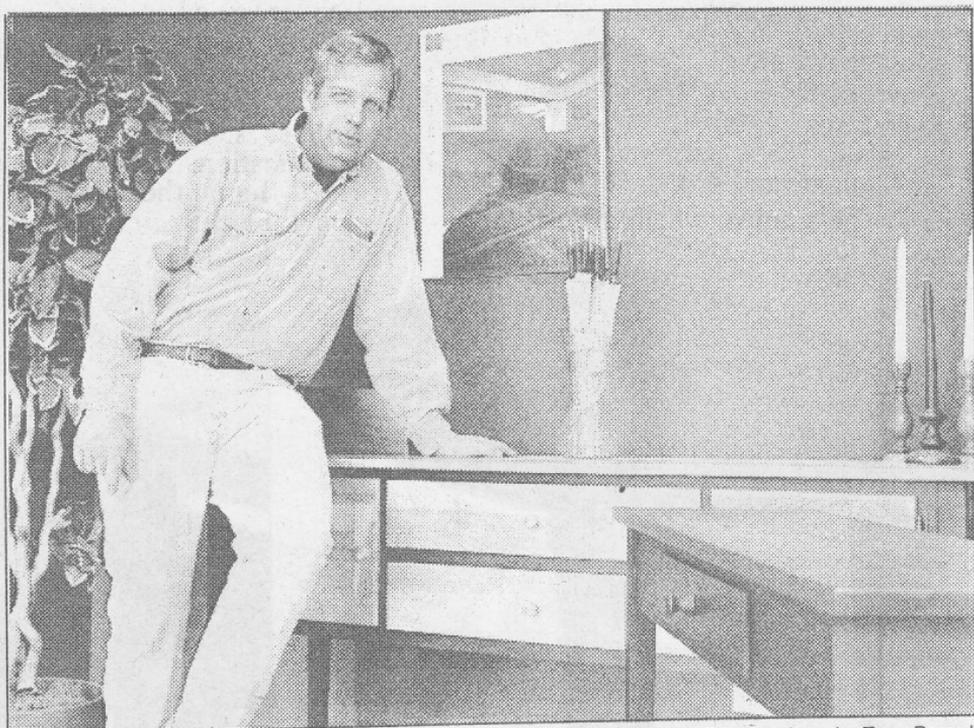


Chicago style

Edited by Bonnie Miller Rubin



Tribune photo by Tony Berardi

Bill Sieck, owner of the Wood Place: "People love the smell."

How much wood could a wood shop chop?

Need some Victorian-style storm-and-screen doors to match the gingerbread trim on your house? Or a little help repairing a broken toy? If the project involves wood, the Wood Place in Oak Park probably can hit the nail on the head.

The shop runs the gamut of wood-related services, from duplicating mouldings to building and installing entertainment systems.

Owner Bill Sieck, 47, is a carpenter of 13 years' experience (with a Ph.D. in psychology). In the last 16 months, he and his staff have completed a half mile of oak shelving for two Barbara's Bookstore locations and exhibit kiosks for Oak Park's Hemingway Museum.

The shop also stocks materials for do-it-yourselfers and projects that exist only in the imagination.

"One couple came in with a picture of a Scandinavian-style dining room set they liked, but they could only find it in teak," Sieck says. "They preferred it in pecan, so we built it for them. Another customer wanted to build some bookcases by himself, so he arranged for an hour of on-site instruction, kind of like a lesson with a golf pro."

Sieck is thinking of painting an X on the threshold, where almost every newcomer stops and breathes in the aroma.

"There's something primordial in people's response to wood," he says.

The Wood Place, 208 S. Marion St., also offers evening classes in using tablesaws and routers, joinery and finishing techniques. Call 708-383-7878 for information.

Marya Smith

Chicago style

Edited by Bonnie Miller Rubin



Photo by Lisa Genesen

Tia Jones, owner of Whatever Comes To Mind Gallery, and friends.

These puppets are her

The puppet troupe of Whatever Comes To Mind gets its punch from the imagination of creator Tia Jones. Each puppet and show become an original work of art, springing to life out of clay, cloth or papier mache. She even built one from three discarded fans found in an alley.

The Oak Park artist also works solo on sets, sound and lighting, taking her one-woman puppet theater to Chicago area schools, the Apollo and Wellington Theaters and the DuSable Museum of African American History.

There are no strings attached to her theater themes. "My shows are not about the ABCs," says Jones, a graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. "I love 'Sesame Street' and 'Mr. Rogers,' but children now are faced with so many issues, like abuses and drugs. My puppets act out things that go on in many homes."

