Brandon Woodworkers Club Newsletter March 2026

Let's Get Started

This month's meeting started at 7 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mark Corso, followed by the invocation from Dave Merrill. After the invocation, Tom Bolen reminded everyone to sign in and get a "sign-in" raffle ticket from Ken Coleman.

Club Business

- As always, a special thanks to Rockler for allowing us to use their facility.
- Rockler will be hosting Innovation Night on Thursday, March 19th, 6-8 PM. You'll get an up-close look at their newest product designs via interactive Innovation Stations, where an associate will show you product features and real-world shop applications. Each attendee will receive a coupon to save up to $75. There will also be raffles for three gift cards.
- The club recognizes the following Florida State Fair and Strawberry Festival winners: Jim Ethington, Caleb Nixon, Richard Nannis, and Keith Vensel. See their photos and ribbons in Show and Tell.
- We always want to add new pictures to the website. Don't be shy, send your pics.
- **Shop tours:** We need volunteers! It is a great time of the year. Please consider hosting club members to come out to see where your magic happens. Tours are typically a couple of hours in the morning on Saturdays.
- We have added the membership directory to the website. We will discuss access and additional features as we go. For now it is simply names and email addresses.

- Our tool loan program is now in operation, and we have brought in the tools we presently own. Member Craig Scott was the first one to take advantage of it and will give us his experience. We want to take a deep dive into both the Dewalt planer and the Festool Domino so there is a better understanding of these tools and the capabilities.
- This is the last month to renew your membership for 2026! Note that we have added a liability waiver form to protect the club and its members as we move forward with the tool loan program. Please make sure you fill out and sign this form or you will not be able to participate in the tool loan program. A copy is also posted on the protected area of the website. Please get your signed copy to Ken Coleman.
- If you have not received your 2026 membership card please see Ken – (show the card) – this card is necessary at some of the vendors who offer us discounts. Also – when purchasing at Rockler please make sure you tell the salesperson that you are with the BWC. Rockler tracks these club purchases and rewards us with gift cards that we distribute every meeting.
- Last month we were able to begin simulcasting the presentations to the Rockler TV screens so all can get a better view of the action. Thanks to Caleb for making this happen! This seemed to be a success and we will keep it up. In addition, Caleb recorded the presentation and posted it on our YouTube channel. This is a great benefit to those who cannot attend the meeting.
- Sadly, member Keith Vensel's son passed away a couple weeks ago. We have a sympathy card for everybody to sign – please see Ken Coleman.

Presentation

Since the club now has tools to loan out, Tom Bolen took some time and talked about the DeWalt 735X planer (Figs 1 & 2) and the Festool 750 Domino (Fig 6). The club's planer has a helical head instead of planer blades. Helical cutter heads offer superior performance over traditional planer blades by providing a smoother finish, reduced tear-out on figured wood, and significantly lower noise levels. Several companies make after-market helical heads and the prices have come down.

DeWalt 735X Thickness Planer

A thickness planer is a woodworking machine used to reduce the thickness of boards to a uniform, precise measurement and create a flat, smooth surface parallel to the opposite face. It uses a top-mounted, rotating cutter head to remove material, with rollers that feed the board through to ensure consistent thickness throughout its length.

Figure 1 DeWalt 735X

Figure 2 DeWalt 735X

Key Features and Specifications:

- Motor: 15 Amp, 20,000 RPM motor; 10,000 RPM cutterhead speed. *Note: The planer generally requires a 20-amp circuit to operate without tripping the built-in breaker.
- Cutting Capacity: 13" wide, 6" thick (maximum 1/8" cut depth).
- Cutter Head: 3-knife, reversible, disposable knife design with 30% longer life.
- Speed: Two-speed gear box is designed to optimize cuts per inch (CPI) at 179 or 96.
- Speed 1 (Slow/Finishing - 179 CPI): Moves the board through at 14 feet per minute. Use this for the final, light passes (1/32" or less) to achieve a finished surface that requires less sanding.
- Speed 2 (Fast/Dimensioning - 96 CPI): Moves the board through at 26 feet per minute. Use this for initial passes when removing a lot of material from rough lumber.

