



THE UNRESERVED BLACKSMITH

Western Reserve Artist-Blacksmith Association



***GETTING TO KNOW ANNA KOPLIK,
CONFERENCE DEMONSTRATOR 4***

President's Letter	2
Club Officers	3
Hammer-ins	6
Trivet	8
Blacksmith of the Year	10
Conference Sign-up	11
Calendar	12

President's Letter

Dear Fellow WRABA Members,

First, let's thank Courtney Wilson for his generous financial donation to the club and apologize for the donation being unacknowledged last year. We are truly sorry that this slipped through the cracks, Courtney. Donors are the gas that keeps this club driving, and we appreciate them.

We would also like to extend our heartfelt sympathies to Frank Strock's loved ones. He often volunteered for club events, and we will sorely miss him. His family has graciously donated his tools, which will be available at the conference auction.

Updates: Congratulations to Bill Fisher on his new role as our treasurer. Under his watchful eye, things are running much smoother. Financials are going well. Thank you for getting this boat on a more even keel, Bill!

While we haven't met my initial (idealistic) goal for completion, the ASM bonsai tree is progressing well (below). There has been a weekday and a weekend crew. Anyone interested in participating, call me for details.

As a final note, it's *very important* to be aware that this year, all minors at open forge **must** be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Thanks,

Roy Troutman



WRABA Executives

President

Roy Troutman

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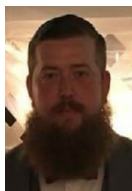


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EDITOR'S CORRECTION: Some copies of the previous newsletter were sent with Grant Michener and Roy Troutman's information reversed. I have corrected the contact information above. Sorry for any confusion!



Anna Koplik: Profile of a Wandering Blacksmith



Anna Koplik, the WRABA 2025 conference demonstrator, was kind enough to answer my questions and share her journey. Quite a journey at that: In 2015, she graduated with a BFA in Jewelry from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY. This wandering blacksmith has worked at craft schools, has taught blacksmithing workshops, and has been a journeyman architectural smith. She has worked at Peters Valley School of Craft, Atlas Forge, Touchstone Center for Crafts, Spirit Ironworks, Center for Metal Arts, Davis Metalsmiths, Caleb Kullman Studio, Michael Bondi Metal Design, and MDO Welding and Fabrication. She has taught at a variety of craft schools, including Penland School of Crafts, Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, and John C. Campbell Folk School.

Her personal work focuses mainly on tool and utensil making and combining functionality with a refined, delicate aesthetic.

While she may not have a home forge, the forge is clearly her home.

Let's hear from Anna herself.

You graduated with a BFA in Jewelry from Pratt Institute. Can you talk about the shift from jewelry making to blacksmithing and what caused that?

Going to school for jewelry, I loved everything that involved hammering and fire, especially sheet metal work. Pratt introduced me to blacksmithing in a Welding and Forging class, and as soon as I tried forging steel, it just felt right. After that, I took some bladesmithing and blacksmithing classes at craft schools and knew that's what I was meant to be doing. When I graduated from college I worked as a blacksmithing assistant over the summer, and from there on out, my sole focus has been blacksmithing. But even with my focus on smithing, my jewelry background and the skills and attention to detail that taught me still influence the work I make today.

Do you find that blacksmithing larger pieces tends to be outside your comfort zone? You have such a fine eye for detail.

I've been lucky that I've been able to do an incredibly varied breadth and scale: working on large scale architectural projects like pergolas, gates, and railings, to hand forging tiny spoons and utensils (I feel like the smaller work is frequently the hardest!).

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I often work smaller scale and really love focusing on small details and delicate forgings, but because of that, I also enjoy the change of pace when I get to work bigger—doing tool making or architectural work. I don't currently have my own shop and am constantly traveling and jumping from shop to shop, so I think partly due to necessity and partly just because I enjoy the challenge, I tend to work smaller, but I'm looking forward to when I have a space where I'm able to explore scaling up more of my work.

Are there any particular skills or techniques you're excited to showcase at the conference?

