRV health service center was remodeled, adding a classroom for DRV's certified nurse's assistant classes. That left a modular building empty that DRV leaders thought might be perfect for the long-awaited "hobby center."

From that point, Thommen and Rempel went to work setting it up. Lifelong woodworkers, they were a perfect fit for the job.

"You and I have been making sawdust since we were young bucks," Rempel said to Thommen, smiling.

Rempel and Thommen's first focus with the center



LeRoy Rempel, left, and Russ Thommen were instrumental in setting up Dallas Retirement Village's hobby center.

was safety. Once all the tools were in place, they marked safety zones with black and yellow tape. They made it a center rule that no one uses power tools while working alone in the shop.

The center is neatly or-

ganized and clearly marked, a sign of the care they took in setting it up. Rempel alone put in about 140 hours working in the center since the project started in May.

"My wife said it felt like I went back to work," he said.

The center has a wide variety of tools and is open to all DRV residents capable of using the equipment.

"There's just about all the woodworking tools you would find in a regular woodshop," Rempel said.

JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

tools for the shop.

DRV hosted a grand opening on July 1, and Thommen and Rempel held an orientation after that, explaining safety and courtesy rules — like cleaning up after use. Since then, 30 people have used the shop and some have already claimed a cabinet to store their projects.

Both regular volunteers — they also take shifts driving a golf cart transporting people from building to building on DRV's campus — Thommen and Rempel like to stay busy. They said the hobby center adds one more way for residents to do just that.

"You can't just sit in your rocking chair all day," Rempel said.

The pair has plans for improving the center and upgrading the equipment when they can. They want to install more cabinets for frequent users and build a "finishing room" where people can paint or apply finish in properly ventilated area.

"So far, it's gone over well," Thommen said. "We anticipate more will use it as people come and go."

You will likely catch the two of them in the center working on projects — even Rempel, who has a shop in his garage.

"It's not essential, but it is nice," Thommen said.



Tools are labeled and have a place in the hobby center.



Donations of tools helped get the center up and running.



The center has a wide variety of tools ready for use.

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