***Note: Change speeds only while the motor is running and the planer is under no load.**

- **Chip Ejection:** Built-in fan-assisted vacuum removes chips from the cutterhead. It is not recommended to use a shop vac to collect the shavings because it will overwhelm the hose and fill the shop vac quickly. Use at least a four-inch hose connected to a dust collection system or let the machine spew shavings into your shop or outside.
- **Turret Depth Stop:** Allows users to quickly set the planer for frequent, repeatable thicknesses. It prevents you from going lower than what you set it at. You can also use calipers to measure the thickness.
- **Base:** 19-3/4" cast aluminum base for rigidity.
- **Dimensions:** Roughly 24"L x 19"W x 17"H (without tables).

- **Weight:** ~92 to 101 lbs, without a base.

Functionality and Accessories:

- Adjustments: An easy-to-read, extra-large thickness gauge (Fig 3) and material removal gauge ensure accuracy.
- Stability: Features an automatic carriage lock, reducing snipe.
- Optional Upgrades: The DW735X model includes infeed/outfeed tables.
- Portability: Solid build (approx. 92 lbs) requires careful lifting, but it is considered a portable benchtop unit.

Key Planing Principles

***Note:** before you plane wood, check it for metal using a metal detector. You may also want to use a wire brush to ensure the wood is free of dirt or debris that can ruin blades.

- **Grain Direction:**
    - Go with the grain: Planing "downhill" (with the fibers) (Fig 4) prevents tear-out and chipping. If the wood tears, turn the board around.
    - "Pet the Cat" rule: Feel the wood; it will be smooth in one direction and rough in the other. Feed the smooth direction forward.
    - Tricky Grain: For figured wood or knots where grain swirls, take very shallow cuts or use a high angle of attack.
- **Light Cuts:** Take shallow passes rather than trying to remove too much material at once, particularly with harder woods or highly figured woods.
- **Sharpness:** Ensure your blade or carbide cutters are sharp, as it makes the work easier and the finish smoother. If you have nicks in your blades or cutters, replace them or you'll spend extra time hand planing or sanding down ridges.
- **Preventing Snipe:** Lift the board slightly as it enters and leaves the planer, or use a sacrificial sled.
- **Maintain Tools:** Wax the bed and infeed/outfeed tables and keep planer rollers clean. Keep the chip ejection chute clear.
- **Safety:** Always wear eye and ear protection when using a powered planer.

Wood is hygroscopic (materials that attract and absorb moisture (water vapor) directly from the air), so when you plane it, you expose fresh, porous wood cells to the atmosphere, allowing them to absorb or release moisture rapidly to achieve equilibrium moisture content with the surroundings. Ideally, if you remove a significant amount of wood, you should let it rest for a few days or a week, depending on your ambient conditions, to allow tension release and prevent warping; recheck the dimensions before use. If you cannot wait, use it immediately for assembly to minimize risk of movement.

Best Practices

- **Acclimate:** Allow lumber to acclimate to the workshop's environment for at least a few weeks before machining.
- **Staged Milling:** To minimize warping, reduce the wood to roughly 1/8" above final thickness, let it sit overnight, then do the final, shallow passes.
- **Monitor:** Use a moisture meter to ensure consistent, low moisture levels before machining.

Figure 3 Highlighting the material thickness gauge

Figure 4 Planing with the grain

What is Snipe?

Planer snipe (Fig 5) is a, typically, 3–4 inch long, slightly deeper gouge or dip in the surface of a board, occurring at the leading or trailing ends as it passes through a thickness planer. It happens when the board tips, causing the cutterhead to remove more material than intended at the start or end of the cut.

Figure 5 Planer snipe

Methods to Eliminate Snipe

- **Use Sacrificial Boards (Butt-Feeding):** Feed a piece of scrap wood immediately before and after your workpiece. The rollers stay engaged on constant material, so the snipe occurs on the scrap wood rather than your workpiece. You can also place a piece of wood adjacent and a few inches behind your workpiece to engage the rollers and minimize or eliminate snipe.
- **Use a Planer Sled:** Mount your workpiece onto a larger piece of plywood or melamine. The sled supports the board, and any snipe occurs at the ends of the sled.
- **Lift the Board:** As the board enters the planer, slightly lift the tail end. As it exits, lift the front end. This counteracts the tendency of the board to tip into the cutter head.
- **Adjust Infeed/Outfeed Tables:** Ensure your planer's tables are perfectly aligned. Raising the tables slightly higher than the planer bed can prevent the board from bowing down.
- **Use a Table Extension or Support:** Ensure the board is fully supported by an outfeed table, or have someone support it to prevent it from dropping as it exits.

