

December 2012

Miles of Smiles

Volume 1

Toys for God's Kids Newsletter

Number 2

Features in this Issue

Making Toys for Children	Page 1
Spreading God's Love	Page 3
Smilemaker Report	Page 7
Photos That Make Us Smile	Page 10

Making Toys for Children

Armed with machine building skills developed during a long professional career as a manufacturer of precision parts for the aerospace industry and the medical surgical community, retired Tri-Lakes resident Ed Vanderhorst now applies many of those same skills to build simple wood toy cars. But the paradox isn't quite as extreme as it might seem at first glance. He explains that, although the materials are different and tolerances are much less demanding, many of the same manufacturing concepts still apply. He approaches this project of toy building with the same determination that drove him throughout his very successful career.



Vanderhorst is a volunteer with Toys for God's Kids, a non-profit based in Denver. Volunteers from across the country create simple wooden cars that are given to underprivileged kids throughout the world by a variety of non-profit agencies, non-governmental organizations, and even members of the US armed forces. These toys, prominently stamped "USA," bring smiles to the many kids who receive them.

But unlike the typical volunteer who crafts perhaps a dozen toys at a time, Vanderhorst's background in precision machining and large production has him set on

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

a goal of possibly doubling the current total annual output of toy cars for the entire non-profit organization.

In his well-equipped machine shop at his King's Deer home, Vanderhorst spends hours designing tools, jigs and innovative machines that will create the little wooden cars with unparalleled precision in rapid succession. For weeks he has been designing and refining prototype machines to get the finest possible product produced with the most efficient process. He explains, "When tools are idle, productive time is wasted that could have been creating more toys." Thus, he focuses on each phase of the multi-step manufacturing process to figure out how to develop a more efficient product flow through the entire manufacturing process.

As an example of his efforts, he proudly displays a pantograph he designed and built. The pantograph transforms a rough-cut block of wood into a fine, flawless finished car in under a minute, eliminating about 15 minutes of very tedious hand finishing.

When asked of his anticipated production run, Vanderhorst smiles and says, "tens of thousands." This is why efficiency of production is so important to him. But equally important to his plans is acquiring an ample supply of lumber. He has been able to get some donations of scrap lumber from a local staircase manufacturer. Scrap hardwoods from flooring and cabinet makers is also needed. The sheer size of his planned production run will require many volunteers to help in a variety of tasks, from sorting scrap lumber, to gluing wheels on axles, to wood burning each car with "USA" and packaging the finished product for delivery. Finding volunteers to help with this project might be the biggest challenge of all.

If you are interested in helping support this ambitious project, either thorough donating materials or donating time, please contact the *Senior Beat* by phone at 464-6873 or by email at SeniorBeat@TriLakesSeniors.org and we'll pass your information on to him. Learn out more about the Toys for God's Kids at their website, www.toysforgodskids.com.

This article was originally printed in the July 2012 issue of Senior Beat, the official newsletter of the Tri-Lakes Seniors Health Advocacy. We thank them for granting permission to republish it.

Notes from the Board of Directors

Marlin Dorhout -- President

At the end of another year, as I reflect on the work of TFGK, I marvel at all the kindness and generosity that has been instrumental in helping us achieve our missions. Many of you have heard me say, "I meet the nicest people in this job." It's true, and it's what keeps me going. I trust it inspires you as well. And so you can appreciate what I'm talking about. Allow me, please, to list a few examples.

There's the electrician who gave of his time and materials to ensure our shop was properly wired, the engineer who constantly tends to the machinery and equipment to keep it all operating, the inventor who improves the process, the entrepreneurs who take it upon themselves to create whole new production systems, the individuals who start up new production cells with little or no supervision, and the creators who take ideas and designs to new levels.

We have suppliers who not only let us interrupt their business for us to scrounge through their workshops for scrap wood, they help us look, and if there isn't enough to warrant our trip, they give us a little off the shelf. There are business people who use their connections to obtain stuff at cost, and then just buy it to donate that product to TFGK. Or, they just buy at retail and donate items we need because they want to help. Of course, many of you have given money, as well as your time. That is certainly most appropriate and very, very nice.

We have received dozens of pieces of woodworking equipment over the years that have been immensely important in our work. People have transported toys and supplies long distances and charged us a mere, "thank you."

