



Special to Grand Rapids Herald Review

## Goods from the Woods Debuts in St. Paul Buyers' Mart Joins Minnesota Wood Campaign to Bring Goods to Market

GRAND RAPIDS MN (March 18, 2004) -- Goods from the Woods and the Minnesota Wood Campaign are hosting two special exhibitions this spring to link local producers of forest-and-wood products with wholesale and retail buyers.

The first buyer's market was held Wednesday, March 17 in Saint Paul and the second will be held April 14 at the Forest History Center in Grand Rapids.

Buyers at the Saint Paul exhibition included Bibelot stores of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, distributors of locally produced and imported gifts, jewelry, clothing and collectible items; the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' Nature Stores located at Minnesota's state parks offering site-specific gifts, books and collectibles; and the Minnesota Historical Society's St. Paul Museum Store, selling books and gifts relating to Minnesota's heritage and culture.

Meta Devine, Minnesota Historical Society, who was a buyer at the Saint Paul show said: "Your call was one of the best things that has happened for us all year. These are great products."

Said Allison Rajala Ahcan, of the Minnesota Wood Campaign: "The Saint Paul session was a great opportunity for our local producers to learn how to better position their products on the wholesale gifts market."

Bob Kvasnicka from Indian Mission Enterprises, Federal Dam MN said the event "was like an awakening."

He learned how to better coordinate production with sales of his products by packaging and marketing them as 'thrill deals.'" He added: "For me to be a better salesman, I need to look at my products through my customers' eyes."



**Kate Brady, Minnesota State Parks  
and Katie Rajala Thomey, Lilly Joe.**

Area sellers represented at the Mart included:

**Jack Rajala**, Deer River – author of “Bringing Back the White Pine,” a book for lovers of Minnesota history and the north woods.

**Katie Rajala Thomey**, St. Paul and Deer River — owner of Lilly Joe, the maker of note and gift cards made of white birch and aspen veneers harvested in Minnesota’s north woods.

**Ron & Lois Hanson**, Bigfork — owners of Wilderness Minnesota, the producer of rustic wreaths of young, birch twigs and delicate rustic cone baskets.

**Bob & Corrine Kvasnicka**, Federal Dam — owners of Indian Mission Enterprises, the producer of authentic maple syrup and wild rice harvested in the Leech Lake Indian Reservation.

**John Zasada**, Grand Rapids – owner of Meristems Forestry, the regional expert in making woven-birch baskets, shoes, vases, vessels and one-of-a-kind forest ornaments.

**Mike & Lynn Olund**, Brimson — owners of Superior Forest Flowers, the producer of high-quality natural and dried bouquets of cultivated and wild flowers grown in the Superior National Forest.

**Bob Carls**, Aitkin – owner of Ripple River Woodturning, the producer of lathe-turned vessels from the world’s most beautiful woods.

Prior to the exhibition IDC and Jobs2020 staff held a seminar for vendors to prepare them for selling into the wholesale market. In addition, the staff of the Minnesota Wood Campaign is providing on-site marketing support and teaming up with the Blandin Foundation to prepare marketing and sales tools, which included the production of photographs, product literature and display materials.

*Goods from the Woods is a community-based initiative designed to celebrate Minnesota’s northern forests and promote a vibrant forest-based economy. Initiative goals are to:*

- *Attract additional tourists to the region with the signature GFTW marketplace.*
- *Improve the economic viability of local specialty forest product businesses.*
- *Increase the utilization of our forest resources through improved harvest coordination.*
- *Promote sustainable harvesting practices.*

*Minnesota Wood Campaign is an effort of people in Itasca and Aitkin Counties to work together to build awareness of the unique traits of northern Minnesota wood, the range of products produced here, and to develop a brand that puts the region at the top of the list of places to turn for wood and forest products..*

Both GFTW and MWC receive funding from Blandin Foundation.

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