



Mike Druffel created this artistic tool shed out of castoff tools.

## His Creative Legacy Lives On In Tool Art

Mike Druffel built a tool shed out of tools. Wrenches, hacksaws, clamps and drill bits are intertwined on web-like walls. Rays of light poke through holes from the saw blade shingled roof.

"I like the tool shed because it was one of Mike's last and biggest efforts," says his wife, Mary. "He had been diagnosed with cancer and was trying to use up his tool supply."

Mike, 65, died in 2009, leaving behind artistic creations made with nothing more than old tools and mounds of welding rods. There's the table and chairs on Mary's back deck. Two gazebos made of hoes, shovels and rakes are in the front yard. Mike made countless items for the couple's five children and regularly donated benches or other creations to his community's school fundraisers.

The Druffels raised wheat, barley and dried peas in the rolling hills of Colton, Wash., but Mike always found time to create, Mary says. He had the need to make things since the time he was 3 and his family caught him heading to town for rope. In the second grade he went to school with windshield wipers on his glasses — his own creation.

Somewhere along the line - perhaps after he built a bench out of horseshoes - something clicked, and Mike decided castoff tools would be his artistic media.

During winter and slow times on the farm, Mike's favorite place was his workshop. And he always had plenty of iron, picking up deals at auction sales, pawnshops, and swap meets and from local scrap yards. Friends brought him buckets of tools.

Mike spent a lot of time laying out the designs, Mary says, trying to keep every



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thing flat and square. Each item had Mike's special signature.

"He always designed a heart into every project," Mary says. "If you look closely at the tool shed you'll see several hearts. It's fun to try to find them."

Mike left the shed and gazebos in their natural state, but he ground benches and tables smooth, painted them and made them as comfortable as you can make iron, Mary says.

As Mike built the shed, he talked about possibly selling it. Mary has no desire to do so. She likes it in her backyard. It's a part of her husband's legacy that she'll always cherish. When she looks at it she remembers how his creative passion kept him going until about a month before he died.

"I put hoes, rakes and hoes in there," Mary says. "The birds like to fly in and out of it."

As for using up his collection of tools, that didn't happen. There are plenty of them left, neatly sorted in Mike's workshop.

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To play "Equi-Soccer", horses bump and kick a 3-ft. ball across a field or arena to a goal zone. Horses from another team try to steal the ball.

## "Equi-Soccer" League Kicks Off In Wisconsin

Horses love a good game of soccer, says Wisconsin horse trainer Paulette Stelpflug. Her proof is that she often sees horses kicking a ball around even when no riders are present.

Training horses with large toy balls is nothing new. Balls are especially helpful in desensitizing mounted police horses from being startled.

Stelpflug believes that training with a ball is helpful to any rider who desires true communication with a horse.

"People want to control their horse's body parts. This gives the horse a reason to move a body part. The ball makes them more motivated because it gives the horse a purpose," Stelpflug says.

The rider communicates through body language — to turn a shoulder in one direction, to back up, to press forward into an object. Those skills can be critical on a challenging trail ride on a steep slope, over boulders or when meeting wild game. It's also fun for riders, who thrive on the connection they feel with their horse when playing "Equi-Soccer".

To play, the horses bump and kick a 3-ft. ball across a field or arena to a goal zone. Horses from another team try to steal the ball. The game rules are adaptable, but in general there are two or three horses, donkeys, or mules on a team and the playing field is 100 by 150-ft. Horses aren't allowed to kick with their hind feet. (In an advanced form of the game, riders can kick the ball while on the horse.)

"The most crucial part of training is when we introduce the horse to the ball. How we do that is huge," Stelpflug says. The horse must be completely comfortable with the ball before it can begin playing the game. She offers clinics and is creating a DVD to show the correct way to train as well as explaining Equi-soccer's rules.

She emphasizes the importance of getting

the correct ball. She's tried cheap balls that have popped too easily. For the past 6 years she has used a therapy ball designed for autistic children. It has three layers including a replaceable bladder, colorful middle layer and a tactile exterior that is easy to grip.

"I've seen it endure kicks and bites and big Friesians tromping on it," Stelpflug says.

She is a distributor for the \$130 ball, and notes it's about the only cost to the sport. You can use detergent bottles filled with sand for goal posts on most any field or arena.

Besides the horse and rider version of the game, she has developed games with the rider on the ground leading the horse — with and without a rope.

"The horses develop very quickly because horses are naturally curious animals. Our goal is to reveal their curiosity and combine that with their play drive. Horses love to play," Stelpflug says. "When the horse is connected to you, you don't need to have a rope and halter. They do it because they respect you and trust you — and they love to play the game."

Besides teaching the horse, Stelpflug has observed how Equi-soccer builds the horse and rider's confidence.

"We are starting a league," Stelpflug says. "People are playing it at their own pace and at casual get-togethers. I can see this taking off."

When she demonstrated Equi-soccer at the Midwest Horse Fair in April it was well received. Stelpflug and other riders will also demonstrate Equi-soccer Aug. 28 and 29, at the Northern Illinois Horse Fair. A video and information about the DVD and purchasing a ball is available on her website.

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