

## Business, artist share passion for woodcraft

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It might be scrap wood stacked by the roadside for pickup, or maybe the debris from a building renovation -- nothing anyone would want. To Lucas VanSickle, there's one more life remaining in that cast-off material.

He may see a small table, a bench or maybe fine hardwoods combined to form a cutting board for the kitchen. That's how his business, Tire Swing Designs, got started in Tallahassee. The LeMoyne Chain of Parks Art Festival that begins today is VanSickle's first art show.

A civil engineer by training, VanSickle lost his job in 2009 as a forensic scientist and accident investigator. He had some past experience in cabinetry and architectural mill work, "so I have always tinkered around with it," he said. Eventually, he decided that working in wood was the next direction for him in terms of a vocation.

"All the wood I use is recycled and refurbished," he said. "To me, as a logical, free-thinking human, that makes the best sense. And often that's where the best pieces come from."

VanSickle started Tire Swing Designs a year ago, and it has slowly taken off -- but not without a lot of hours, sweat and toil, he adds.

Helping him along the way has been artist Robert Hargrave in Railroad Square, as well as Arthur and Pamela Aveling at King Arthur's Tools, maker and distributor of woodcutting and carving products.

The Avelings know what it's like to get a business off the ground, and their company has a unique bond with artists whose medium is wood. "Their want and desire to help anyone who's doing what they do is phenomenal," VanSickle said. They even loaned him some tools to get started, when there was no cash for equipment.

For those who want to learn more about woodcraft and even try their hand at it, the Avelings opened the Camelot Workworking Studio at their business on Hartsfield Road. Woodcarver Maverick Jaillert has taught four classes, and sessions are filled to capacity.

"It's part of our mission and our goal to support woodworkers in the community," Pamela Aveling said. "We have also bought lathes, so we will be teaching wood turning as well as wood carving." As the studio develops, the Avelings will be inviting some of the world's finest wood crafters to Tallahassee to teach classes.

They have high hopes for Lucas VanSickle and Tire Swing Designs. "Lucas is very talented," Arthur says. "He's going to be a great artist."