



## WEN assists Milwaukee Woodworker

For over 15 years Fred Lewis made custom cabinets part time while working full time as a machinist for Harley Davidson. Two years ago Lewis saw the chance to do full time what he really loves –woodworking.



Lewis built his first cabinet in his basement. As his hobby turned into a part-time business, he moved his shop into his garage and later to a 1,400 square-foot building, where he operated part-time for 13 years.

In 2005 after retiring from Harley Davidson, he had the opportunity to expand into a larger 4,200-square-foot building.

“I’m not a business person. I’m a machine operator. I realize in order to run a business you’ve got to be a business person,” said Lewis. “That’s not easy to do without getting some advice and having a mentor of some kind to go to with questions and to give you a heads up on different things you need to do to operate a business.”

Lewis found that mentor in Kamela Goodwyn, WEN Minority Business Specialist. Goodwyn helped Lewis to obtain an Early Planning Grant in order to complete a business plan, which enabled him to secure financing for his new building.

“In addition he has received a Façade Grant from the city to assist with the signage and beautification of his building. I worked with him on that as well,” said Goodwyn, who continues to assist Lewis as he grows his business, Lewis Custom Cabinets, which offers a unique service to homes and businesses in the Milwaukee area.

“Now days, you don’t find a lot of small cabinet shops in the inner city,” said Lewis. “The few that surround don’t come out and do home estimates and one-on-one consulting with the customer. We sit down and take the time to figure out what it is they want, before anything is ever done.”

Lewis celebrated the grand opening of his new facility at 3433 N. 35th Street in December 2007.

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