

***LIVING ONLINE**

I miss triple coupons, though I'd never admit it. Who at www.courant.com/ctliving would ever suspect I was a clipper?

- >> **Inane Bronco and Sprites nearby:** The top 10 celebrity-name anagrams.
- >> **Water workouts:** They're better with noodles, buoys and kickboards.
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"I just love the way wood is. As you stain it, you see the true nature of it. The colors come out."

— MATTHEW DOMICZEK



MARK MIRKO | mmirko@courant.com

WINSTED WOODCARVER Matthew Domiczek made this kitchen table and chairs. He found the time after being laid off from his job.

AT WORK

A SILVER LINING MADE OF WOOD

POST-LAYOFF, WINSTED MAN IS CARVING OUT A NICHE FOR HIMSELF

By **JOANNA SMILEY**
Special to The Courant

Hope gleams from the dark corners of their 114-year-old Winsted home as Matthew

Domiczek gazes at the wooden napkin holder he carved for his wife, Anna, and baby Konrad giggles.

It has been more than six months since the Domiczeks' last paycheck, which makes them numbers in the state's soaring unemployment statistics.

But the couple, who each emigrated from southern Poland, ignore that kind of news. Matthew's layoff from a local trucking company, says Anna, led him back to "his true artistic expression."

He swung open their rickety basement door and started carving. Anna's so proud, her eyes tear up as she describes her love for watching him cut shapes in thick pieces of pine.

Above their tiny kitchen entrance, a dark wood sign hanging from a rusted nail reads: "Welcome to our Cabin." Just a few feet inside stands Matthew's pride and joy, an alpine-style dark wood kitchen table set he spent two weeks making right after his layoff and recently sold for \$360 on Craigslist. Majestic, medieval, mountainous-looking, it shines with the raw skill of untrained hands.

Matthew and wood are sort of similar: His 6-foot-3 frame, scruffy brown hair and plaid shirt exude a layer of rustic that blends into the backdrop of mountain paintings and wood carvings coloring the Domiczeks'

walls. Most of their snug house is crammed with small pieces Matthew built: a toy chest, coat rack, shelves and wall hangings carved into mountain scenes.

"I've always loved that wood is nature. I've loved the mountains since I was a little kid," Matthew, 37, says. "I just love the way wood is. As you stain it, you see the true nature of it. The colors come out."

He glides his hand across the smooth brown coffee table he built, then pauses.

"My mother lives in Poland," he says. "She was, and still is, at 76, a gifted artist. When I was a young child, she was always painting and I was always drawing, studying the way things were created and shaped. I think that's where I learned. I guess it's

CARVER, C7

MOMMY MINUTE

Before A Store, Go To A Tag Sale



REBECCA STEWART
rstewart@fox61.com

One man's trash is another man's treasure. No one knows that better than my neighbor, Kasey.

It's tag-sale season, and she is a mother on a mission.

Tag sales are a great way for parents on a budget to stock up on toys or clothes.

"I look forward to Saturdays," she says. "People pay so much money for new items. And you can get such great bargains if you just look around."

She maps out her stops the night before and arms herself with information. She knows prices; she isn't afraid to bargain; she keeps a running list of what she needs; and she keeps her eyes open for anything useful.

Kasey has a whole lot of company.

The Los Angeles Times reports garage sale listings on Craigslist are up 80 percent over last year.

At The Courant, tag sale classified ads were up about 5 percent, but that has slowed with all the recent rain.

Everyone knows tag sales are a great way to clear the clutter. But it's also a great way to make some quick cash. Then there's the rush of finding what you never knew you wanted at bargain prices.

Like the slightly used Kettler tricycle. New, it costs about \$200. Kasey paid \$14.

A \$45 Home Depot toy workbench? She paid \$10.

Being her neighbor has its perks. A few weeks ago, she pulled up to our driveway, opened her trunk and pulled out the slide I'd been looking for.

It was marked \$4. She bargained and got it for \$3.

Her advice? Plan and go early. "The good stuff goes quickly," she says. "You never know what you're going to find. That's why I love it."

It's the spirit that turns every weekend into an adventure, into the search for treasure.

>> Rebecca Stewart, weekend anchor at WTIC, Channel 61, each week chronicles the challenges of work and motherhood. Read her blog at www.fox61.com/news/blogs.

AT WORK Q&A

Profanity At The Office: How Far Is Too Far?

Wire Reports

Q: I have been hearing shouted profanity about all manner of things, from work situations to uncooperative computers, as well as people who are not within earshot being called names. We know it is completely unprofessional and that there is an anger-management problem, but is it a hostile work environment issue?

A: Profanity often is cited as a component of a hostile work environment. Because of the environmental degradation that results when profanity is pervasive, epithets based on sex, race, religion and other personal characteristics protected by law seem to have

a way of gaining acceptance.

The law does not dictate what is appropriate or professional in the workplace. It merely deems a narrow subset of behaviors so despicable and pernicious that a victim should have the opportunity to seek damages.

Your workplace can be disrespectful, degrading and positively hostile, but the conduct is not illegal unless you can make a connection between that hostility and a category protected under law. In your case, if the profanity that you are hearing is accompanied by sexual, racial or other epithets, even if they are not directed at you, then the conditions could create a bona fide hostile work environment claim.

If you supervise this employee, you should

address his or her conduct at once. If you have only the pleasure of working alongside this individual, report the behavior to your human resources department or some other person designated under your organization's anti-harassment policy.

Employment lawyers have long seized upon this distinction to mount what is commonly known as the "equal opportunity harasser defense." The reasoning is simple: As long as everyone in the workplace is treated in an equally reprehensible manner without regard to their protected characteristics, then the law has not been broken.

Q: Last year, I left my full-time job as a graphic designer. I have decided to semi-retire

and would like a part-time position with flexible hours. I am 53. How should I state my preferences to potential employers?

A: To avoid inappropriate and uncomfortable interviews, target only those work situations that match your desired lifestyle.

For graphic designers, one alternative to a "payroll position" is temporary or contract work. The freedom to accept or reject assignments can provide a great deal of flexibility.

When talking with interviewers, be sure to avoid any comments that might be interpreted as "I don't want to work very hard." That's a surefire way to get screened out.

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