Our computer work has all been accomplished by volunteers but is still of the highest quality. Facebook is maintained by a volunteer. Much of our printing has been done at cost. The prizes for our golf tournament and other awards are mostly handmade.

Every month there are groups of volunteers who help residents of nursing and group homes assemble cars. In my mind, that deed squares exactly with the command, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." It doesn't get any better.

But, actually it does. Dozens of you "work" every day making 100's and 1,000's of cars so some kid, somewhere, somehow, has a gift that shows someone cares. And getting that message of caring is the essence of our mission. Not only does it generate a feeling of self-worth in a child, but, more importantly, it lets them know they are one of God's kids. Thanks you so much, all of you, for getting that message to, now, over 500,000 kids. We are extremely blessed.

Spreading God's Love Around the World

by Dick Lautenbach

I thank the Lord that Marlin has given me the opportunity to be an Ambassador for "Toys for God's Kids." This ambassadorship has given me a variety of situations to this exciting ministry.



We thank the Smilemakers for providing us with these neat cars.

An opportunity to increase production of toys presented itself when my cousin Bill Van Zante sold his Pella, Iowa, manufacturing business. I showed Bill the "Toys for God's Kids" brochure and a couple of different car models and Bill said, "I can make these." He bought a new machine, and he and volunteers now manufacture toys five days a week in Pella. These toys are now being taken to several countries by representatives of Pella Churches.

I'm also now working on a possible Holland, Michigan, connection through Bonnie's nephew to build toys. Please pray that this will work out because it could be huge.

Another exciting presentation I made a couple of years ago was to Franklin Graham's Operation Christmas Child. I said I thought it would be nice if we could include a toy in each Operation Christmas Child box that goes to kids all over the world. Since then, our Operation Christmas Child connection has given us tremendous opportunities to provide smiles worldwide. We are now sending toys to the Denver and Minneapolis distribution centers of Operation Christmas Child as well as to several Denver area churches that ask for toys to be included in the boxes that they make up.

My wife Bonnie and I have also had the privilege of taking toys to several different countries on our "Vacations with a Purpose." Our mission is two-fold: to encourage contacts we make in our travels to consider joining Toys for God's Kids as well as to distribute cars. (When we distribute toys, we also like to include a gospel tract with each car.)

Several contacts we have made are with Teen Challenge in Australia, Poland, and the Netherlands.

Let me tell you of an incident that was related to me when we were in Latvia last May and visited Operation Christmas Child's representative there to ask about including

Continued on Page 5

Continued from Page 4

cars in their boxes. Pastor of an evangelical church, he and his wife distribute thousands of Operation Christmas Child boxes before Christmas each year. I gave the pastor, his wife, and children sample cars. The pastor's wife started to cry. I asked her why she was crying and she said, "Let me tell you a true story." She related that when they were distributing boxes in a small Latvian village near the Russian border, she noticed a little girl open her box. She said the first thing she pulled out was a wooden car stamped with "Toys for God's Kids" on the underside and USA on the back. Praise God, that little car had travelled so many miles and made a poor little girl in a village in Latvia smile.

(Just for the record, Operation Christmas Child ships the boxes in large containers to recipients all over the world from a distribution point in "The Old Country," the Netherlands. Their customs give Operation Christmas Child no problems with importation and also, because the Netherlands is parts of the European Union, the Christmas Child boxes can cross into other European Union countries with no difficulties.)

In September 2012, our "Vacation with a Purpose" took Bonnie and me to Mongolia. Mongolia, a former Soviet Republic member, is emerging as a pretty successful democracy, despite Soviet restrictions still in place on outside Christian mission activities. Operation Christmas Child, however, has been approved to distribute boxes there because it is classified as a humanitarian effort.

November found us celebrating Thanksgiving with some of our grandchildren and five great grandchildren in Mexico. They had the privilege of giving cars to poor children on the streets of Mazatlan.

Needless to say, toy makers, toy shippers, toy distributors, and toy recipients all share an unspeakable joy and we thank the Lord for that.

