

Home projects for younger hands

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A.J. Hamler's grandson is proud of the stepstool he made with his grandpa.

“My boys have helped with our vegetable garden since they were little,” said Cheryl Collins of Orinda. This past year they planted new drought-resistant plants. Collins says her sons disliked the weeding chores but loved planting and harvesting. “They especially loved playing rotten tomato baseball with a shovel,” Collins said.

Three generations of the Lamorinda Talbot family have passed down a love of woodworking projects. Al Talbot’s father, George, had a workbench “littered with miniscule parts for the latest wooden ship or boat model,” recalled Al’s wife, Lucy.

She says Al’s first apartment was filled with the end tables, stereo speakers and book cases he crafted in his spare time. Lucy and Al’s son Matt picked up construction skills at age 5 by playing with a Brio MEC set. Later he built a cutting board and book shelves, and as a high schooler he rebuilt a service yard fence by himself as his father and grandpa looked on.

Stanley Middle School Wood Tech instructor Michele Murphy says her students often try out their new skills at home. “Parents tell me that their son or daughter now will go into their workshop and start tinkering with the tools or ask to help them with their projects,” Murphy said. Parents and grandparents often want to build a second Adirondack chair to match the one their eighth-grader built. Murphy says parents at open houses tell her over and over what a valuable skill woodworking was for their child to learn.

The community at large offers work projects suitable for children. Some big box hardware stores teach free projects aimed at the grade school set, (<https://tinyurl.com/y9yloh65>), and parents can learn woodworking skills alongside their children as young as age two at San Francisco’s Butterfly Joint (<http://thebutterflyjoint.com/>). Classes are taught by owner Danny Montoya, a credentialed early-childhood educator.

Once they reach 16, teens can swing a hammer alongside their parents while volunteering at Habitat for Humanity (<https://www.habitatbsv.org/get-involved>). This bonding time combines learning construction skills with life lessons.

So, grab your tools, your offspring, and get to work! You’ll be building lifelong memories, and possibly completing projects that will last nearly as long.

Consult these websites before your home work begins:

<https://www.familyhandyman.com/tools/diy-for-kids/view-all/>

<https://www.bobvila.com/articles/kid-friendly-diy-projects/>

http://www.ajhamler.com/woodworking_gallery



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