

Coming Tomorrow  
in Voice: Rookie of the Year  
ready for local fans in Philly

phillyBurbs.com/bct  
Your Internet Starts Here.

Sunday, October 14, 2007

Section D



Woodturner Andy DiPietro holds one of many finished pieces as he talks about his hobby, which has led him to convert his basement into a studio.



Finished pieces including bowls and vases grace a shelf in DiPietro's home (above). Two vases (right) show off the beauty of wood.



# As the wood turns

## He creates beauty from downed trees

By Linda Wondolowski  
BCT staff writer

lwondolowski@phillyburbs.com

First it was the pens and key chains, then came the bowls and small vases.

Seated at the dining room table — another woodworking project — Burlington Township resident Andy DiPietro cradled his prized 13-inch-high, hollow-form vase.

"This is the most favorite thing I've ever done," said DiPietro, 49, whose home is filled with the woodturning projects he has crafted during the past three years or so.

Completed 1½ months ago, the 11½-inch diameter, the spalted maple burl vase features a 1/8-inch wall thickness — a challenging endeavor in the world of woodturning. The term is self-descriptive, referring to a piece of wood or log mounted on a lathe that is shaped by a stationary tool while revolving or "turning" on the lathe.

"The beginning of the process is a log," said the craftsman, who sifts through piles of discarded logs at the township's recycling center in search of pieces that he can transform into works of art on his lathe.

"It's a green hobby, if you think of



BCT staff photos/MICHELLE BOTTALICCO

The crafter demonstrates how he shapes a piece of wood using a lathe and chisel.

it. The wood is destined for the landfill or the recycle pile."

Not just any piece of wood will do, however.

"You're looking for wood with a lot of figure," said DiPietro, who works as a senior mechanical engineer at ABP Induction in North Brunswick, where he designs foundry equipment. Chunks of Red Maple and Norway Maple, for example, can develop such a "figure" just by laying around in moisture for a while.

"When it sits on the ground for any period of time, fungus will attack it and add these beautiful black lines to it, so the wood beautifies with age. It needs moisture," he said.

The effect is known as spalting,

said DiPietro, and timing is key.

"If you let it go too long, it rots. It starts to tear. If it tears, then it's firewood," he said.

Plus, said DiPietro, "You don't want to take too much wood — it rots. You must use it within six months. There's a tendency to always take too much."

"My favorites are maple, walnut, cherry and holly. The holly tree is white (wood)."

Burl, an abnormal growth that sprouts on tree trunks or branches, is another "prize" for woodworkers, DiPietro said. "It happens only about 5 percent of the time."

His aim: "I'm looking for woods