March 2012 Preview

A story in the March issue will focus on another Ambassador of Toys for God's Kids. If you have been designated an Ambassador for TFGK's we'd like to hear from you. Send us a description of your duties, and we'll include your information in our story. Send information to LKitchen1@hotmail.com If you would like to mail your information, send it to Faye Kitchen, 61 Toppler Drive, Castle Pines, CO, 80108

TOYS FOR GOD'S KIDS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Berger	Treasurer	gsbperfectharmony@comcast.net
Marlene Dorhout	Board Member	toysforgodskidskids@aol.com
Marlin Dorhout	President	toysforgodskids@aol.com
Lawrence Kitchen	Board Member	lkitchen@chicagobooth.edu
Jerry Krupp	Board Chairman	rkrupp16@aol.com
Rita Krupp	Secretary	rkrupp16@aol.com
Andy Morris	Board Member	jamorr6964@gmail.com
Dutch Van Maaren	Board Member	dutch7179@comcast.net



Board of Directors: (Left to Right) Standing: Marlin Dorhout; Dutch Van Maaren; Lawrence Kitchen; Dave Berger Sitting: Marlene Dorhout; Andy Morris; Jerry Krupp; Rita Krupp

photo by Gloria Berger

SMILEMAKER REPORTS

Bill Van Zante

I was born and raised on a farm in the Pella, Iowa, area and spent 30 years there. After we left the farm in 1960, my wife and I moved to Pella and started a manufacturing business. I ran the business for 52 years with 30 – 40 employees; then, at the tender age of 83, I sold the business. I began searching for something to do with my idle time.

Shortly after the sale, I purchased a building to store my tractors, trucks, and other equipment. It had a nice room which was heated and air conditioned which could be used for a nice shop. One day when my cousin Dick Lautenbach was in town, he told me about some small wooden cars being made by Marlin Dorhout in Colorado. This attracted my attention and my interest. I thought that 52 years of experience in the manufacturing business would be of value in the production of wooden cars. Further conversations with Marlin convinced me to give it a try. Marlin gave me samples and patterns to begin, so I invested in tooling to begin production of “Toys for God’s Kids.”

Ray Van Dyke, my son and I have made some 12,000 cars. Of these, 7,000 have been given away to organizations and people in our community and 5,000 are in inventory. The wood we get, all free, is used to make the bodies and wheels. We purchase dowels to make the axles.

We get drop off wood for the car bodies from a rafter manufacturer. It comes to us 1 ½ inches thick, 6, 8, 10, or 12 inches wide, and 2 – 4 foot lengths. This is sawed into 1 ½” x 1 5/8” pieces and then cut into bodies with a CNC mill. We can produce 60 bodies per hour. We have six different car body designs entered into the CNC program. All leftover scrap wood as well as sawdust is sent to American Wood Fibers where it is processed into sawdust, so nothing goes to waste.

The whole process, from raw material to finished cars is done in our shop. The cars are packed in boxes of 150 each, ready for delivery. We dedicate 18 hours per week (3 – 6 hours per day) to making toys, leaving time for other activities. The tools we use are basic: saw drill press, router, and sanders. We turn all the wheels on a mandrill at 400 RPM to sand them round and smooth. We have made about 48,000 wheels this way.

It has been fun making toys and the feedback from the kids has been very rewarding. If any toy makers are traveling through Pella, feel free to stop in at VZ Enterprises.

Continued on Page 8

Cutting Bodies with the CNC Machine



Bill in His Workshop



Bill's Workshop Setup



SMILEMAKERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

We realize that there are many Smilemakers who are not getting credit for all the work that they do for Toys for God's Kids, simply because nobody knows what they do or how involved they are. We would like to recognize these Smilemakers in future issues of Miles of Smiles. If you know of Smilemakers who need recognition, send us their names so that we can interview them.

We also need your group's Smilemaker report. Below are some questions to get you started. When you're finished with your report, email it to us at LKitchen1@hotmail.com Or if you prefer to mail your report, please send it to: Toys for God's Kids, 61 Toppler Drive, Castle Pines, CO 80108. Thanks for your help.

Where are you located?

How many Smilemakers are in your group and what are their names?

Explain what you do. Are you a body maker, assembler, distributor, etc.

Do you participate in any Senior Center Activities to produce cars?

Where do you donate your cars?

Do you have photos you can share?

What special things would you like us to know about your group?

How can we provide better support?

What else would you like us to know?



Stan and Terry Furce



Eldon Peters

March 2013 Newsletter

Do you have photos from Your Smilemaker's group Holiday party? We would like to include them in our next issue. Email them to: LKitchen1@hotmail.com or mail them to Faye Kitchen, 61 Toppler Drive, Castle Pines, Colorado, 80108



John and Betty Stitzel