



# Building Connections

Vermont WoodNet is a coalition of woodworkers and wood product businesses whose primary mission is to strengthen business opportunities for small-scale Vermont wood product businesses that produce "Vermont Made" products and to foster a commitment to the sustainability of the forest resources.

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## Mark your calendars

- March 20 Quarterly Meeting at Planet Hardwood, 7 to 9 PM
- April 20-22 Home & Garden Show at Champlain Valley Exposition (WoodNet has a booth)
- June Woodworkers Demo month at the Gallery.
- June Bird House Display all month at the Gallery.
- June 10 Make a bird house day at the gallery
- June 16 Make a bat house day at the gallery
- June 23 Make a bird house day at the gallery
- Mar 16 or June 15 or Sept 14 Wood Product Grant Applications due

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## Quarterly Meeting

The Vermont WoodNet Quarterly Meeting will be held at Planet Hardwood on Tuesday March 20th from 7PM to 9PM. In addition to an update of Vermont WoodNet activities, the MapleWood Gallery, grants, the 2007 edition of the Resource Guide, FSC Certification, WERC sponsored survey, and future educational programs, our host will give us a tour of their business and describe the materials and services that they offer.

Networking at these meetings is always a hit where many of us have established new and expanded activities for our business. So come one, come all! You don't need to be a Vermont WoodNet member to attend. All are welcome. Refreshments will be served.

Directions: From Taft Corners go south on Route 2a for about 6 miles. Turn right onto Barber Road. Planet Hardwood is located at 401 Barber Road in St. George. (If you come to the intersection of 2a and 116 you went a bit too far.)

## Vermont WoodNet Survey

Vermont WoodNet is finalizing a survey for all of you, the membership to fill out. This survey will provide us with much needed information for many projects that we are currently working on. The information that we gather with this survey will provide us with more information for our data base, will provide information for the updated version of the resource guide we are going to be printing for all of you this spring, and will help us to choose some classes/workshops that would be of help to you, the members, with your businesses.

We will be asking for you to give us a brief description of what you do in your businesses, what you can offer others in a networking capacity on future jobs, and possible sources for wood, tools, and any other types of work-related sources that you can think of. It would also be helpful if you could start thinking about what types of workshops would be of both interest and help to you in your business. Possible ideas would include marketing, internet, Quickbooks, 3D CAD, and so on.

The survey will be available to you in hard copy (through the mail) and via internet. Look to hear from us soon about how and when to fill out the survey, and PLEASE make sure that you do it. We NEED to have input from everyone, so any and all of your thoughts and ideas will be helpful.

### WoodNet's \$32,000 Advertising Program

Vermont WoodNet has an advertising budget of \$32,000 that is funded by our USDA Rural Development Grant. The Board of Directors has contracted with PDI Creative Communications of Burlington to use these funds for the promotion of the Vermont MapleWood Gallery and the membership of Vermont WoodNet.

With the marketing guidance and creative design of Peter Kriff and Becca Padden and the entire team at PDI, we've been able to institute a program that promotes the goals of our members and Vermont WoodNet. PDI has provided the redesign of business cards, created new logos and promotional materials, as well as directed photography and designed our print ads. A new website has been developed specifically for the Gallery and the products it represents.

Our total media budget of \$20,000 has covered the cost of multiple print insertions and the required photography. Gallery advertising has appeared in the Stowe Reporter and we have a series of ads running in New England Home magazine. The magazine's tag line is "Celebrating Fine Design and Architecture" and we believe it reaches our target audience. It's read by architects, designers and home owners. We have a 1 year contract for 6, 1/3 page insertions in this bi-monthly magazine.

Funds have also been allocated for web advertising (IIDA New England Chapter and Vermont Life), postcard printing and mailing. We'll also have 5 ads running in Vermont HomeStyle Magazine.

The main purpose of this advertising program is to promote the Gallery and encourage customers to visit it in Stowe. We expect to also generate interest in Vermont WoodNet members and their work as seen on the Gallery website ([vermontmaplewoodgallery.com](http://vermontmaplewoodgallery.com)). The messages of Vermont quality and forest sustainability are always featured in the ads.

An increase in gallery and website traffic should increase sales for our membership. Reaching the target audience of architects, designers and homeowners should stimulate new commissions for our members.

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### Update on FSC Certified Members

Currently, we have 28 certified members as part of Vermont WoodNet's group FSC certificate. Since the annual meeting in September, we have added six new FSC members. They are Peter and Diane Nazarenko, Planet Hardwood, Sandra Morgan, Young Furniture-FSC Cabinetry, Charles Shackleton, Shackleton Thomas Furniture, Susan Fiske, Forest Products Associates, Richard Bissell, Richard Bissell

Fine Woodworking, Ralph Tursini, Tursini Woodturning & Bowl Works.

Forest Products Associates is located in Greenfield, Mass. and is a lumber yard that will offer FSC certified lumber. You can go there and pick your lumber by the board. This is what we are hoping will be the beginning of this type of availability of FSC lumber to our members. Currently, she should have cherry, maple and mahogany lumber, but is willing to carry other species if there is a need. To contact Susan, call 413-772-6833.

There are many changes beginning to take affect with FSC regulations. In either late spring or early summer of this year, we will be having a workshop to explain all the changes and to offer help on "How to Use FSC as a Marketing Tool". We hope to offer two classes, one in the Brattleboro area and the other in Stowe. We hope that all of our FSC members, as well as anyone else who may be interested in FSC certification, plan to attend one of the two workshops.

