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KNOW YOUR MADISONIAN | DON TUBESING

## Know Your Madisonian: Don Tubesing helps others carve a new life

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Don Tubesing's wife and business partner Nancy, right, bought him his first stone carver training as a gift. Now Tubesing, left, is organizing stone carving workshops for unemployed and underemployed people in Madison who want to "carve a new life."

Since settling in Madison eight years ago, Don Tubesing has been a Big Brother volunteer with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, a supporter of the Lussier Family Center and member of the leadership team of its statewide gospel choir, a volunteer with the literacy program at the Dane County Jail, a stone carver and a history-maker in the Madison theater community.

Tubesing, 74, and his wife, Nancy, urged Forward Theater Company to adapt Madison author Erin Celello's novel "Learning to Stay," about an Iraq veteran with PTSD, for the stage. Forward commissioned local playwright James DeVita to do just that, and the theatrical production of "Learning to Stay" (underwritten, in part, by the Tubesings) played to sell-out crowds this spring in the Overture Center's Playhouse theater.

Tubesing's latest initiative is to offer workshops in stone-carving to people who are unemployed, underemployed or veterans – with the idea of opening up new job opportunities to them.

The son of a VA hospital chaplain, Tubesing grew up on the grounds of the Milwaukee Soldiers Home where his father worked (and where he and Nancy got married). The couple eventually built a successful publishing company in Duluth, Minnesota, publishing such award-winning children's books as "The Quiltmaker's Gift" and "Old Turtle."

They later sold their primary titles to Scholastic Books and the University of Minnesota Press and moved to New Mexico to be closer to their two grown sons. But after seven years there, "We decided it was time to come home" to Wisconsin, Tubesing said.

Now the Tubesings live in the town of Middleton, where their property includes a vast studio for Tubesing's stone sculpting (known as [Alberto Stone Works](#)). As longtime business partners, he and his wife continue to run Pfeifer-Hamilton publishing, named for their parents. And they share what they call a deep body/mind/spirit philosophy.

**As an ordained pastor, the author of more than 20 books, a businessman and a specialist in stress management, you have such a long and interesting resume, it's hard to know where to start.**

Looking forward, neither of us could have expected these things. Looking back, it all connects.

### **Does Pfeifer-Hamilton concentrate on books with a spiritual component?**

We find a story that needs to be told, and we know very well that it's not going to get told because the author won't find anyone to support it. It doesn't have to be spiritual, but it has to have a message that matters.

### **Tell us more about your stone-carving workshops.**

I've been working on this for a year and a half. I want to teach veterans who are struggling, and (also) unemployed and underemployed post-release inmates. In both cases there are many people who are quite qualified and just strong people who can't do well at a desk job. So the blue-collar part of me that carves stone — which is a total mess and hard work — said I'm going to set up a program to teach some of those folks the art of stone carving. There's a one-day workshop (today and again on Saturday) they can come to and find out if they're interested — and make something they're proud of, rather than start in a big program and feel like they're a failure again. If they're interested, the second-phase is a nine-day carving training. After that we plan some apprentice-type things where they can branch out. Not everyone wants to carve stone, but if you know how to work with this stuff you can make fountains and sell them, do landscape design, kitchen countertops — there's so much.

### **Why did you settle in the Madison area?**

You can go on and on with stories, because when you're 74, the stories mount up. But there's a style of living that's really joyful for us — and it matches Madison. We've always believed that you can make things happen, so we're encouragers of that.

*For more information on Tubesing's stone-carving workshops for unemployed or underemployed people, free to Wisconsin veterans, contact him at 608-327-9888 or via the program's website, [michelangelosworkshop.com](http://michelangelosworkshop.com).*

— Interview by Gayle Worland

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