In her current production of "Little Red Riding Hood," the wolf is a dope dealer. The contemporary Red Riding Hood unwittingly leads him to her Grandma's house—and purse—and the story unfolds. The hand puppets are finding a place in the home, as well as the stage, with prices starting at \$175.

In addition, Jones' gallery features paintings and sculptures that also reflect her concern with social issues. One tabletop sculpture deals with anorexia nervosa and includes a refrigerator door and a tray of cupcakes.

Whatever Comes To Mind Puppets and Gallery is at 11 W. Harrison St. in Oak Park. "Little Red Riding Hood" runs weekends through June 28. For information, call 708-524-9351.

Marya Smith

Chicago style

Home

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Section 15

Chicago Tribune, Sunday, February 21, 1993



Tribune photo by John Dziekan

Karen Wunderlich Stezowski, owner of Green Planet, with a children's swing made from a single tire.

Researching the Green Planet

Once upon a time, the term "mainstream ecologist" would have been considered an oxymoron.

Now the country has an environmentalist in the Vice President's Mansion, and the western suburbs has a low-key, ecology-minded store.

The Green Planet in Glen Ellyn stocks down-to-earth, environmentally sensitive home products, from recycled art glass to unbleached cotton bed linens.

"I think more people want to do the right thing, but you can't realistically expect them to make drastic lifestyle changes," says owner Karen Wunderlich Stezowski. "I'm

a mainstream suburbanite myself, and my goal is to make it easy for average folks to get their hands on environmentally sound products."

Before opening the Green Planet last fall, she and her husband, Richard, spent 14 months seeking non-toxic items with minimal packaging. "My husband calls me the bloodhound of 'eco products,'" she says. "I think of myself as doing the research that other people, especially working women, don't have time to do."

The Green Planet is at 484 N. Main St., Glen Ellyn. Call 708-858-9593.

Marya Smith

Chicago style

Edited by Bonnie Miller Rubin



Tribune photo by Chuck Berman

Owner Anne August with pine furniture at The Irish Shop.

Pining for Irish antiques?

Who doesn't dream of opening the door of a vintage pine armoire filled with fresh, starched linens? This fantasy can be fulfilled at The Irish Shop in Oak Park.

All of the shop's contemporary wares, from lace-trimmed pillow cases to boxes of Weetabix cereal, are displayed in or on 19th Century Irish pine furniture.

Owners Anne and Jim August like to tell browsers the story behind each piece of furniture. One pine table comes from a convent in County Mayo. An oversized pine hope chest with rough-hewn dovetailing hails from Cork. Washstands, armoires and open dressers have similar roots.

"These were built as practical country pieces," Jim says. "Most of them were painted originally, but have been stripped and waxed. People who have traveled to Ireland come in and say, 'Oh, here's

a cupboard just like the ones we saw in the cottages there.'"

The Augusts bring restaurant and retail experience to their new venture, which opened three months ago. Anne, a native of Belfast, was a manager at Printer's Row restaurant and Charlie Trotter's and a sales representative for Nordstrom's. Jim, a Chicago native, was a manager for Carlucci's and Neiman Marcus. Although he's Polish, he also plays guitar, bodhran drum and tin whistle in an Irish band.

Anne, who moved to the United States more than 20 years ago, has had one surprising development since the shop opened: "My Irish accent has returned after talking to so many Irish customers."

The Irish Shop is at 728 Lake St., Oak Park. For more information, call 708-445-1149.

Marya Smith

It's only natural

Eco-sensitive gifts show your friends you care about them — and the Earth.

By Marya Smith

If you—or those on your holiday list—are committed to environmental issues, what on earth is an appropriate gift choice?

Most local ecologists we talked to echoed the advice of Julie Samuels of the Illinois Environmental Council: "An ideal gift for an environmentalist is not a 'thing,' but a membership or contribution to a favorite organization."

There are many environmentally sensitive choices including: the Nature Conservancy (79 W. Monroe St.); the Lake Michigan Federation (59 E. Van Buren St.); and the Chicago Audubon Society (5801 N. Pulaski Rd.).

"If you do give an object, you wouldn't want to choose something made of limited resources—ivory for instance," adds Samuels. A better choice is anything made from recycled materials, such as barware fashioned from discarded pop bottles (\$8 to \$26), or jewelry and carvings (\$24) made from tagua nuts, a sustainable rainforest product, all available at Green Planet in Glen Ellyn.

