



# MINNESOTA WOODWORKERS GUILD

Newsletter

V1-N3, March 2026

## **Editor's Note**

- Ed Estlow

In light of the issues some of you encountered with the February newsletter, we're trying a different approach. We believe the cause of the problem was the overall length of the newsletter or the overall file size of the email. To avoid these potential problems, I'm emailing this brief introduction to you, and the full newsletter will be located on the Guild website:

[Minnesota Woodworkers Guild](#)

Thanks to all who submitted a proposed name for this newsletter! We've chosen seven finalists to put to the membership for a final vote. Here's the link to vote for your favorite:

<https://forms.gle/7T1aqxLkmcycq4eWT8>

Tune in next month to discover the winner!

As I write this there's a huge blizzard raging outside my window. It's noon on Sunday and the first plow just went by. I think that means there will be six more hours (hopefully not feet!) of snow. Hope you're snug in your shop or better yet, in front of the fireplace reading this newsletter!

This month we've got

- Paul Ehrlich's President's Message,
- An update on Todd Laubach's leadership in the important and meaningful work of MNWWG volunteers creating memory and neonatal loss boxes for area hospitals,
- Featured Guild supporters in Southern Minnesota,
- An update on the Education Committee's offerings from Khriisslyn Goodman,
- And an early heads-up on the October 2026 Woodworker's Expo

## President's Message

- Paul Ehrlich

This is always a challenging time of year as we move between Spring like days and the final snows of winter – it sure is a great time to be in the shop!

**Northern Woods:** There is a lot going on in the Guild as we prepare for the annual Northern Woods Exhibition coming up on April 23 – 26 at Eden Prairie Center. If you are interested in entering, please note that the deadline is April 15, 2026. We also are looking for volunteers to help with setup, staffing, tear down, etc. See <https://mnwwg.org/northern-woods-exhibition/> for details.

**Programs:** We had a great program for March with Tom Caspar who helped explain the difference between the “figure” and the “grain” of wood and how this impacts the design and construction of a piece. The session was live streamed over YouTube and is available for viewing on the Guild’s YouTube channel. Note that there is not a program scheduled for April since we have the Northern Woods Exhibition.

**Education:** The online class for SketchUp has just completed and the initial reviews are very positive. We are going to continue to offer more classes both online and in person. Please see <https://mnwwg.org/classes-guild-taught/> for updates.

**Special Interest Groups:** The guild has several special interest groups (SIGs) that are member led and are focused on a specific topic. In this month’s newsletter we have an article about the Box making and CNC SIGS that are working on making memory and memorial boxes. See <https://mnwwg.org/special-interest-groups#about> for more details.

**Board Updates:** The Guild has a very active board that is focused on making sure everything goes smoothly with the organization. The board is now working on a three-year Strategic Plan. The plan is emphasizing continuing to support great events like Northern Woods and Expo and building on education and support for volunteers. We will be having a few openings on our board – if you are interested in serving, please contact me at [President@MNWWG.ORG](mailto:President@MNWWG.ORG)

## Memory and Neonatal Loss Box Update

As you may know, one of the Guild’s ongoing programs is building wooden boxes for use by local and regional hospitals. These include memory boxes given to families of pediatric cancer patients, as well as boxes used for a ceremony for families grieving a neonatal loss.

## Memory Boxes

The memory box SIG, led by Todd Laubach built 57 boxes. These were distributed to three area hospitals: Essentia Duluth, Mayo, and North Memorial. Eight additional boxes were delivered to North Memorial in January 2026. Requests from Mayo and Essentia were off from 2024, but North Memorial's requests went up, and the overall program remains strong.

Creative design and workmanship were exquisite with these boxes as you will see in the photos below. They will be much appreciated by the recipients during a tough time.

Special thanks to Jay Schultz for helping Todd with the entire effort, including deliveries. Thanks too, to all the Guild members who stepped up to volunteer to build and donate boxes.

Last, Todd is stepping down as coordinator of the Memory Box SIG. Two folks have graciously volunteered to lead the program, Jay Ankeny and Ken Jones. Jay and Ken will share the various responsibilities of leadership. Here's their contact information:

Jay Ankeny  
320-290-3579  
jankeny@jetup.net

Ken Jones  
612-418-7779  
ken.jones377@gmail.com

## Boxes for Neonatal Loss

The CNC SIG was requested to build special boxes that would be used by the Duluth Essentia Hospital Grief Group as part of a ceremony for families that have had a neonatal loss. In 2025 the group built 24 of these boxes and the group is currently working on a similar number for delivery this Spring.