I am excited to show a combination of my toolmaking work and my smaller, delicate forgings. I enjoy the contrast between the brute force that something like hammer making can involve, and the very refined and controlled forging of things like tiny spoons. I think it's important to show the diversity of what blacksmithing can do, but also how it all comes down to accuracy and understanding your material, your heat, and your hammer blows.



What can attendees expect from your demonstrations at the conference?

Everyone can definitely expect plenty of bad jokes and nerdy blacksmithing! In addition, I will focus a lot on process and how I think about forging. People often look for a formula: "If you start with X material and do steps 1, 2, and 3, you end up with object Y." When I realized I get to throw out and make up that formula however I want, the whole world opened up. I plan to demonstrate hammer forging, as well as some of my utensil making, but it will be focused on understanding the process behind the object so that it can be applied to whatever you want to make.

Is there anything new (trends, innovations, etc.) in the world of blacksmithing that excites you currently?

I really love seeing the ways people will reinvent old techniques for new designs; traditional techniques being used to create more modern objects. Work like what Pete Braspenninx, Elizabeth Belz, Seth Gould, and Elizabeth Brim make always amaze me with how they use both traditional and modern techniques to make such beautiful and unique work that is still very much about blacksmithing. That is something I always strive for in my work: to celebrate the tradition of forging, while still creating new and interesting work and pushing what is possible in metal.

You're part of the Society of Inclusive Blacksmiths. Talk about them as a resource. How have they helped you?

The Society of Inclusive Blacksmiths is something I wish had existed when I first started blacksmithing and I'm so grateful it exists now. SIBs has amazing scholarship and grant opportunities, and we have a virtual mentorship program I coordinate along with Anne Bujold. But to me, SIBs is most important simply as a community and for representation. Just knowing that this community of diverse blacksmiths

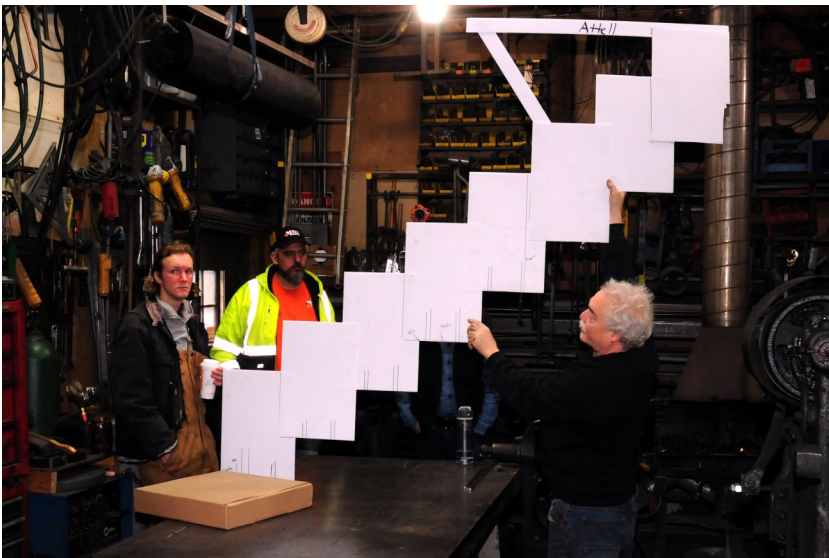
exists out there is such a game changer for so many people just starting out in the field. Being able to connect with and see other blacksmiths that you can relate to can make you feel like you have a place in this craft, like meeting other women blacksmiths both in and out of SIBs did for me. Having these resources, opportunities, and communities for people not traditionally as represented in blacksmithing will help expand people's access to this field, and the craft will just keep get richer and stronger, which is something I am thankful to be a part of.

See more of her work here: <https://www.annarkoplik.com/>

Thank you, Anna, for letting us glimpse what's to come!

