

NE

Vermont-made

Small-shop woodworkers from Vermont answered a call from the governor's office to build two tables and a podium for the executive conference room in the state's Pavilion Office Building in Montpelier.

Members of Vermont WoodNet used wood from a 146-year-old elm tree, felled from the Statehouse lawn, and sustainably harvested ash. But the real story was 26 individuals and businesses collaborating on the design and building processes, which started in summer 2001.

"The whole purpose wasn't to build the pieces; they were only a byproduct," said the guild's chairman, Bob Bouvier. "We wanted to show that from a very concept of an idea, we could work together and accomplish something."

They certainly did, and it was a long road. Bouvier said the wood for the trestle tables and podium traveled nearly 2,000 miles and visited 14 towns. Woodworkers were assigned specific duties, from milling stock to finishing, until the pieces were delivered on Oct. 6.

And there were financial contributions too. The cost of the pieces, which were gifts to the state, was \$23,000. Donations totaled \$10,500.

"Every woodworker got about 38 cents on the dollar, which was their contribution to the project," Bouvier said. "But they didn't go into it to make money. They went into it to demonstrate to themselves that they could really do this and to support Vermont WoodNet."

Vermont WoodNet was established in 2000 and has about 100 members, mostly from the state's northern counties, who meet quarterly.

"The idea is to network, perhaps collaborating on bigger jobs, purchase raw materials or tools together, or create a joint marketing venture," said Bouvier. "Most of us work by ourselves and seldom interact with anybody. The purpose of Vermont WoodNet is to give them a little kick in the behind and get them out a little bit, and meet people who have had exactly the same successes and failures."

The group plans a second project to build display cases for two highway rest stops. Chapters will be es-



The two trestle tables and podium made by members of Vermont WoodNet for the governor's executive conference room in Montpelier, Vt.

tablished for woodworkers in the central and southern counties, with as many as five regional meetings.

Contact: Vermont WoodNet, P.O. Box 4562, Burlington, VT 05406. www.vtwoodnet.org

— Tod Riggio

Einstein's furniture

The name Albert Einstein raises thoughts of a genius, a scientist, his theory of relativity and many other things. Einstein and furniture are certainly not thought of at the same time. But that changed in October when the Historical Society of Princeton acquired about 65 pieces of furniture from the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton, which belonged to Einstein and his wife Elsa.

"His second wife, Elsa Einstein — the furniture primarily came through her family, although they were cousins," said Maureen Smyth, curator at the Historical Society of Princeton. "Both their mothers were sisters."

Einstein left Nazi Germany in the 1930s and emigrated to Princeton, where he lived until his death in 1955. The furniture was shipped to the United States under a false name, and after some difficulty with customs in New York, the pieces were brought to Princeton.

"This was the family's everyday furniture," Smyth said. "There are pieces from the living room, dining

room, study, miscellaneous pieces from the house. There's a music stand, which we now have on display in our exhibit. It was his music stand; he played violin since his childhood. I think in a lot of ways it really evokes him as the individual, perhaps even more than any of the other pieces."

Some of the pieces are in storage and others are on display at the Historical Society's headquarters. Other pieces include a barrel chair seen in many of his portraits, a Biedermeier tall clock, and some items dating back to the 18th century.

"For the Historical Society of Princeton, this is a hugely important gift because of the vast interest visitors and residents express about Einstein and his life in Princeton," said Smyth. "It will really allow us to present a much more comprehensive look at his work, his life in Princeton, his connection to the community and other issues."

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— Brian Caldwell

60 Grit

Rough humor by Steve Spiro

