WOODTURNERS OF ST. LOUIS

A Chapter of the American Association of Woodturners

WTSTL.com
October 2026

Next meeting will be November 17, 2026. Note date change and NO premeeting.



Hollow Ornament ● Michael Blankenship is a totally blind woodturner who never worked with a lathe before going blind. Michael shared his personal journey from becoming blind at age 50 to learning woodturning, which he credited with saving his life.



Michael starts his ornaments by choosing some contrasting wood or more recently using a casting from a resin (Alumilite) with various fillers from gum balls, to wood chips, to glitter….. Michael typically turns several ornaments at a time and works with multiple lathes/chucks to improve his productivity.



He starts with rounding the wood blank that will be used for the top and the finial. Using a circle cutter he cuts a tenon on one end, parts off what will be the finial and cuts another tenon on the “to be” top.





For this demo Michael turned a resin ornament that was cast in a paper cup. After removing some of the paper it is mounted in a chuck, the tail stock engaged and the blank rounded. Then a hole is drilled thru the ornament (same diameter as cut for the finial and top tenons; 3/4 to 1 inch is typical).





The blank is then rotated and held with an expansion grip using the hole that was just drilled. This allows the other end of the blank to be rounded.





Michael uses a hollowing tool designed by one of our past club members. The offset brace eliminates torque generated by the cutter. Half of the ornament is hollowed then rotated on the



chuck to finish hollowing the other half. It is sanded and finished both inside and outside.




The finial and top are then mounted in a chuck, finish turned, sanded, and a friction finish applied. The ornament is then ready for assembly. Two BB's are placed inside the ornament so buyers can shake it and feel confident that it is hollow.





Thanks to Michael for a great demonstration on turning hollow ornaments. Check his website (www.turningblind.com) for a documentary on his career and his shop.

A recording of this demonstration is available on our YouTube channel. Search YouTube for Woodturners of St. Louis.

Pre-Meeting● Thanks to Tom Zeller for demonstrating the use of the Beall buffing system.




NOVEMBER MEETING: NOVEMBER 17 630PM

November Meeting – Wine and Cheese Social, Ornament Exchange & Election ● At the November meeting members will have the opportunity to exchange ornaments that they have made. If you would like to participate, just bring one of your ornaments to the November meeting. The ornament can be simple or complex. Participants will then draw a number to pick an ornament made by another club member. Hope to



have your ornament in the event. Ornaments can also be entered into the President's Challenge!

There will not be a demonstration at the November meeting. Instead we will have a few hours of socializing. Bring your spouse/significant other, favorite wine (or other drink you enjoy) and an appetizer to share. The social will start following a short business meeting. The meeting will begin at 6:30 pm.



The annual election will be held at the November meeting. The positions of Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer will be up for election. Members that have expressed an interest in serving: Rob Conaway, VP; Val Botkin, Secretary; Charles Sapp, Treasurer. If you are interested in serving the club as an officer or Board Member, please contact Moe Milstead. Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the November meeting. Roles and responsibilities of the board members can be found in our bylaws on the club web site.

On behalf of the Board and members, our thanks to everyone that has served as an officer or on a committee for the WTSTL or been a demonstrator. Your contributions to the club are appreciated.

Turning / Training on the Second Tuesday of the month● NO Turning Tuesday in November and December. It will resume in January 2027. The project for January 2027 will be rough turning a green bowl. Finishing it will be the project for July 2027 after it has dried.

Members are asked to contact Click Here: Ray Hinkle before November 17th so material will be available. Please bring your face shield and spindle/bowl gouges/ parting tool/skew for the class.

WTSTL Tool Boxes and Turning Tools● Each of our Comet lathes has a number and there is a tool box with tools with the same number in the movable/lockable cabinets. When setting up the pre-meeting area get the numbered box that goes with that Comet. This helps us identify any missing items and which box to replenish.

It is also very important to put the tools from a specific box back into that same box for inventory control. And, be sure that the tool boxes are taken back to the meeting room and stored in the locked mobile cabinets. The chuck and all loose items (spurs, knock out bar, …) should be removed from the lathe and put back in the tool box for secure storage.

We need your help too. Please give us feedback on the good and bad with the A/V system so we can make your online participation a great experience.

If you do not see video at the start of the meeting (~6:30pm CT) let us know via the Zoom Chat window.

If the video drops offline or there are other issues let us know via the Zoom Chat window

Please mute yourself during the meeting as any background noise overpowers the demonstrator and puts you in the demo screen.

Please send Steve Botkin and Charlie an email with any suggestions. **We monitor the Zoom chat but texts, email, calls, and voice feedback is difficult during the meeting as the AV team is quite occupied with operation of the equipment.**

WTSTL Hybrid Meetings● Each meeting lets us improve and address new issues with our hybrid system. In person meetings will continue to be open to visitors (except when a paid demonstrator is scheduled); remote participation will be available via Zoom. Recorded demonstrations are posted on the club YouTube channel.

