

NEWS & VIEWS

By Sharon Hambrick



Pen turning with a mission

Over the past three years a unique pen turning program founded by Larry Beckwith at the Arborwood Assisted Living Center in Granger, Indiana, has spread to three states, and a new program is on the horizon in another state at the time of this writing (Sept. 15, 2008).

Beckwith and the Penwright program were profiled in the Oct/Nov 2006 issue of *Woodcraft Magazine*. That story, “From the Hands of Alzheimer’s,” and the accompanying pen tool making instructions are included here along with information about the people who accepted Beckwith’s challenge and started their own programs.

What makes the Penwright program unique, aside from the lack of power tools, is the effect it has not only on Alzheimer’s patients but also on other nursing home residents whose activities are restricted by their physical conditions. Beckwith and Arborwood life enrichment coordinator Patty Piechocki found early on that residents who turned pens reaped psychological, social, and health benefits. The activity gives residents something they can do—make pens for themselves or others—while keeping mentally and, to some degree, physically active. It also develops a sense of camaraderie as residents share the pen turning activity.

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Lozano's award brings national attention to unique program

When Dannis Lozano accepted the Jefferson Award for community service at a June 2008 ceremony in Washington, D.C., he brought national attention to a program that introduces nursing home residents to wooden pen turning, minus power tools—a concept created by Larry Beckwith and featured in *Woodcraft Magazine* (Oct/Nov 06). Lozano's work with the program led to his selection for the award.



Dannis Lozano

Beckwith's goal in bringing pen turning to Alzheimer's patients in the South Bend, Indiana, area was to give them something they could accomplish. He hoped the magazine publicity would entice other woodworkers to begin their own programs.

In Dublin, Texas, Lozano read about Beckwith and accepted his challenge on a large scale. He contacted area nursing homes and made tools and workstations (eight for each home) so that interested residents could transform square blanks of wood into beautiful pens. Eventually he extended the program to include 14 facilities in several area towns where participants have turned more than 500 pens. Lozano charges only a small fee for the pen mechanisms and pays for materials by selling his turned salad bowls, candlestick holders, and platters. If requested, he also engraves pens free of charge using a new engraving machine he purchased.

On April 24, 2008, Lozano was one of 10 semifinalists who received the Jefferson Award at a ceremony in Abilene, Texas, for his work with the pen turning program. Ida Smith, activity director

for Homestead Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Gorman, Texas, nominated Lozano for the award, which is sponsored at the local level by the Abilene Reporter-News and KTXS-TV in conjunction with the Nonprofit Management Center at Abilene Christian University. In June 2008 Lozano traveled to Washington, D.C., where he and 75 other winners from across the country accepted the Jefferson Awards for Public Service given at the national level by the American Institute of Public Service.

Lozano's volunteer work began many years ago while in the U.S. Navy and later the U.S. Coast Guard. Now retired from his own plumbing business, Lozano continues to help senior citizens on fixed incomes by doing plumbing free of charge.

(A shorter version of this article appeared in the Oct/Nov 08 issue of *Woodcraft Magazine*.)

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Residents at Homestead Nursing and Rehab in Gorman, Texas, use Dannis Lozano's workstations and tools to turn wooden pens.

Larry Beckwith and the Arborwood Penwrights: recognition and expansion

Since Larry Beckwith introduced pen turning to the Arborwood Assisted Living Center in Granger, Indiana, in January of 2005, both he and the program have earned recognition for their efforts. At the same time Larry and the Penwrights have worked to bring the program to others in the community.

Recognition

Beckwith is one of five people from throughout the United States selected by the Assisted Living Federation of America for the 2008 Volunteer Hero Award. Patty Piechocki, Arborwood life enrichment coordinator, nominated Beckwith for the award.

In her recommendation letter, Piechocki wrote about the program participants: "Staff members of Arborwood Living Center started to notice a change in behaviors of the residents—they were always out of their rooms. Friendships were forming in response to the group. Members reported that they were more happy, and optimistic. Residents' aimless wandering (which is common behavior displayed by those with Alzheimer's) decreased. Residents with significant memory loss were concentrating on their projects for longer periods of time. And, best of all, those with diagnosed depression were rarely displaying symptoms."

Beckwith's other awards include: the 2006 Martin H. Miller Senior Volunteer of the Year Award for the state of Indiana and the 2006 Senior Volunteer of the Year Award from Real Services of Northern Indiana.

The Penwrights were nominated for the 2007 Senior Volunteer Group of the Year Award from Real Services, and were also recognized in 2007 by the Alzheimer's Services of Northern Indiana for outstanding support. Piechocki was nominated

in 2008 for the Professional Care Giver of the Year Award from Real Services.

Program updates

- The Penwrights had crafted a total of 263 pens by May of 2008 and had sold many of their creations to support local charities, including the Alzheimer's Services of Northern Indiana.

- Not satisfied to stop within the Arborwood walls, in May 2008 the Penwrights joined with the Center for Hospice and Palliative Care of St. Joseph County to help meet the needs of hospice clients. A new program will allow the hospice clients to attend the Penwright program with their loved ones or hospice volunteers. In addition to the friendship and camaraderie offered by the pen making activity, the hospice clients will make "legacy pens" for their loved ones.

- The Penwrights formed a committee of health care professionals, community relations advisors, and financial supporters to work to strengthen the Penwright vision.

- The first Penwright manual is being developed to guide health care professionals interested in beginning their own programs.

- Tool redesign is on ongoing process.

- Penwright programs have been started in three other states (see separate articles).

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Following in Larry Beckwith's footsteps

Three other programs also trace their roots to Larry Beckwith's Penwright program, and a third is in the organizational stage.

TEXAS

See separate story about Dannis Lozano's programs in the Dublin, Texas, area.

IDAHO

In Boise, Idaho, Alfred Howell introduced Beckwith's program at the Life Care Center of Boise in June 2007.

Howell reported that the program has met with a positive response at the center and as well as in the community. "Woodworker club members have offered wood for pen blanks, pen kits, volunteer support to make hand tools, and volunteers to aid residents on craft day," Howell said.

Alfred Howell's contact information

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WASHINGTON

In Kirkland, Washington, Ron Schroder started a program at Aegis Lodge, a retirement community, in April 2008. Participants range in age from 67 to 89. "They have a great deal of fun," Schroder said. Besides the social benefits, Schroder noted that the activity has been good therapy for the participants, helping strengthen their hands, forearms, and a little bit of their shoulders.

"I give the credit to Larry (Beckwith)," Schroder said, referring the success of the program.

Ron Schroder's contact information

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TENNESSEE

Butch Ruth is organizing a program for the Murfreesboro-Rutherford County area in Tennessee.

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