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### **GWU Alum, Campus Police Officer Showcases Woodwork**

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# GWU Alum, Campus Police Officer Showcases Woodwork

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Office of University Communications

July 11, 2014

## *Display Marks First Exhibit for Longtime Gardner-Webb Staff Member*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. — By day, Larry Thomas patrols Gardner-Webb University as a campus police officer, a job he has held for 36 years. After work, Thomas crafts wood into furniture and art, a hobby he has also enjoyed for nearly four decades.

A 1974 GWU alumnus, Thomas's first-ever woodworking exhibit is on display now through July 31 in the Tucker Student Center art gallery. The show, which opened with a reception July 10, highlights his handiwork with pieces that include a chess set constructed from five different types of wood, a handkerchief table shaped from pine, and a Scandinavian wedding goblet, all crafted from local wood.

Growing up in Shelby, N.C., Thomas's dad introduced him to the wood shop, always having a handsaw and nails available, he said. Years later, Thomas created his own wood shop with sawhorses, plywood, a drill, and a sander. "I started building stuff and just got better," he shared. "Now I usually go home and go to the shop until suppertime. Just getting home, taking off the uniform, putting on shorts and a T-shirt and going into my shop is a good feeling. It's relaxing."

After attending six different schools between first and 12th grades, Thomas found a home at Gardner-Webb in the 1960s. He first majored in psychology but finished as a religion major. He served as a medic and psychiatric specialist in the U.S. Army before he returned to Boiling Springs, graduated, and began working on campus. Prior to serving as a campus police officer and current captain, he worked as sports information director and head of the Bulldog Club. "Basically, I've been here since 1967, except for three or four years," he said. "I met my wife here. My kids grew up here. Most of the kids on campus are like my kids, and that's the way I treat them."

Thomas has crafted wood for many on campus and in the community. He remembers the first piece he ever made, a hutch his wife still owns, and his favorite piece, a bedside table for his wife. Many of his pieces are made of wood found on and around the GWU campus, including black walnut from the Memorial Drive area, ginkgo trees felled on the campus Quad, and wild cherry from nearby Springmore Elementary School.

“I love wood, and if it’s got a special connection, that means a lot to me,” Thomas offered. “I love trees. I don’t cut them down for something, but I’ll use them if they’re cut down or I have access to them. I just take wood, cut it apart, put it back together and create.”

*Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University provides exceptional educational opportunities within a Christian environment, preparing students to think critically, to succeed professionally, and to serve faithfully as members of their local and global communities.*