

In Michigan, launching a shiny new career - again

When you think of CAD software, you don't often think of jewelry. Thomas Miller did, and it's paying off.

Miller, of Kentwood, Michigan, designs pennants for necklaces, along with rings and earrings, with DraftSight. At age 50, he was looking for something to do when he retires. Jewelry looked like a good way to utilize his talents.

Though Miller has a strong background in manufacturing and quality assurance, he was "downsized" when companies started leaving the West Michigan area. "Now I'm laying the groundwork for something I want to do the rest of my life – something fun," he said.

His search has been long and interesting. After growing up on a farm near Saranac, Michigan, he bounced around as a bus boy, grocery store bagger, x-ray darkroom tech, bricklayer, truck driver, restaurant owner, realtor, insurance agent and manager of self-storage facilities. He also spent time in the military. His training in CAD goes back to his work as a quality control specialist.

When he's not designing jewelry he likes to target shoot, and enjoys black and white photography – the film kind. He develops and prints the film and pictures himself.

"I also love to cook," said Miller. But of course – seems there isn't much Miller can't do.

To make his newest career even more fun, he's collaborating with his 21-year-old daughter Sarah, who lives several hours away in Columbus, Indiana. She helps design the jewelry and he is learning to mill the raw metal. He's using aluminum, brass and copper because they are inexpensive metals to work with while fine-tuning the designs and his milling skills. He's also using several kinds of wood in the designs.

"What I'm finding is that with DraftSight, it's very easy to make changes in the design," he said. "We print out a drawing and that tells us where and how to mill the metal. DraftSight is great because it makes prototyping and adjustments in design easier and faster."

The unique and clever selling point of his jewelry is that somewhere in every design, there will be a heart. We can't show you any of the designs yet because Miller is getting everything copyrighted. But stop back to see some very cool designs and finished products, and to find out how you can buy some.

"The neat thing is that even though my daughter is a few hours away, she has loaded DraftSight on her computer so we can bounce files back and forth," Miller said. "It won't be hard for her to pick up."

"I've been playing with CAD since it was DOS based," said Miller. "DraftSight is no problem. It has a wonderful tutorial sight for helping me when I need it."

We always knew DraftSight is .. ahem .. a gem-like product.