If you are interested in being part of this project, please contact:

Donavan Cummings (CNC SIG Lead)  
651-402-3000  
[donavan@donavanshomes.com](mailto:donavan@donavanshomes.com)



*24 boxes were built by the CNC SIG group*

We delivered boxes to Duluth Essentia and North Memorial in May.



*Close-ups of the exterior and interior of one of the boxes*



On May 24th Janet Totter delivered four boxes she made for the program to Jennifer Burgers at North Memorial. Nine more boxes were delivered to Jennifer at North Memorial in August, and another eight in early November.

## Woodworkers Expo



The Woodworkers Expo was held on October 11. Boxes that had been made but not delivered yet were on display. It was great to talk to so many people and several new members signed up for the SIG.

Finally, as mentioned above, one additional delivery to North Memorial occurred in early January 2026.

Thank you all again for working with Todd, building and donating boxes for this great program. You have made a difference!

### **Minnesota Woodworkers Guild Supporters**

- George Lucas

I recently visited number of our supporters in southern Minnesota. Do not believe that all our supporters are in the Twin Cities metro area, we have supporters all over Minnesota and even surrounding states. The southern Minnesota supporters I visited are all happy to see members of the Minnesota Woodworkers Guild and all have good deals for them.

Here are some of the supporters in southern Minnesota and the deals that they give members of the Minnesota Woodworkers Guild.



Root River Hardwoods, Albert Lea MN

Root River Hardwoods in Albert Lea has a broad selection of hardwood lumber that you can select from the stacks. They have both domestic and tropical hardwood lumber. They will give you a 15% discount when you show your valid guild membership card.



Vetsch Hardwoods, Rochester MN

Vetsch Hardwoods has a vast selection of domestic and tropical hardwoods as well as various hardwood veneered plywood. They will give guild members free milling and wholesale pricing on purchases of 100 BF or more (can mix species and grades). You must show a valid guild membership card.



Acme Tools, Rochester MN

**ACME TOOLS**

This is a new store (opened in late summer of 2025) in Rochester. It has a huge selection of any type of tools and accessories that a woodworker may want. They will give guild members 10% off accessories and hand tools. Good for in-store purchases only. You must provide a discount code. The discount code is available after you log in to your account through the [Member Center](#). Click on the box labeled "Discount Codes."



Hirshfield's Rochester MN

Hirshfields has a wide selection of stains and varnished as well as paints, wall coverings, and finishing supplies. They will give guild members their Contractor's Discount. (wholesale pricing) If the stores cannot find the Guild name listed under discounts you can locate the Hirshfield's Discount Code of the Guild's website. Login to your [Member Center](#) account and click on the "Discount Codes" box. You must show a valid guild membership card.

Sherwin Williams:

Rochester, Winona, Albert Lea, Austin,  
Owatonna, Mankato MN



Sherwin Williams has multiple stores in southern Minnesota, including three in Rochester. They have a complete line of paint and finishes – water-base, lacquer, alkyd, acrylic, shellac and polyurethane based. Guild members receive the contractor’s discount. This varies by product but is often 20-30%. You must provide an account number at checkout. The account number is available after you log in to your account through the [Member Center](#). Click on the box labeled “Discount Codes.”



[Abrasive Industrial Supplies, Winona MN](#)

AIS can supply all your sanding belts and disks. They are a mail-order house that can ship small quantities (minimum quantity may be only 1-4 belts depending on the size) of high quality of belts and disks. They offer free shipping for all guild members. You must have your guild card and number available when you order.