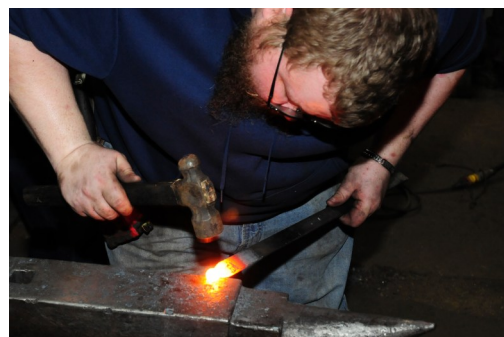
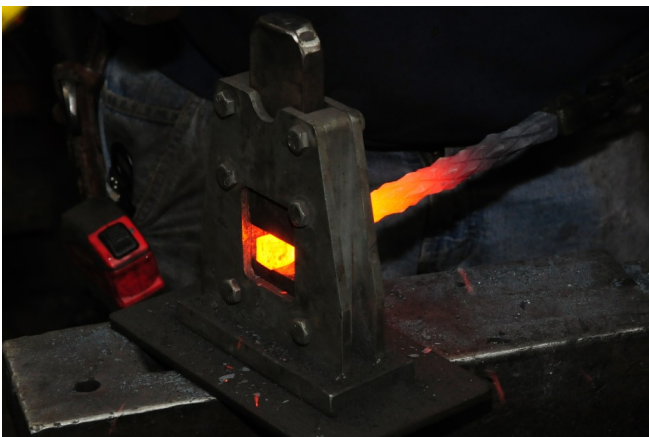
Ken Roby's Hammer-in

(Left) Jarrett Gorecki, (Middle) James Hyde, and
(Right) Ken Roby



Ken Roby's signboard staircase template (left). While not pictured, he laid a 3" white plastic strip below the steps, cutting holes in that strip to visualize where the railing would go. He cut out and joined together 18x12" signboards with MAXTITE polymer for the stairs. Definitely material that a blacksmith could use to work more 3-dimensionally.

Pineapple Twist



David Campbell working on the pineapple twist

Hammer-ins

Walt Mullett's hammer-in at Sonnenberg Village

Previous to Walt Mullett's hammer-in, we were given a tour of the village print shop and Hope's House. Hope's House donates clothes, shoes, blankets—whatever a child needs—to foster families, and it was an eye-opening experience to see both how much they do, and the fact that such places exist.

After the tour, Walt Mullett and Jeff Waybright demonstrated how to forge a hummingbird. Walt (left) with a finished hummingbird in his hand. He planned to attach it to the bouquet pictured behind him. The First-Quarter Store Competition winner was also announced at Walt's.



Congratulations, Randy, on your win for the First-Quarter Store Competition, 2025!

Walt Mullett

Randy Barker's winning candlestick holders



The Urban Forge's hammer-in at Soulcraft Makerspace

Tim Cunningham (right) demonstrated a 3-hook T-rack. His useful scroll tidbit for a ram's horn design: start at the end and take your time going around. Slowly walk one tip forward and bring it around on the round end of the anvil (tip of split). Stop at a mostly rounded tip at one split so you can more easily include symmetry. You can more easily go back and forth. Support on anvil to get the curl all the way around.



Project: Basic Forged Trivet

Materials Needed

- 1.) Mild steel stock:
 - a.) 3 pieces of 3/8" square or round stock, ~10–12" long (for the frame)
 - b.) pieces of 1/4" or 3/8" round stock, ~3–4" long (for legs)
- 2.) Rivets (optional: you can also hot punch and tenon legs)
- 3.) Forge, hammer, tongs, anvil, vise
- 4.) Punches, twist wrench (optional), hacksaw or cutoff hardy, wire brush, and finish (linseed oil, beeswax, etc.)

Step-by-Step Instructions

1.) Design & Layout

Decide on your trivet shape: triangle or square

Mark steel lengths to match your design, factoring in corners or joints

2.) Forge the Frame

Forge Ends (optional): Add decorative finials, like a scroll, fishtail, or leaf to the ends if they'll show.