Using a thickness planer is highly satisfying, offering the immediate gratification of transforming rough, warped, or dirty lumber into perfectly smooth, parallel, and accurately dimensioned boards. It elevates woodworking from tedious manual work to efficient, precise craftsmanship, allowing woodworkers to produce high-quality, professional-looking components quickly

Festool Domino DF 500 Q

The Festool Domino DF 500 Q (Fig 6) is a premium, handheld, pendulum-action (Fig 7) mortising machine designed for fast, precise, and strong mortise-and-tenon joints (Fig 8) in furniture, cabinets, and frames. It uses proprietary oval-shaped "Domino" tenons (Fig 8), providing superior twist-proof strength compared to biscuits or dowels. The system is highly versatile, allowing for mortises in various woods and panels with minimal setup. The DF 500 is optimized for smaller to medium-sized joinery (12mm stock or thicker), while the DF 700 is geared towards larger, heavy-duty applications.

Figure 6 Festool DF 500 Q

Figure 7 Festool domino cutter head

Figure 8 Tenon alignment with dominos

Figure 9 Festool DF 500 Q Systainer and dominos

Key Features & Capabilities

- **Pendulum Action:** The spiral cutter rotates and oscillates to create clean, mortises in seconds.
- **Versatile Sizing:** Accommodates interchangeable cutters (4mm, 5mm, 6mm, 8mm, and 10mm) to match tenon sizes from 4x20mm up to 10x50mm.
- **Adjustable Settings:** Features adjustable mortise depth (12--28mm), routing height, and angle (0--900 with indexed stops).
- **Accuracy & Dust Extraction:** Built-in indexing pins enable accurate, fast, repetitive joints. The 27mm dust port is designed for connection to a Festool dust extractor, crucial for long cutter life.
- **Set Components:** The DF 500 Q-Set (often model 578544) typically includes the joiner, a 5mm cutter, a trim stop, a cross stop, a support bracket, and a Systainer storage case.

Specifications

- **Power:** 420 watts
- **Speed:** 25,500 RPM
- **Weight:** 7.72 lbs (3.5 kg)
- **Power Cord:** 13 ft (4 meters)

Key Reasons to Use a Domino Machine:

- **Speed and Efficiency:** It is much faster than traditional mortise and tenon methods, often by a factor of 10x or more.
- **Superior Strength:** The mortise-and-tenon system produces strong, torque-resistant, and durable joints.
- **High Precision and Alignment:** The machine's indexing system ensures accurate alignment of workpieces, minimizing the need for complex layout marking.
- **Versatility:** It can handle various joint types, including miters, bevels, and butt joints, and is effective for both small projects and large, heavy-duty structures.
- **Adjustable Fit:** The machine can cut mortises slightly wider (due to a "slop switch") on one side, providing room for adjustments during assembly and allowing for faster, stress-free gluing.
- **Consistency:** It provides consistent, repeatable results, making it ideal for production work and creating multiple identical components.

Comparison with Other Joinery Methods:

- **Biscuits:** The Domino is stronger and more versatile, offering a larger gluing surface area.
- **Dowels:** The Domino is easier to align and provides a stronger, mortise-like joint compared to standard, less forgiving, round dowels.

Comparisons to Alternatives

Biscuit Joiner	Dowel Jig	Domino Machine
Primary Use Panel alignment	**Primary Use** Alignment and strength	**Primary Use** High-strength structural joinery
Joint Strength Low	**Joint Strength** Moderate to High	**Joint Strength** Very High
Speed Fast	**Speed** Slow/Moderate	**Speed** Very Fast

Core Operation Steps

- **Setup:** Attach the dust extractor, connect the cable, and lock the power switch into the on position.
- **Settings:** Select mortise depth (based on tenon size) and width (tight for one side, wider for aligning subsequent joints). Mortise depth should be half the tenon length, i.e. 25mm depth for a 50mm long tenon.
- **Aligning:** Utilize the center indicator on the clear plastic shield to align with pencil marks, or use the indexing pins for repeated spacing from an edge.
- **Plunging:** Hold the machine firmly against the workpiece, ensuring it is level. Apply smooth, steady pressure to plunge the cutter into the wood, then allow it to retract.

