

nsaw Man of Michigan' works magic on fallen trees

association of Southeastern

44, of Chesterfield Town-
rver, artisan and car-
in the "green" business
tes.

ne popular to recycle and
was giving Mother Na-
le creates eye-catching
existing tree stumps, 90
ion.

s he calls himself, said he
woodcarving and the "log
"

and it, "I turn it into new
hours of operation, sweat
give it new life."

how and sell his extraor-
at the Novi Spring Home
April 3-5 at the Rock Fi-
ce, produced by Building
ation of Southeastern

One of the pieces he will
ide the doors of the venue,
ring flowery bench made

oned himself outside the
for the show for the past
onstrates to attendees how

he carves," says Rosalie Lamb, senior staff
vice president and BIA show manager.

This year his son, Stefan, 11, will accom-
pany him with his own chainsaw to
produce his own works of art.

"He has been carving for three years. He
kind of enjoys it, but since he got a Wii and
Nintendo, he has stopped a bit. He got a
chain saw last year for his birthday. This
year he said 'I want a Wii.' He is a good
boy. He carves tools and mushrooms, the
little stuff by himself," said Szkipala.

It was during a father and son trip to a
competition in Pennsylvania, featuring
more than 200 carvers from around the
world that Stefan decided to start carving
on his own.

"Another boy was there and he said 'let
me try it,'" said Szkipala. "He tried it and
he liked it. He made a couple of pieces...
sold them and got hooked."

Szkipala's work can be seen in home-
owner's yards, gardens, on golf courses
and on the grounds of businesses through-
out the state of Michigan, New York, Cal-
ifornia, Florida, South Carolina and Ohio,
as well as Canada and Europe. He has been
recognized and listed as an "Honored Pro-
fessional" in the National Register's
"Who's Who" in executives and business-
es.

Written up in numerous
articles for his prowess
with a chainsaw, Szkipala
assisted the Madison
Heights Nature Center
with a fallen 15-foot section
of trunk, turning it into an
elaborate carving greeting
visitors to the center. He
also turned an 800-pound
elm tree trunk into a 6-foot
tall replica of the NHL's
Stanley Cup, which ap-
peared on "Fox Sports De-
troit" and "UPN 50's" eve-
ning news.

Szkipala said people are
always stopping by to take
photographs of the wooden
monolith. It makes him
happy to see them with
smiles on their faces.

Known as the "Chainsaw
Man of Michigan," his most
recent and biggest job is a
15-foot "Cat in the Hat" in
Birmingham. He also has a
carved lighthouse at his
home with a working light.

Born of Slovak parents
and a native of Romania,
Szkipala immigrated to the
United States in 1991 and in
1996 became an American
citizen. As a teenager, he
dreamed of escaping com-
munism and coming to
America. "I see in the
movies the country is beau-
tiful and you can do any-
thing you like," he told a
Detroit Free Press reporter
in 1997. He tried to leave Ro-
mania legally in 1984, but
was rejected. Szkipala at-
tempted to sneak out, but
was caught, beaten and
jailed for a year.

Eventually the persistent
youth, "borrowed" another
man's passport and crossed
two borders into what was
then Czechoslovakia. With
another "borrowed" pass-
port, he made it to Austria
and a refugee camp, where
he was accepted for immi-
gration to the U.S.

Szkipala studied carpen-
try, woodcarving and fine
art in his native Romania.

Szkipala, who now spe-
cializes in creating wood
carved altars and dabbles
in antique restoration,
lathe turning, fireplace
mantles and custom
frames, went into business

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One of Emil Szkipala's chainsaw sculptures. Art critic Greg Larkin, speaking of Szkipala's work, said it has "an artistic philosophy that mixes elements of Rodin with Walt Disney... His figures reflect and delight, similar to the Matisse paper cutouts."

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with a man who introduced him to
the precision of chainsaw art. In 1993
he became partners with Dr. Ken-
neth Boshell, who was known as
"Chainsaw Man of Michigan."

As the "Chainsaw Men of Michi-
gan," Szkipala and Boshell appeared
at various home shows and exhibi-
tions, parades and on local televi-
sion. After Boshell's retirement in
1999, and subsequent death in 2000,
Szkipala inherited the title of
"Chainsaw Man of Michigan."

In addition to his fine art works,
Szkipala shares his knowledge of the
old world craft of woodcarving and
chainsaw artistry as a teacher.

For further information, visit Szki-
pala's web site www.treecarv-ings.com or call (586) 977 7856.