Bend to Shape

Use a bending fork or jig on your anvil to form angles:

a.) Triangle: 60° bends

b.) Square: 90° bends

* Make sure each side matches in length and angle.

Join the Ends

- ⇒ Forge weld the ends if you're confident
- ⇒ Or rivet or collar them for a mechanical joint

3.) Clean and Flatten

- After forming the shape, ensure it lies flat
- Heat the piece and tap lightly on the anvil to correct any twist or warps.

4.) Add Legs

- Drill or punch holes in the frame corners.

- Insert leg tenons or rivets.
- Peen over tightly.

(Alternative: Weld legs if you prefer, but riveting is more traditional.)

Test for Stability

- Place the trivet on a flat surface. If it rocks, heat and adjust leg angles to stabilize it.

6. Surface Finish

- Clean off scale with a wire brush or wire wheel.

Apply a finish

- Heat the trivet slightly.
- Rub on linseed oil, beeswax, or a commercial metal finish.

TIPS AND TRICKS

- Try making a triangle trivet first—fewer angles to fuss with
- Keep checking for square angles and matching leg lengths as you go
- Use a flat plate or swage block to test for flatness before attaching legs



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Blacksmith of the Year Award 2024

Scott “Rhos” Tolle

The 2024 recipient of the Tom Summers’s Blacksmith of the Year Award is Scott Tolle. He got his start blacksmithing by helping his grandfather on their farm. Later, in the SCA, he encountered a Master Smith from England and attended workshops with him for five years before eventually finding WRABA.

While a relatively new member, Scott has shown remarkable dedication to the club. During open forge, he has been there every week. He is usually the first to show up and the last to leave events. He was the communications officer in 2023-2024, has driven all the way to Toledo for a metal donation, and has often been there to pick up the slack. He also started the WRABA store competition in 2025. Side note: don’t forget that the next contest deadline is May 1st! Hinges and latches.



Conference Registration 2025

Friday, June 27th to Sunday, June 29th

Name _____

Address _____

Primary Phone Number _____

E-mail _____

Register at
Eventbrite

What days will you attend? (Circle all that apply)

Friday 12PM Hands-on: \$25 advance registration and \$30 at the door. Limited to 12 members.

Saturday 9AM: \$35 including lunch and dinner

Sunday 9AM: \$35 including lunch and dinner

Saturday and Sunday: \$50

Friday only: Non-members must complete membership application below or online in addition to the above prices.

*Note that electronic payment will result in a \$5 surcharge

WRABA Membership Application

WRABA newsletter preference: Electronic Mailed

Single membership: \$30 New

Family membership: \$35 Renewal

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home phone _____ Cell phone _____

Forge name _____

E-mail address _____

Skill Level Beginner Intermediate Advanced

Mail to:

Western Reserve Artist
Blacksmith Association

c/o William Fisher

430 E. Portage Trail

Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221

Checks payable to:

WRABA

Q1 April 2025

WESTERN RESERVE ARTIST-BLACKSMITH ASSOCIATION

c/o William Fisher

430 E. Portage Trail

Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44221



Send To:

Forwarding Address requested postage guaranteed

Additional WRABA Events (Dates subject to adjustment)

April 26th-27th: Rev. War Reenactment, Burton Century Village, 14653 E. Park St., Burton, OH 44021

May 6th-October 25th: Open Forge at Burton Century Village, Tuesdays at 5 p.m.

May 17th 9AM: Brad Weber's Hammer-in, 88250 Mill Hill Rd, Bowerston, Ohio 44695

May 24th-25th: Civil War Reenactment, Burton Century Village

June 27th-29th: WRABA Conference, Burton Century Village

August 2nd-3rd: Power and Steam Show at Burton Century Village

August 30th 10AM: Club picnic at Burton Century Village

August 23rd-24th: Steampunk Festival at Burton Century Village

September 23rd-28th: SOFA Quad State Conference

October 4th: Don Pfaff's Hammer-in

October 11th and 12th: Apple Butter Festival at Burton Century Village

November 15th: Randy Barker's Hammer-in (subject to change)