## **Education**

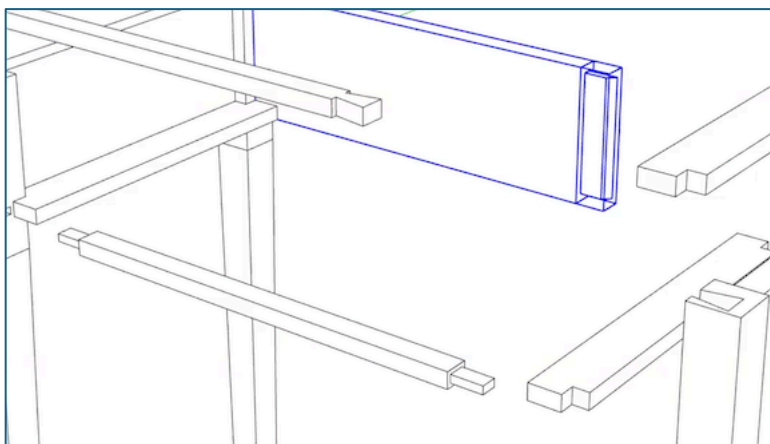
Khrisslyn Goodman

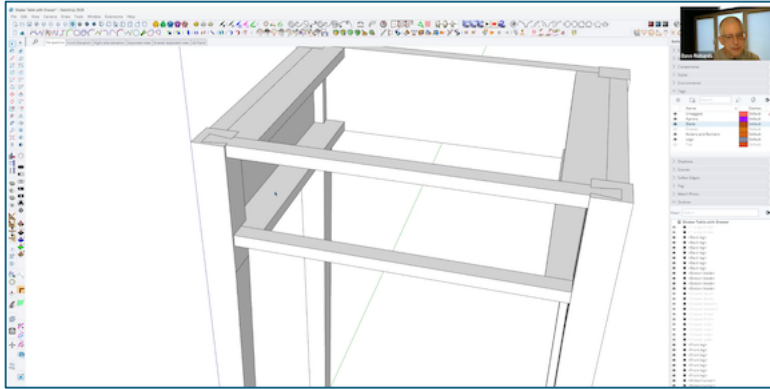
Welcome back to the education segment of the newsletter, brought to you by the Education Committee: Dave Duddleston, George Thomas, John Madsen, Khrisslyn Goodman, Mike Bierscheid, Norbert Nielubowski, Paul Ehrlich, and Taliesin Nyala.

### Classes

We have much to report this month, beginning with the conclusion of our first class. SketchUp, the focus of our first class, is software for 3-D modeling. As digital design was one of the most desired areas of learning from our February 2025 member survey, this is where we started.

Here are some sample images from SketchUp:





We are thankful that Dave Richards, of Fine Woodworking fame and located in Rochester, kicked off our education programming in such a professional and engaging way! In early returns of our end-of-course survey, 100% of participants had their expectations for the course met AND are interested in a follow up course to go deeper!

SketchUp is of course not the only 3-D modeling software out there, and a companion class in Fusion which will be taught by Brad Tallis is being planned for Saturday afternoons in May. As we did with the SketchUp class, Brad will offer a 30-minute introduction to Fusion video online so that you can preview the content to help you make your decision about taking part. When the preview video is ready, we will send that out with a class registration link.

Going a little bit further into the summer, we have a Guild hand tool class which will be hosted at Sheer Craft in St. Paul. The dates will be Mondays and Wednesdays, July 8th-22 (5 sessions) 6pm-9pm. The total cost of the class will be \$340 instruction and \$130 for materials (\$470 total) per person for a group of 6. Watch for sign-ups coming soon!

### PDF Resource Library

Education Committee member John Madsen has composed a number of handy resources in PDF format on a number of topics from wood glues & adhesives to basic necessities as you might be starting up your own shop. We'll continue to grow the collection in alignment with our course offerings. In the meantime, follow the link below to have a peek!

<https://mnwwg.org/reference-revised-2026/>

### Minnesota State Fair Demonstration Day

For the first time last year, the Guild was able to participate in demonstrating at the fair for a day. We were located in the Education Building, and the event gave us the opportunity to share about the Guild, showcase the woodworking of our members, and demonstrate our craft with fairgoers. It was such a fun and inspiring day!

Last year's success was possible because so many Guild members helped in so many ways: getting advertising out, making signs, demonstrating (we had 11 one-hour demonstrations!), setting up A/V equipment, staging materials the day prior to the event, talking to fairgoers, and disassembling at the end of the event.

This year we will have an expanded footprint at the fair meaning that we can offer not only Guild member demonstrations, but also the opportunity for kids (and adults!) to try their hand at woodworking, similar to what we have done at the Expo with the kids' projects.

Although this event is five months in the future and we don't yet have our exact date, **please contact Khriisslyn ([kgoodman@mnwwg.org](mailto:kgoodman@mnwwg.org)) if you are interested in being a part of the day.** You don't need to dedicate your whole day to the Guild; just a few hours would be great.

### **2026 Woodworkers Expo**

- Norbert Nielubowski

It's not too early to save the date for the 7th Minnesota Woodworkers Guild Expo on October 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> at the beautiful Minnesota State Fairgrounds Progress Center. We are adding a second day of activities on Friday October 16<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon and evening - stay tuned for more details!



Registration is now open if you would like to become an exhibitor – retailers, makers, and educators are all welcome!