



## Tillamook YCF youth finds new identity: award-winning woodworker

By [Sarah Evans](#), OYA Communications  
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If you strolled through the craft and art exhibits at the Tillamook County Fair in mid-August, you might have seen a beautiful bowl made of five types of wood, their colors and grains alternating and cascading down the sides in geometric diagonals. In front of the bowl sat a tag denoting its status as a first-place, blue-ribbon entry, and a sign declaring it won the Jon Dwigans Award for outstanding adult craft.

The artist never saw the bowl on display, although he spent numerous hours turning the woods on a lathe and gluing them together inside the woodshop at Tillamook Youth Correctional Facility. James T. has been at the facility for five years, and only was able to glimpse the display in photos brought back by staff.

“I sometimes wish I could walk through the exhibits, but I did see pictures,” he says. “It’s fun knowing I’m competing against other people and actually having my pieces in the professional category.”

James has been drawing since he was a young child, but never worked with wood until he came to Tillamook. He first learned to use a jigsaw in the Trask River High School shop. His real passion for the craft didn’t come until Jim Cox became the shop teacher.

“He’s taught me more than anyone else in my whole life,” James says. “I like the creativity of woodworking. With wood, it’s different every time. There’s always something new to do.”

This was the second year in a row that James won the Jon Dwigans Award. He also earned two other blue ribbons this year — one for a goblet, and one for a box — and a second-place award for a wooden book with Celtic designs on the cover. He likes to use his drawing skills to experiment with scrimshaw and wood burning, creating pictures and designs on his pieces.



*James T. poses with his wooden bowl that won the Jon Dwigans Award at the Tillamook County Fair.*



*Thompson's county fair ribbons sit atop a wooden book he made that won a second-place award.*

James also has been experimenting with other media, including pastels. Facility staff have set aside a spot on the wall in their conference room for his latest pastel work to hang, once it is complete.

James ultimately hopes to turn his passion for art into a career. He talks of potentially opening a shop someday where he could sell various artists’ work.

He already gets fulfillment out of seeing the impact his work — along with the work of the other youth in the woodshop — has on customers who buy their pieces.

“I like it when we get an order from someone,” he says, “and then they come in to pick it up and you see their eyes light up when they get what they wanted. It’s nice when I can be here to see that.”