Mentoring● Woodturners of St. Louis has a mentoring program for members. On our mentoring page, you'll find a list of members who have graciously agreed to invite other members into their home workshops for mentoring sessions. In some cases, mentors can visit your home to give instruction there instead. And some mentors offer consultations via Zoom or email.

We have several mentors available now, and we'd love to add more. If you're an experienced WTSTL member and would like to be a mentor, contact our President.

If you're a WTSTL member and would like to arrange a mentoring session, please go to our mentoring page. The locations of our current mentors are listed there, so you can choose the one closest to you. The topics they're willing to give instruction on are listed there as well. We hope this program will bring members together to share our skills, spark fresh creativity and learning, and strengthen our sense of community.

Website● Electronic membership to the WTSTL is available via the club website. After entering your contact information and selecting your plan, log on to your PayPal account to complete your application and enter the amount to pay. When PayPal asks for our organization, enter **Woodturners of St. Louis.** You will receive a follow-up email with your membership card. If you are not contacted within a couple of weeks, email the club Treasurer.



President's Spin● What a great month we have had at the club! On Turning Tuesday, we made kitted Christmas tree ornaments. I purchased a bunch of kits from Amazon, these kits use a 1.50" seven mm tube. The bushings that are used

are the same bushings as slimline pen kits. We did Pens last month; I want to show the students that there are several projects out there that use the same tooling that you already have for other projects. This project only required a 1.5" block of wood, basically a very small scrap. If you have kids or grandkids this is the perfect holiday project for them to make a few gifts. October was the last Turning Tuesday of the year, we look forward to more sessions next year. Talking to Ray Hinkle, the first Turning Tuesday of next year will be turning a green bowl then we will let them sit until July and turn it for the second time.

During this month's meeting Michael Blankenship came out to show us how he makes his Christmas tree ornaments. If you were not there you missed a great demonstration. If you do not know anything about Michael, he is completely blind. It was fascinating to watch Michael. He gets his hands way closer to his work than most of us are comfortable with. Totally understanding given his situation. I think we would all agree that preparation is important. For Michael preparation is not only important, but also critical. He has everything laid out where he knows it is. He wears a tool belt, not going to lie here, I dig a good tool belt. I can't imagine working everything by feel, one could argue that doing everything by feel produces better products. Michael started his demo by saying that he was showing us how he makes ornaments. All of our best demonstrators say the same thing. I think that one statement says a lot. We all have our own ways of doing things, the demos that we do at the club every month are just planting seeds for our own creativity. On my drive home that night I imagined how I would go about making the ornaments that Michael demonstrated. It is an opportunity to take what you learned and apply it one way or another. I would like to thank Michael and his wife for coming out for a demo, not only did they support the club with a demo, they brought pen gift boxes and some sandpaper samples of Grit-Grip. They are a sandpaper company out of Naples Florida, check out their site at grit-grip.com.

Last month's President's Challenge was a square bowl. The winner was Joe Farell. He brought in a beautiful spalted maple bowl along with a few other items that he made. Also, I would like to thank Keith Baizer for bringing a box of silico brushes to donate to the club.

With end of the year just around the corner, that means that it is club board member elections time. This year we are looking to fill the Secretary and two Director spots. Val Botkin and Tom Zellor have been absolute legends over the last couple of years. Val not only keeps Steve straight she keeps the rest of us on the straight narrow. It is time to let her enjoy being a club member without the responsibility of the secretary. Tom contributions have been monumental. If you have taken home a cool piece of wood it has likely come from him. He arranges a lot of our demonstrators and provides many of our pre-meeting lessons. These two are great advocates for our club and woodturning. Please consider volunteering to take on these very important roles.

Lastly, the November meeting is our Wine and Cheese social and ornament exchange. I can't wait to see what everyone brings for the exchange! - **Moe Milstead**

President's Challenge ● Members select their choice of winner for the PC. During the break between the business meeting and the demonstration, review the items on the challenge table. Separate your ticket and write your selection (the number in front of each entry) on the back of the one marked "TICKET". Place it in the PC bowl. Your voting ticket will enter you in the door prize drawing. One PC entry per member; entry must be turned following the challenge.

Congratulations to the October PC winner: Joe Farrel for his square bowl.

President's Challenge for November 2026 – Turn an ornament. (If you choose, your entry can also be used for the ornament exchange. See article in this newsletter.)



Treasurer Report ● Dues for 2027 will be on the agenda for the Nov meeting. Electronic membership applications and payments can be made on the website. If you prefer to complete and mail a paper application, it is available and can be down loaded from the club website. New members are asked to complete the application form. Club patches are available from the Treasurer for $5. **– Charles Sapp**



Secretary's Report● Hands On Turning - 10/13/26.
Project was a small ornament. We had 9 people in attendance.