We scouted for some additional eco-smart kid presents and found Ecoblocks (\$40 at Simple Things), a sturdy block set made from recycled milk cartons; a stuffed furry koala

bear that converts into a globe (\$22 at Lincoln Park Zoo Shops) and a Little Critter Kaleidoscope for close-up, fanciful views of flowers or insects (\$10 at Natural Wonders stores in Oakbrook, Orland Park, Woodfield, and Hawthorn Center).

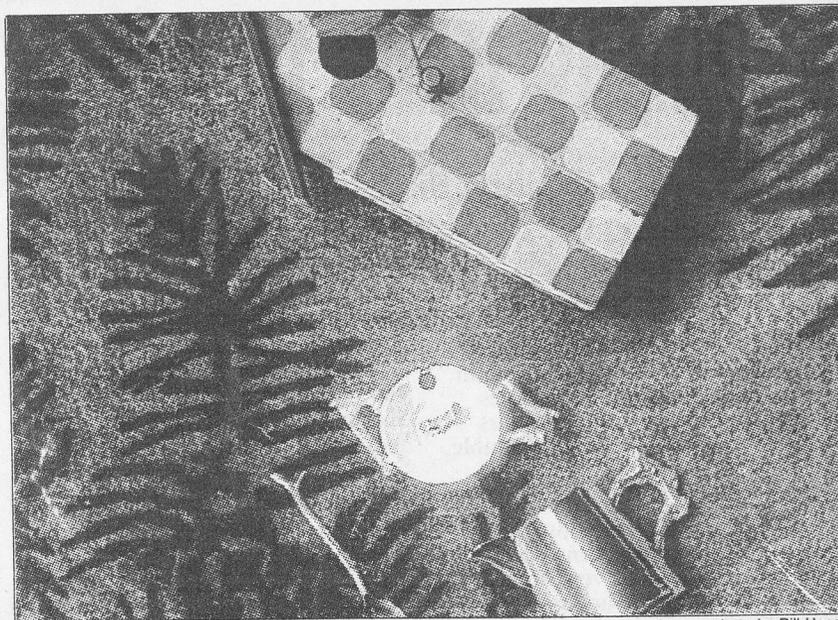
"A great gift for any age would be a bicycle equipped with a basket for errands," says Joan O'Shaughnessy, Chicago program coordinator for the Illinois Environmental Council. "Another would be native vegetation to plant in a person's own yard."

The Brookfield Zoo Shop stocks evergreen seedlings (\$9.95) and the Lincoln Park Zoo Shops feature a bonsai gift kit (\$27.50).

Dispose disposables

"One simple, but environmentally sensitive, gift is a china mug with a lid to use in the car instead of disposable cups," says Sarah Jane Knoy, midwest regional director of Greenpeace. Commuter mugs (\$10 to \$15) are available at Gloria Jean's Coffee Bean, Crate & Barrel and Starbucks Coffee, which has one that resembles a small globe.

Jack Darin, state field representative for the Illinois chapter of the Sierra Club, puts a birdhouse on the top of his gift list because "it turns a backyard or even a city porch into a wildlife observation area." Natural



Tribune photo by Bill Hogan

Pine cone doormat, \$24.95 at Crate & Barrel stores; silver-plated creamer and sugar set with twig motif, \$85 at Chiasso stores; and checkered birdhouse, \$52 at Art Effect, 651 W. Armitage Ave.

Wonders stores, Nature Company stores in Wheaton, Northbrook and Oakbrook, and the Brookfield Zoo are just a few retailers that sell unusual and handsome bird dwellings and feeders (\$12 to \$150).

Other nature-inspired items aren't strictly attuned to environmental issues, still, they help to bring a little of the outdoors into everyday life.

We spotted boxes of treated autumn oak leaves (\$9.95 at Nature Company stores); crystal-filled bookends (\$50 to \$95 at the Field Museum Gift Shop, East Roosevelt Road and South Lake Shore Drive); and a silver-plated creamer and

sugar set with a twig motif (\$85 at Chiasso stores).

Healing Earth Resources, 2570 N. Lincoln Ave., adds the sound of nature—falling rain, to be specific—in cactus or bamboo rain sticks (\$23 to \$190).

And, in case you wondered what nature lovers do at night, try a Stelarscope (\$34.95 at Nature Company stores, Natural Wonders stores and Chiasso stores) for naming the constellations at any time of year or a Super Star Machine (\$35) for projecting 31 constellations and over 300 stars on your own ceiling—at Natural Wonders stores. ●