Key Tips and Techniques

- **Reference Faces:** Always register the fence off the same face (e.g., the top surface) to ensure consistent alignment.
- **Angle Adjustment:** Use the fence locking lever to set angles, with detents at 0, 22.5, 45, 67.5, and 90 degrees.
- **Material Thickness:** Use the height gauge to set the cutter to the center of the workpiece or use the board thickness stops.
- **Safety & Accuracy:** Test on scrap wood first. Use the "tight" setting for the first mortise and "wide" for the second to allow for slight adjustments.

The primary advantages of utilizing a domino machine in woodworking lie in its exceptional speed, precision, and durability in constructing floating mortise and tenon joints. This capability significantly streamlines the joinery process and enhances the overall quality of the projects.

Newcomers/Visitors

The club welcomed Cliff, Jeff, Ron and Jim O'Connor, Joe O'Connors's brother.

Show and Tell

Alright, let's get to everyone's favorite portion of the meeting.

Fred Langes

Fred made a bread board for his wife and his daughter saw it and said she wanted one, so he made her one (below, right). Later, Fred found some zebra wood at Rockler and made his wife another cutting board (bottom) from birch and walnut with a zebra wood end grain diagonal. He also made a corner jig to round the corners using a router.

Ken Boyd

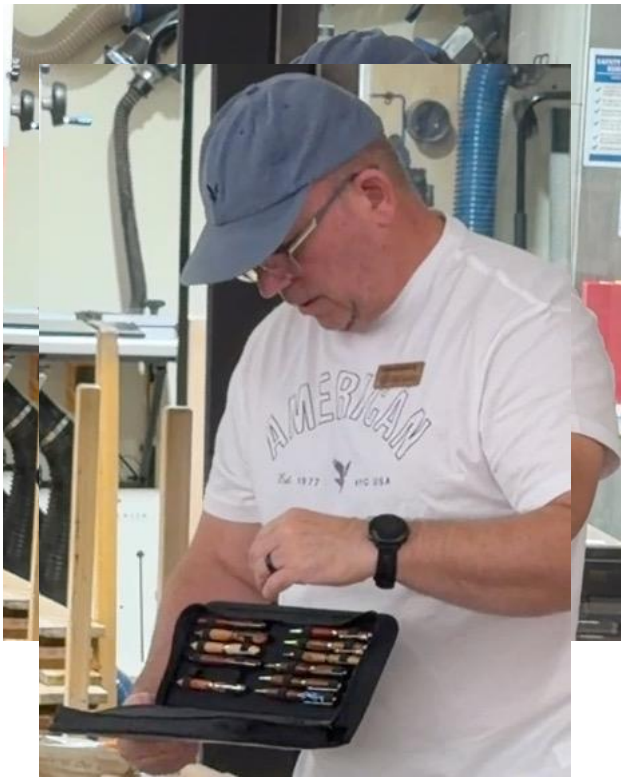
Ken made the following:

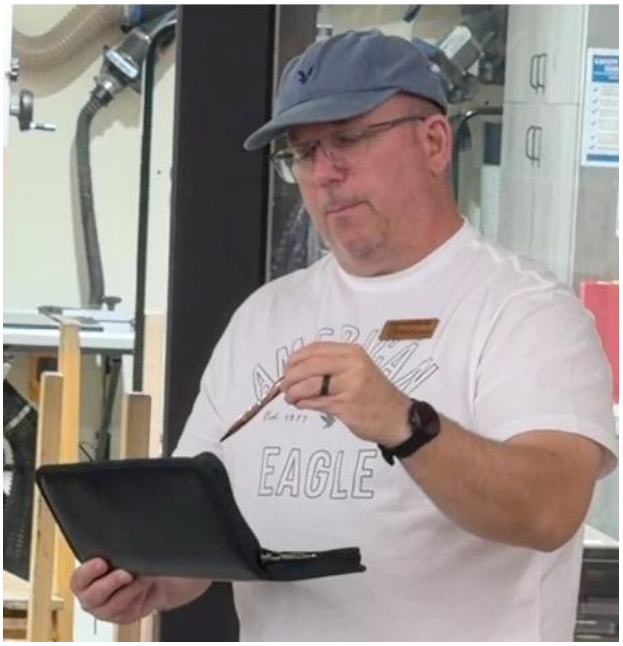
- Two bowls from a birch propeller hub he cut in half. Ken engraved wild flowers in the bottom of one and put a piece of cedar in the other.
- Birch wood scraps with engraving for the grandchildren to paint.
- Lady's walking cane from walnut and birch with her name engraved and finished with a Deft stain and finish.