Monthly Meeting - 10/27/26
Pre-meeting demonstration was on buffing finishes on turned items. Presenter was Tom Zeller.

Meeting demonstration was a turned Christmas ornament. Presenter was Michael Blankenship. We had 30 members present and 3 visitors. We also had 2 members attending via Zoom.

There will be no Hands On sessions in November or December. The November meeting date is 11/17 and is the Wine & Cheese Party, ornament exchange, and election. There is no meeting in December. - **Valerie Botkin**



Library News ● Our library is only open on Sunday at our club meetings and is open to all our paid members for checking out books, videos, and DVD's.

Our library is a great source of inspiration and knowledge. Members can access complete listing content on the club website. Please take advantage of this wonderful club benefit and return items in a timely manner.

Please contact one of the officers if you are willing to serve or assist in this needed position. – **Moe Milstead**

Video Resources ●

- The Woodturners of St. Louis have a YouTube channel. On it you will find many of our demonstrations. To find the videos – go to YouTube.com and search on *Woodturner St Louis***.** https://www.youtube.com/@woodturnersstlouis2950/videos

Note – Not a member of the AAW. Check out their website: **AAW .**

Community Programs ●

Beads of Courage: The Beads of Courage is a program for kids in need. BOC is a not-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for children and teens coping with serious illness. The program integrates the use of beads as visible, tangible symbols of their experiences and treatment. Children receive a bead for every test, procedure, or treatment they undergo. Woodturners donate boxes to hold the beads they earn. Details on requirements for the boxes can be found on the club web site. Suggestions for BOC bags can be found here. Ceramic beads to attach to the boxes are $1.25 (13/16" in diameter) and available from Rob. Bring your boxes (or bags) to the meeting and give them to Tom Reel.





Pens for the Troops – Kits are available from the club Treasurer for a $3 deposit which is returned to you when a completed pen is returned for the program – get your kits and return completed pens to Charles Sapp. In 2026, our club delivered 180 pens to Woodcraft for distribution to the troops.

Wig Stands – Wig stands will be collected and delivered to a hospital in the fall. A video is available on our YouTube channel and article links included in the March 2025 newsletter on how to turn a wig stand.



Positions to Fill ●

- Demonstrators– Your help is needed to provide a demonstration at each of our meetings. The demo subject is your choice, whatever you enjoy doing – bowls, hollow forms, plates, boxes, pyrography, resins, stabilizing, tips and tricks, tops, ……. Contact Rob Conaway to volunteer.
- Audio / Visual Team – Additional support is needed to help set up, monitor and understand the system for backup. Additional support would really help. Talk to Steve Botkin to volunteer.
- Pre-Meeting Mentor – Set up the Comets and be available to mentor members and visitors
- We appreciate all the help with set up and clean up. Contact Moe Milstead for more opportunities.

Tax Deductions● The Woodturners of St. Louis is a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization. Donations may be tax deductible. Donate up to $100,000 annually from your IRA directly to a qualified charity through a qualified charitable distribution. (As long as certain rules are met-such as you're at least 70½ when making the gift, and the check is payable directly to the qualified charity-then the distribution shouldn't be taxable income.) **Contributions accepted at any time of the year!**



ZOOM Streaming Links ● Our meetings will be streamed via ZOOM unless noted in the meeting information on the web page. All members should receive a reminder and the ZOOM link during the week prior to the meeting. If you do not receive the link by the Thursday prior to the meeting, **send an email to CWSAPP@CHARTER.NET requesting the link.**

Vendor / Sponsor Discounts ● Check the website for vendors that offer discounts to club members. ***When shopping at Rockler in Bridgeton, ask them to register your purchase with the WTSTL as they provide gift cards to the club for door prizes after a number of purchases.***



Calendar of Upcoming Events

Turning Tuesday – Cancelled for November and December. See newsletter article about January 2027 project. Contact Ray Hinkle before Nov 17th if you plan to participate in January so materials are available.

Date	Pre-Meeting 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Meeting 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm
November 17, 2026	**(note date change) No pre meeting. Wine and Cheese social, ornament exchange, and election of officers. Meeting starts at 630pm.**	

Facebook site ● Check out the club Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Woodturners-of-St-Louis/292734664135601 and "**Like**" the page (click on the "Like" icon) to receive updates. You can also post your pictures on this site.



October Show and Tell

Thanks to Phil Sonderman for getting pictures in the absence of the editor.



