

Woodworkers Guild

of

Southwestern Michigan December 2013

Next Meeting

Location

December 10th, 2013 7:00pm

**Al Collison's Shop at
10292 Douglas Ave.**

Take Douglas North to Cooper, it is 2 ½ miles North of Cooper, on the right (East) side. Or you can take 131 to D ave East to Douglas and turn left, (North). Al will have an orange cone and flashing light out to get your attention.

Agenda: Gary Foote from Woodcraft of Grand Rapids will be demonstrating dust collectors and educating us on the dangers of dust.



The November meeting was a road trip to Tillers International. There was a sizeable turn out of twenty five or more members and some first time guests.

The members were greeted by two five month old Oxen that have been in training together for more than two months. The Oxen yoke was a preview of the evening's discussion.



A brief business meeting was conducted by Bill Crown and the meeting was turned over to the feature presenters Chuck Andrews, John Sarge and Rob Burdick. Chuck gave an overview of Tillers and their mission for those not familiar with Tillers International. Tillers mission is built

around three elements. A training center, a museum and outreach of low-capital technology to provide sustainability and productivity to some of the poorest places on the planet. Much of this is centered on Oxen animal power and can provide a 1000 year leap in technology in some of the world's poorest places. The animals can survive there and raw wood materials and scrap iron from car parts can be found and turned into farm implements. The funding for Tillers comes mostly from private donations, the almost 100 classes offered each year on farming, blacksmithing, wood working, fibers and other areas interest to rural technologies. Corporate sponsors include Land-O-Lakes and USAID. Small focused grants come from the Gilmore Museum and the Kalamazoo Foundation.



Ralph Babcock made a challenge to the guild to match a gift of \$500 if the guild members would collectively donate \$500. Ralph has been a member of tillers for a couple of years.

By end of 2014, Tillers expects to have taught 10,000 students from all over the world the skills necessary for third world sustainability.

After the introduction the discussion switched over to the evenings featured presentation of yoke construction. The yoke constructed here are called the "American" yoke and is what comes to mind when most of us picture Oxen yoke.

This design is preferred as it fits the animal better, is more comfortable, allowing the animal to work a longer day, thus more productivity. The East African yoke is a much simpler design, but not as productive or comfortable for the animal. Rob is holding an East African yoke below.



Sometimes the design has to factor in the animal it is being constructed for. For example an animal with a hump would require a different yoke than an animal without a hump. Here in the United States cottonwood is the preferred material of choice due to its lack of splinters. Elm is also another strong wood to consider. Oak is avoided because of its splinters.

In Africa, they look for the smallest piece of timber to do the job. Deforestation is a big concern, so the goal is to promote most efficient use of the materials at hand and not the cutting of more trees.

The selected timer is roughed to shape and layout lines are added with a pencil.





After the layout, the holes are drilled before the shaping begins. Only animal and human power allowed. Once the holes are drilled the shaping work begins. All done with hand tools that can be constructed in the local communities.



There are many ways to approach the removal of the wood, such as saw kerfs and chisels, but in the places that Tillers goes to such a Mozambique or Uganda, a farmer may only have a machete or hoe. It was noted they can do impressive work with only basic tools like a machete or ax. After the roughing process the finer hand tools are used to achieve the final shape.



A number of members went on to tour the Tillers Museum.

Many thanks to Chuck, John, Rob and Zeke for an enlightening and informative evening on how simple technology can improve the lives of

people throughout the world.

Guild Officers

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Vice President - Al Collison	685-8428
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Woodworkers Guild of S.W. Michigan

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