

Saco Bay Voice

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Pool Road woodworking business thriving

Locals and tourists alike
appreciate quality, custom work
from a local craftsman

By KRISTEN MUSZYNSKI

Saco Bay Voice Editor

BIDDEFORD — In an age of mass-produced fiber board furniture, a quality chair or table might seem like a thing of the past for those who live on a modest budget. Affordable, quality furniture is available, however, and it's being made right in our own backyard, by Roger Rheault, owner of Rheault's Furniture on Pool Street.

The sprawling display of Adirondack chairs, picnic tables and lawn decorations on his property along outer Pool Road is but a sampling of the pieces that

Rheault produces for sale.

While the classic Adirondack chairs are popular, Rheault also sells a full line of outdoor furniture and indoor pieces as well. Accent pieces like the wishing well or goose planter add variety to his work.

He has extensive indoor furniture offerings, from cabinets, bookshelves and tables to glass showcase and television centers. For outdoor enthusiasts, he offers Adirondack loveseats with and



ROGER RHEAULT/PHOTO BY JOURNAL STAFF

Roger Rheault, owner of Rheault's Furniture on Pool Street in Biddeford, takes a break in one of his porch rocking chairs. Below left, a painted Adirondack chair with a beach scene and below, Rheault finishes assembling a chair for a customer last week.

■ WOODWORKING

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A goose-themed flower box is one of many wood creations that Rheault creates for the outdoors, along with his line of indoor furniture.

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without built-in tables, Canadian rockers, swings, and even Adirondack bar stools.

Rheault started the business in 1987 when his roadside creations began selling. A Biddeford native who grew up in the house that he uses for his business, Rheault previously worked in restaurants and had started building picnic tables for a fellow restaurateur. When the friend couldn't accept the tables right off, Rheault placed them by the side of the road, where they sold quickly. Special orders then began to stream in and business took off from there, he said.

Now Rheault fills his days in his garage workshop, turning pieces of cedar, pine, spruce and teak into functional art pieces of furniture. The screws he uses are of yellow zinc or stainless steel and the wood is of the highest quality, he said.

"I take a lot of pride in my work," said Rheault. "Quality is my top goal and to keep the customer happy."

Rheault said he is self taught in woodworking and has pushed himself to perfect his skills. After nearly 20 years in business, he has developed an efficient process of

cutting, sanding, assembling and staining his pieces.

Summer is the busy season for Rheault, while custom orders keep him going during the winter. He does repairs for some customers and restores antiques for others. Business has grown in recent years, especially custom work, said Rheault. With so many tourists traveling Route 9 to the beach, Rheault has received orders from as far as Texas and delivered them himself. Most of his business is local, however, especially from those who own property near the beach, and Rheault said he enjoys interacting with his customers.

Rheault said he tries to keep his prices competitive without forsaking quality. The Adirondack chair is \$125, while a porch rocker goes for \$130 and the Canadian rocker is \$950 with the table and awning. Most customers "recognize the quality right away" and don't even ask the price, he said.

Some of Rheault's work is decorated by Judi Lavoie, a local artist, who has painted and enhanced tables and chairs with her paintings of ocean scene views.

Rheault said he hopes to branch out with more antiques and seeks to add a new product every year. This year, he is offering Bliss hammocks and a line of windchimes to accessorize his furniture. The new pieces are in addition to the eye-catching weathervanes and table umbrellas for sale on Rheault's lawn.

Rheault's Furniture, at 383 Pool Street, is open from 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. six days a week and Sundays by appointment. Visit www.rheaultsfurniture.com or call 282-3949.

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