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### New Vermont WoodNet Websites

By the time you receive this newsletter there should be a new and improved version of the Vermont MapleWood Gallery website ([www.vtmaplewoodgallery.com](http://www.vtmaplewoodgallery.com)). Thanks to the RBEG grant from the USDA, the Gallery website as well as our organization's web site, [www.vtwoodnet.org](http://www.vtwoodnet.org) will be rebuilt in order to better represent our organization and your businesses. The websites will get a new look and some new technology in order to provide a more professional appearance to their visitors.

The Vermont WoodNet website is in the construction phase right now and should be available by the end of March. The goal is to design the site in such a way that a consumer can visit the site and easily learn what Vermont WoodNet is and is able to search for businesses that can fulfill their needs. A second goal is to make the site work better for you in communicating our news, events and opportunities. We also seek to receive higher placement on the major search engines.

If you are a \$100-level Business Member, did you know that one of your benefits is have your own full page on the Vermont WoodNet site? There are several of you that should take advantage of this. Simply email our webmaster, Sue McLam, [sue@knoxmountain.com](mailto:sue@knoxmountain.com), to put this process in motion. You'll simply need to provide some text and photos and Sue will set up your page. It's a great way to get your presence on the Internet.

### Photography Equipment

Part of the USDA marketing grant that we received last year was to purchase a complete camera, studio, and printing set up so that those of us who don't have access to this kind of equipment, can use it and take some higher quality photographs to use for our individual business marketing purposes. Both digital and hard copy prints.

Arny Spahn, a retired professional photographer from Randolph is purchasing all of the equipment. He will also write up a HOW TO DO IT set of instructions for those who are not familiar with the equipment or the way to take decent quality photographs. He will also have a training session for those interested in learning first hand from a professional. This, most likely, will never replace professional photographs but for those who are just starting or who don't have the money for professional ones, this is a good alternative.

The equipment will be ready for use sometime in April. Since using the equipment must be cost self sustaining, there will be a small charge to cover the cost of materials. Those costs and the guidelines for how and where the equipment is used still need to be totally worked out, but they will be in place by April as well when the equipment is ready for use.

### News from the Gallery

Great news from Vermont MapleWood Gallery: sales are up by 36%! It seems our advertising campaign may be starting to pay off. As a result of the increased sales, **we need more items to display and sell in the Gallery**. Please remember, be sure to call ahead before bringing any items to the Gallery to make sure that someone is there to receive them. If you have any questions, please call Judy - cell: 802-274-8075, home: 802-892-7786.

The Stowe Area Association has declared the month of June in Stowe as Bird Month. Many activities will be going on at various locations in Stowe throughout the month. The SAA will advertise these events in flyers, ads, and their web site. In conjunction with this the Gallery will be putting up a display of bird houses made by our members. We would love it if every member made at least one bird house. Simple or fancy, small or large. Any kind will be great. They will all be displayed in front of the Gallery and all will be for sale. Join the fun!

In addition to the display the Gallery hopes to have members demonstrating some wood-related things on Saturdays and Sundays all month. PLEASE, join us as a demonstrator. We need lots more!

We have 3 special events planned for the month. On June 10th and again on June 23rd visitors to the Gallery can build their own bird house. On June 16 they can build their own bat house. For both of these events there is a small fee to cover the cost of the materials and participants must call the Gallery to reserve a spot.

If you have other ideas for events that we could do during the month please call Judy and let her know.

Please make sure to stop by the Galley. We have some very talented members! Gallery Phone: 802-253-8211.

### Grants Available for Wood Product Companies

The Vermont Wood Products Marketing Council and the Vermont Council on Rural Development are pleased to announce the 2007 Small Grants Program for Vermont wood products companies.

A total of \$60,000 in grant funds will be available to provide direct assistance to Vermont industry members, and will support marketing projects that will expand product visibility, market presence, and ultimately increase revenue and support job opportunities. All existing value-added Vermont wood products companies, regardless of size, are invited to apply for funds during one of three grant cycles. Proposals will be assessed by a review committee, and will be evaluated on their ability to clearly articulate an understanding of the applicant's current market status, scope of the proposed project, and measurable outcomes that will sustain business.

Proposals for up to \$5,000 may be submitted with the following deadlines:

Friday March 16, 2007

Friday June 15, 2007

Friday September 14, 2007

An application form and complete guidelines can be found at [www.vtwoodnet.org/VWPMC small grants RFP.doc](http://www.vtwoodnet.org/VWPMC_small_grants_RFP.doc). For additional information visit either of these sites: [www.vtrural.org](http://www.vtrural.org) or [www.vtwood.org](http://www.vtwood.org)

Paper copies can be requested by calling 828-6022 or 747-7900.

The Small Grants Program is funded through a grant from the Economic Development Administration secured by the Vermont Council on Rural Development with support from former Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords. The grant seeks to strengthen the value-added wood products industry in Vermont by developing collaborative partnerships, and promoting the Vermont Brand through innovative, sustainable projects.

### 2007 Vermont WoodNet Resource Guide

Thanks to a grant from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation and Bob DeGeus, we have received funds to do a new edition of the resource guide (Edition #3). The last one (edition #2) was about 4 years ago and it's way past time for an update. You will be asked for some resource input to the guide when you receive the Vermont WoodNet survey we told you was coming in the last newsletter. The purpose of the Resource Guide is to act as a Yellow Pages for woodworkers, so the more good and valuable information it contains, the better off we will all be trying to find the appropriate resources to run our businesses. The printing and distribution is planned for late spring/early summer.

The grant is for Resource Guide production, not printing. We will need to sell advertisements to be included in the guide, like we have for the two previous editions, to pay the printing costs. Some of you may find this an excellent way to specifically reach your target markets and we hope you will buy advertisement space for that reason and also to help make the guide printing possible for all our members. Stay tuned for these details coming soon.

If you have questions about Vermont WoodNet you can contact a member of the Board of Directors.

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