AMERICAN
EAGLE

Ward Gannon

Ward turned a bunch of pens from wood with a CA finish. Four of them in order, after the case of pens, are: two purple hearts; maple; and osage orange.





Dave Merrill

Dave scroll sawed Love in Bloom, a fretwork art from spalted hickory, backed with walnut, and finished with 10 coats of shellac for the state fair. Dave got the wood from Bill Powell in 2019 and had it sitting in his garage until 2025 when he cut it out. The shellac was hand-rubbed between coats.

Rossie Knighton

Rossie's wife wanted a bench for the patio, so he built an eight-foot nine-inch bench from monkeypod and cypress and finished it with marine spar varnish.

Bruce Woody

Bruce turned pens and a peppermill combo. The pens are from hybrid (wood embedded in resin), canary wood, and walnut burl; the peppermill is from zebra wood. The pens have a CA finish and the peppermill has and Odie's oil finish.

Holly Bentley

Holly turned a peppermill from cedar with help from Rick Ward.

Bob Ippoliti

Bob scroll sawed a cat from birch plywood and mounted it in a birch frame. This particular cat is by the artist Charles Hand and this is one of his new styles, and he calls it Stylist. Bob made this for the fair along with two other ones. One thing led to another and before he knew it, the deadline to enter had passed. So, he has it ready for next year's fair. Bob worked in roughly 20-minute increments and he used 25 blades on it.

Aaron Harrigan

Aaron made three chess boards from leopard wood, hard maple, and epoxy.

Robert Babbitt

Robert made a turkey call stand with angled dove tails from cherry. Mark and Robert made a YouTube video of this; it's posted here: Corso Homes.

Caleb Nixon

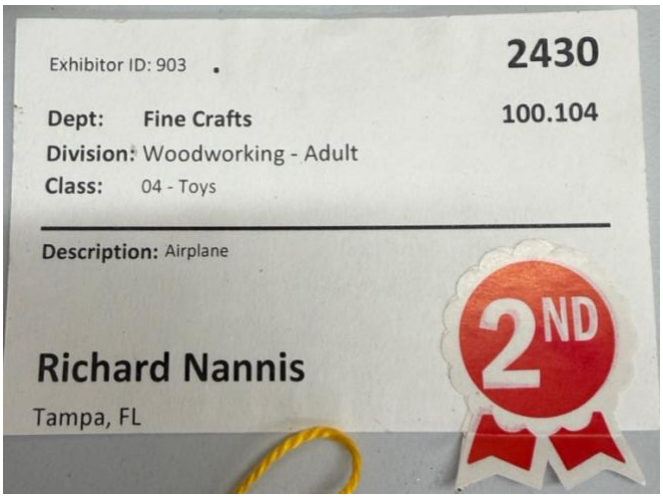
Caleb took 1st place at the State Fair for his intarsia lion head. Congratulations, Caleb!! The lion head is made from cherry, walnut, hickory, black ebony, and birch. It's finished with a matte lacquer and a glossy water-based spar urethane. It took him 86 hours and the drilling the tiny holes for the custom whiskers was a nightmare, a nightmare that became a dream come true – just outstanding work!

Stacey Rhody

Stacey made three Thor's hammers from ziricote, bubinga, rosewood, and padauk and finished with butcher block oil. For him, the handles are square – fits him better – and the head has a five-degree angle. He recommends you cut a hole in the head first and make sure the handle fits, because doing it after is a real bugger. As for grips, you can leave it natural, or add hockey tape, leather, 550 cord or paracord, hemp, or something else.

Rich Nannis

Richard took 2nd place at the Florida State Fair for this airplane. Way to go, Rich!! Much of the plane is turned and other parts are band sawed and scroll sawed. Originally, it was meant for the children's hospital but his granddaughter liked it so much he wound up keeping it.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Tampa, FL


