

Career-tech program at Hinds helps retired Clinton educator hone new passion



John Gill of Clinton

Special to The Clinton Courier

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John Gill of Clinton had retired comfortably from his previous career as an educator when he discovered his next passion in life – woodworking.

“After my teaching career, I worked a while for the federal government in northern Virginia, then lived on Okinawa Island, in Japan,” Gill said. “It was during that time I acquired a lot of used, but good-conditioned woodworking equipment.

“My first big project back then I decided to do was to make an Adirondack chair. I used a template and made one, then I ended up making three. At that point, my wife, Vicky, told me, ‘These would make wonderful Christmas gifts. I think you need to make eight more.’ I had to laugh and say, ‘You’ve taken my hobby and turned it into a job!’”

His newfound talent turned from just another “honey-do” list to a full-on academic program for him, but this time as a student. In May, he earned a career certificate in Residential Carpentry Technology, which serves to help his hobby and his confidence when it comes time for home repairs.

“I never thought about entering the program with the goal of working in the field; that’s a younger man’s game,” he said. “I just wanted to know more about it. Plus, our house is about twenty-five years old, and we’ve never had any major renovation work done to it. I thought it would be great to be a little more knowledgeable about the process.”

The salty, ocean-driven air of Japan’s southern islands might have taken some shine off Gill’s chairs, but didn’t lessen his desire to learn more about working with wood.

“I’ve been working on the chairs as part of the lab work we’ve done in class,” he said. “I’ve learned the basic framing of residential construction, like

walls, doors, floors, ceilings, rafters, those types of things. With that kind of work, you have to have some kind of assistance, or two people doing it.”

Gill spent his classroom career teaching accounting, auditing and other business-related courses, retiring from Alcorn State University in 2010 as the dean of its School of Business, where he worked out of ASU’s Vicksburg Campus. He had also taught similar courses previously at Jackson State University.

His carpentry instructor the past three semesters, Henry Holmes, says the longtime instructor was himself a model student.

“With him being an educator, he was able to explain things to others in class to help them out,” Holmes said. “And he re-did two of his chairs in the shop after class.”

He was so impressed with the carpentry program that he made a point of making a donation through the Hinds Community College Foundation.

“I saw firsthand the value of the Residential Carpentry program,” he said. “It was a real pleasure to give back to that program through the Hinds Foundation. I plan to make the Foundation a permanent part of my annual giving plan.”

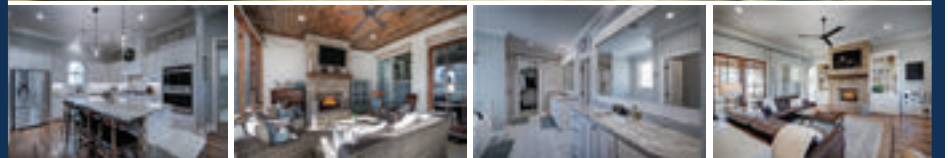
Gill stayed at Hinds last fall to take classes in Precision Machining Technology.

The self-titled “career academician” who has now seen workforce as an instructor, administrator and student across generations says only the technology has changed. He said employers still look for genuine desire and good personal habits.

“What they’re looking for is the same thing they were looking for ten or even twenty years ago,” he said. “It’s about finding highly motivated, hardworking and serious people. That hasn’t changed, and it’s not going to change.”

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