

Father-Daughter Blacksmithing Duo Shine at Giant Dwarf Forge

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
April 7 2024 7:59 AM



BELLEVILLE - For Mike Lanham, the dream to become a blacksmith started with “Sesame Street.”

He remembers a “Sesame Street” short in which a blacksmith uses a silo ring to make carriage bolts for a sled. At age 5, Lanham was fascinated. It wasn’t until he was in college at SIUE that he was finally able to take a summer blacksmithing class, and that interest he developed at age 5 turned into a passion. Today, Lanham is the owner of Giant Dwarf Forge, and his 13-year-old daughter Caroline is following in his footsteps.

“The idea that you could take something thrown away and make something brand new out of it just sparked something in my imagination, and it never let go,” he said.

Like a lot of young boys, Lanham said, his first blacksmith mission was to make himself a knife. He joined the [Illinois Valley Blacksmith Association](#) and the [Blacksmiths Association of Missouri](#), then started attending more demonstrations and trying it for himself. His first knife took him six hours. Now, he makes knives in 45 minutes.

He remembers one project that took months to perfect. A few years into his blacksmithing journey, he watched a demonstrator make a pair of tongs. Lanham went home and made six tongs but couldn't get it right. When he came back a year later to watch the demonstration again, he realized that three strokes of the hammer made all the difference.

This patience is an important part of blacksmithing. Caroline said that most issues are “a two-second fix” if you know what you're doing, but it takes a lot of hard work to get it right. She said this “trial and error” is her favorite part.

Through Giant Dwarf Forge, Lanham and Caroline go to a lot of trade shows like the [Home Builders & Remodelers Metro East Association](#) Home Expo. They also sell utensils, knives, keychains and more on the [official Giant Dwarf Forge Facebook page](#). The father-and-daughter duo love working together and sharing their passion for blacksmithing with the rest of the community.

“I tell everybody imagination and patience are your only two limitations,” Lanham added. “It's just a lot of thinking about it and processing it and then just going home and trying to reproduce it and doing it again and again.”

For more information about the Home Builders & Remodelers Metro East Association, visit hbrmea.org.