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Albert Tejera

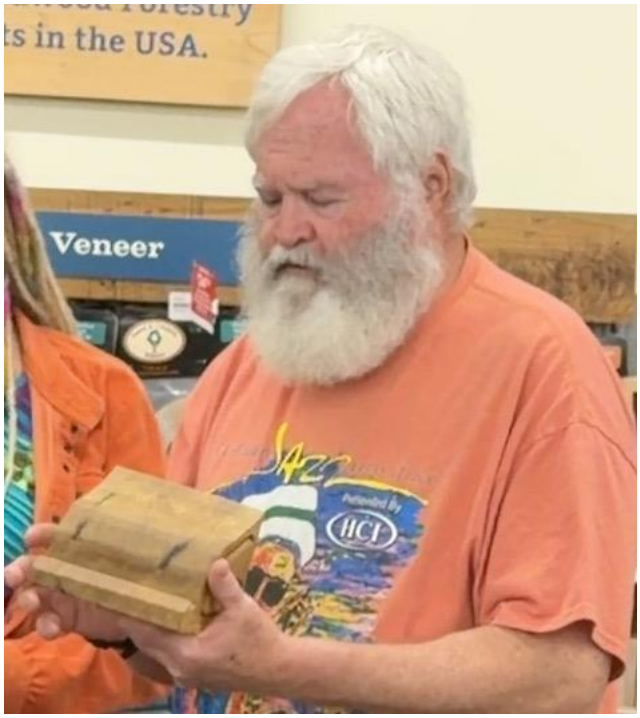
Albert brought in the remnants of a whole guitar he built for the state fair. After the fair he took it apart to put some clear coat on it. He also brought in the jig that holds the guitar so he can rotate the platform it's on vertically and horizontally while spray painting it. The mottled/orange peel finish wasn't planned but turned out to be a pleasant surprise.

Rick Ward

Rick turned a bowl from spalted sweet gum and finished it with spar varnish. He got the sweet gum years ago from a neighbor who cut down his, the neighbor's, tree, so it's been curing in Rick's garage. This is the first bowl from that log and Rick will give it to his neighbor as a thank you.

Jeff Futch

Jeff made two band saw boxes from black limba and finished them with TotalBoat's Wood Honey. One of the boxes has maple drawer pulls and the other has walnut pulls.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Neil O'Malley

Neil made a Shoji lantern from stained glass and wenge that he bleached and finished with polyurethane. It has color-changing LEDs on the inside. The bleaching process he used was to lay the pieces on paper towels and spray them with bleach. The paper towels absorbed the bleach and provided a longer bleaching effect.

Ray Penn

Ray made a dovetailed box and some pens from birch. The pens have a friction polish finish. Ray is making the pens – one for each employee where Ken picks up the free birch wood – and Ken is laser engraving each pen with an employee's name. Thank you both so much for your lovely gesture.

It's amazing how many and the variety of projects club members have made from free birch over the years! Thanks, Ken.

Mike Hurlburt

Mike made about 25 cowboy spatulas from maple, mesquite, and leopardwood and finished them with oil. The ones you see here are “wife-approved” for their kitchen. The others he made will be gifts.

Jim Ethington

Jim won two ribbons at the Strawberry Festival: 1st place for his guitar; and, President's Choice Award for overall 1st place in the entire show!!!

Jim also brought in the guitar that won those awards. It has nine coats of catalyzed urethane.

Keith Vensel had planned to be at the meeting but couldn't make it so Jim brought in Keith's guitar (red, white and blue, below) and his Guitars for Veterans logo. Keith's guitar took 1st place and Best in Show in the Decorative Décor category. It will be auctioned off to help veterans with PTSD.


RED OAK
4.99
Veneer
VILLAGE PRESIDENT'S CHOICE AWARD ADULT
FLORIDA STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL
PLANT CITY FLORIDA

Keith Vensel

Reminders

Thank Yous

Here's to Rockler

And to our refreshments trio of **Sherry, Diane, and Joe, we**

And the Winners Are

$10 Rockler Gift Certificate for attendees (sign-in tickets) – Caleb Nixon
$10 Rockler Gift Certificate for Show and Tell – Albert Tejera
$15 Rockler Gift Certificate for Show and Tell – Rick Ward
$25 Rockler Gift Certificate for Show and Tell – Neil O'Malley
50/50 (for the big moolah) - $76 Darryl Kehoe

Meeting times

The BWC meets the 2nd Tuesday of the month at Rockler Woodworking & Hardware, 169 Brandon Town Center Dr, Brandon, FL 33511, 813-793-6030. April's meeting will be the 14th from 7-9 PM.

Newsletter by John Bacca
AV support by Conrad Wheeler and Caleb Nixon

Club Officers

Tom Bolen, President
John Bacca, Vice President
Ken Coleman, Treasurer
Holly Bentley, Secretary