

Fine woodworking at Maine State Prison

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Instructors for the fine woodworking program at Maine State Prison are, from left, Jeremy S. Gallant, Brian Reid, Howard Hatch and Dylan Fuller.



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WARREN — Rockland furniture master Brian Reid has begun a fine woodworking program in the Maine State Prison. The program currently includes 10 students and teaches all aspects of fine woodworking, such as the intricate details of hand-cut dovetails; mortise-and-tenon joinery; and sanding and finishing techniques.

Reid's idea is to create a self-sustaining program wherein the current prisoner students will learn skills they can pass on to the next group of prisoner students. They meet every Sunday and are learning to build cabinets, tables and chairs. Reid, a longtime instructor, modeled the curriculum on the program he teaches at the Center for Furniture Craftsmanship in Rockport.

Reid's desire to create a fine woodworking program in the Maine Prison System grew after hearing his New Hampshire Furniture Master colleagues describe the rewards of teaching in the New Hampshire prison system through a program sponsored by the New Hampshire Institute of Furniture Making. After several

meetings with Robert Walden, Director of Maine Correctional Industries; and Ken Lindsey, Manager of Warren Prison Industries, Reid's program was approved by Maine Department of Corrections Commissioner Joseph Ponte.

The Maine State Prison program commenced last August. Lie-Nielsen Toolworks generously donated the majority of the hand tools the program needed to begin instruction, and many fine furniture makers donated tools, including a high-quality German table saw.

Current instructors in the program, in addition to Reid, include Dylan Fuller of Thomaston, Howard Hatch of Augusta and Jeremy S. Gallant of Portsmouth, N.H. To date, the students have made a small bench, a small mirror and a Shaker-style table. Tyra Hanson, owner of The Gallery at Somes Sound in Somesville, is a sponsor of the program and sells the students' wares in her gallery. A selection of the prisoners' work also will be on display in a special section at the Maine Prison Store in Thomaston. Proceeds from the sales will be used to buy additional tools and materials.

Reid is currently fundraising to secure monies to pay instructors, who donate eight-plus hours per month of teaching time towards this program. Donations of working tools also are greatly appreciated. Donations are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by federal law. For more information, contact Reid at 319-3621 or info@brianreidfurniture.com; or brianreidfurniture.com/maine-prison-program.

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