

Planting a Seed Yields Unforeseen Results

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Acorns into Mighty Oaks

...When I leave this world I hope
I leave a better place
Where deeds I've done
And paths I've trod
Have helped the human race;

Where seeds I've sown will blossom still
And trees I've planted grow
From acorns into mighty oaks
I hope I've made it so. “

It seems a version of this old poem has come true recently as a project to help veterans in the Spokane area had a positive effect for a craftsman in Transylvania.

#1 - The creation of the Vets' Garage:

Eight years ago, some veterans in Spokane got together and created a group called the Vets' Garage. The goal for the Vets' Garage was to create a place for veterans to meet and have fun while learning useful (and possibly employable) skills like woodworking, car repair, computer rebuilding. All veterans were welcome, but there was a special focus on those vets suffering from PTSD. Professional counseling was available, but therapy was also provided by the act of having veterans teaching other vets.

#2 - CNC routing emerges as a main part of woodworking production at the Vets' garage

One area where the Vets Garage shines is CNC (Computer Numeric Control) routing. This is computer-controlled woodworking that allows digital drawings to be transformed into a variety of wooden objects such as furniture, plaques, or toys. A sheet of wood, like plywood, is loaded onto a large table with machine guides. A computer program starts the process of carving a three-dimensional copy of a digital drawing in the plywood. There is an ever-growing demand for woodworker/technicians who can master this skill.



Elemér Pető holds one of his custom bowls fashioned on his homemade router duplicator

#3 - Two local churches in Spokane partner with a small village church in Romania.

Many members from the Unitarian Universalist Church and the Westminster United Church of Christ have been privileged to visit the small Hungarian-speaking town called Felsőrákos in Hungarian or Racoșul de Sus in Romanian and get a glimpse of rural life in a village. We benefit from the travel and meeting these wonderful people with their different pace of life. While Romania is a modern European country with computers and cell phones, there are also wood-burning stoves, horse-drawn carts, foot-powered looms, and water-powered stone wheels to grind the grain.

#4. Elemér Petö and his family come to Spokane in Feb 2017

Spokane visitors to Transylvania have met many warm wonderful people including Elemér, a clever woodworker who happens to be the very long-time President of the Felsőrákos Unitarian Church board. The two churches helped bring Elemér and his family to Spokane for a visit. The Partner Church Teams got together to think of local places and activities that the Transylvanian family would enjoy. These included visiting special restaurants, seeing local artistry, folk dancing, and other activities. Since Elemér was a skilled wood worker, we thought he might like to see the CNC router at the Vets' Garage and see a high-tech version of woodworking. Elemér watched the machine carefully, noting how quickly and accurately a design can be duplicated.

#5. We made a far greater impression than we realized.

No one who was at Vets' Garage the day of Elemér's visit realized how great an impression the CNC router made on Elemér. When he got back to Felsőrákos, he built a mechanical device similar to the CNC router. Elemér created his router duplicator from spare parts and pieces that were available to him. As he traces a wooden model with one side of his device, mechanical arms control a nearby router that is cutting out a copy a couple of feet away. His device will allow a skilled craftsman to duplicate a design in wood but does not use a computer. Elemér's table set-up speeds up the recreation of wooden objects and opens the door to greater productivity and profits. He has created fancy wooden serving trays for a nearby restaurant. Very clever!



Elemér uses the router to create bowls



Full platter is a tribute to post-World War I dismemberment of Hungary

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This is a good example of how small things grow. The small seed-like efforts that started the Vets' Garage have helped many Vets. Two churches sponsoring a family visit have reached across the waters to make friends. The idea of a high-tech router in the United States led to production, pride and some small profits in our partner church village of Felsőrákos.