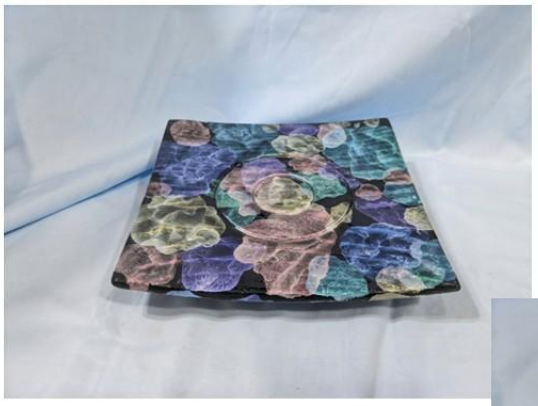
Ken Bald





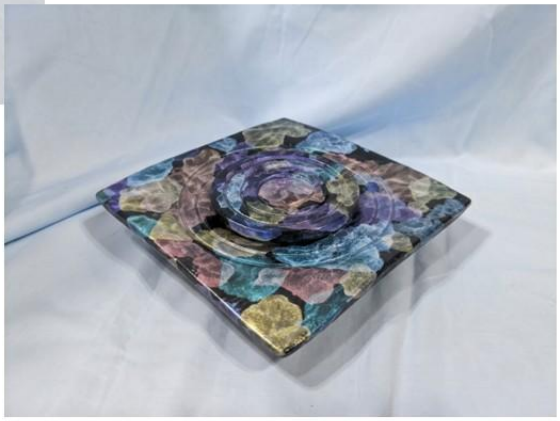
Dan Williams







Charles Sapp







Keith Baizer



The "art of burning oak" is a traditional **Japanese** wood preservation and design technique called Yakisugi (historically or alternatively known in the West as Shou Sugi Ban).







Joe Farell



October President's Challenge – Square bowl winner.





Randy Dicken





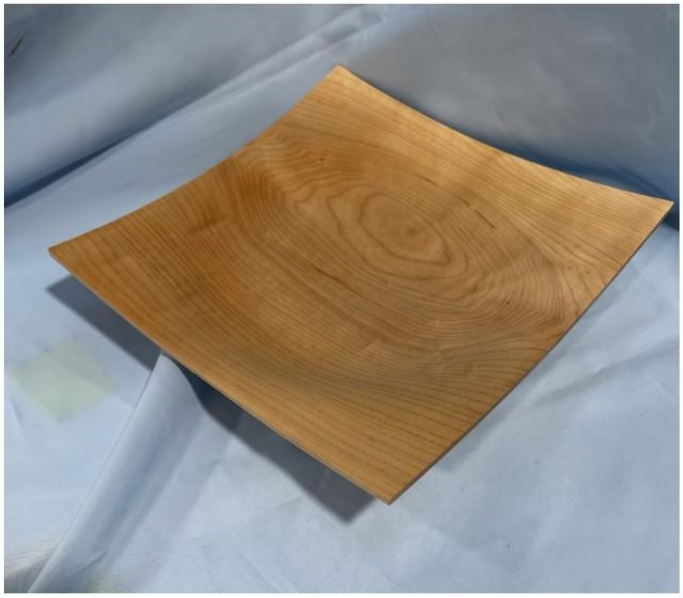


Jerry Rymarquis





Diana Votaw





Ray Hinkle





Don Eskridge







Tom Reel







Steve Reynolds

For questions, contact the web master. **Items submitted for the Show and Tell are now being displayed on the home page of the web.** Provide Charlie Sapp with good quality pictures (640 x 480) of your turnings for Show and Tell!

If you enjoy turning wood, making things on your lathe or want to learn more about woodturning then join the Woodturners of St. Louis. Learn and share ideas with like-minded Woodturners of St. Louis. Our chapter normally meets from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 8300 Valcour Avenue, St. Louis, MO with a pre-meeting at 5:00 pm.

American Association of Woodturners• WTSTL is one of 350+ worldwide chapters of the American Association of Woodturners. We encourage you to join this organization. The AAW is dedicated to providing education, information, and organization to those interested in woodturning. You can join the AAW at their site: http://woodturner.org/member/MemberLogOn.asp.

Membership comes with access to on-line training information and includes a subscription to the *American Woodturner* magazine. Our club is a chapter of the AAW and we encourage all club members to join the AAW. They have been publishing a great series of on-line woodturning training articles for members that are worth the price of membership by themselves. They have also indexed all of the past AAW magazine articles so you can search and find help with most any issue you have or ideas on your next project.

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Secretary:	Valerie Botkin		valeriebotkin@gmail.com
Treasurer:	Charles Sapp	636.928.0149	cwsapp@charter.net
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Audio Visual:	Steve Botkin	314.504.0684	Steve@Botkin.ws
Director:	Tom Zeller	314.484.6499	zellertom83@gmail.com

Questions: webmaster@wtstl.com

Show and Tell items are featured on a slide show on the club website home page. Check it out!

www.WTSTL.com