The Men’s Shed is an international phenomenon with thousands of clubs worldwide. We answer men’s innate need for activity. A Men’s Shed is a club, mainly for older guys. We have tools and materials for pursuing our interests and passions, for learning something new, sharing skills, making stuff and tinkering. We share a pot of coffee in a friendly atmosphere. In the end, we make friends and discuss troubling health issues. The key to our popularity is best expressed in our motto: men don’t talk face to face, we talk

shoulder to shoulder

USMensSheds.org
Let’s reflect on where and when it all started and how far the now international Men’s Shed movement has come. The Australian Men’s Shed Association can rightly acknowledge Men’s Sheds as a 1990s Australian grassroots invention and a valuable gift to the world.

- The first ‘shed’ in the world developed mainly for men in a community setting and was opened as ‘The Shed’ in Goolwa, South Australia 27 years ago on 24 February 1993.
- In 2008 the first Men’s Sheds opened beyond Australia in New Zealand.
- It’s around 11 years since the first Men’s Shed opened in the UK (in Hartford, England in January 2009) and then in Ireland (in Tipperary Town in August 2009).

Things have moved very fast internationally, particularly in Ireland and the UK, and more recently in Canada and the US. There are now more Men’s Sheds beyond than within Australia and more Men’s Sheds open per head in Ireland than in Australia. In all these countries national associations have looked to AMSA in Australia for leadership and guidance.

AMSA has played an important role in steering the national and international movement, to maximize impact and inclusion, sustainability and better organisational succession. David Helmers, our Executive Officer, has been there since AMSA formed and much of what we’ve achieved is a result of the dedication of David and the AMSA team. AMSA has regularly and critically reviewed its operations and collected evidence of impact. The AMSA ‘Members Handbook’ is a sign of a robust and effective national organisation. It is a valuable and accessible guide to how it all works in Australia and where to go for more information.

It has not been easy. Some of the pioneer shedders have died and some Men’s Sheds that once shone brightly are no longer operating. Negotiating the appropriate balance between organisational and financial responsibility at local, state/territory and national levels has never been simple. Bipartisan national support through men’s health funding has greatly assisted AMSA in delivering on its objectives. Support from some state governments is a huge bonus.

As a proud AMSA Patron for over a decade, I acknowledge the valuable work of fellow Patrons and congratulate everyone involved for what has been achieved. It’s complex, yet simple. Men who feel at home, positively engaged and socially connected look after themselves, the community and other men, and in the process are more likely to stay healthy and well.

As the late Dick McGowan anticipated in August 1998 when he invented the very first Men’s Shed they have, over two decades, provided copious evidence across the world of the powerful capacity to provide men with a ‘feeling of worth, familiarity with every-day life and mate-ship’, by simply creating ‘somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to’.

I wish all those involved in Men’s Sheds across the US, as participants, advocates and leaders, the very best in 2020 and beyond. You are transforming lives, families and communities.
DENVER MEN’S SHED  
Timothy Schneider, Leader

My journey began while watching The Today Show in the fall of 2018. They were giving a presentation on the Men’s Sheds and featured the Traverse City Men’s Shed. It piqued my curiosity so I looked into the idea of starting a Men’s Shed here in Northglenn, Colorado.

I reached out to the US Men’s Shed Association (USMSA). A few days later Glenn Sears, Board member of the US Men’s Shed sent me a note with informative attachments. The ball was rolling!

At our Church I spoke to our Pastor, Bill Davis, about starting a Men’s Shed and gave him copies of the start-up documents. After looking them over he excitedly contacted me about the idea and wanted to have a meeting to see what it would take to get one started at our church. We had our first Men’s Shed meeting on July 15th, 2019. There were five men on that first day and our topic was What is a Men’s Shed? We now have 13 members and are scouting for new members.

I want to thank the USMSA for being with me on my entire journey. We have monthly calls to update each other on what’s going on in our Shed and other Sheds around the world. If you will be in Colorado, stop in for a visit. We’re at the Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 10785 Melody Drive, Northglenn, Colorado 80234. Contact me at this email address: dtim1912@gmail.com

Below, see the Food Bank Delivery Truck. It holds 4 or 5 pallets of product for our Church Food Bank. Here, members are helping to unload all of this product.
PORTLAND MEN’S SHED

Greg Miller

We have been busy! As our current project, we build beds for kids in the Portland area, kids who otherwise would have no bed to sleep on. This is how it works. A parent or friend goes to Sleep in Heavenly Peace’s website and requests a bed. If they are in our area, we receive the email with their request. We call and arrange to deliver and assemble the bed/beds with mattresses and bedding.

Since June of 2019 we have delivered 128 beds in the Portland area. We are also building a tiny home which we plan to sell to raise money for our bed project. Here are some recent photos.
CLARK COUNTY MEN’S SHED
Arnold Dyer

Clark County Men’s Shed (formerly the Vancouver Men’s Shed) held its first meeting on November 9, 2019. Our second meeting drew 24 men wanting to learn more about Sheds. Sponsored by a local non-profit, CDM Caregiving Services and the Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington, our Shed has met monthly since. CDM Caregiving Services has a large new building housing an adult day care program during the week but not on weekends, so we use the building on Saturdays and for other meetings throughout the week.

Our members have been helping CDM clients with small home repairs such as replacing an old dishwasher with a new one and hauling away a used mattress. It has taken several weeks to work through insurance and confidentiality issues. We will expand the project in the near future. We also facilitate a Wisdom Circle at the CDM building on Mondays. These meetings provide a structured place for men to share life’s issues at a heart level.

We have a drop-in brunch at The Diner, which the local Meals on Wheels program opened last year. It’s an alternative to the traditional congregate meal site. Open to the whole community, it attracts a wide range of customers. We meet with Meals on Wheels staff and other agencies to coordinate volunteer repairs in our community. We’re just getting started. The future is bright!

PHOTO TAKEN AT OUR STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING.
OUR SHED HAS A STRONG MULTIGENERATIONAL BASE.

GRAND TRAVERSE MEN’S SHED
Jim Novak

We bridged the generation gap by providing our facility and expertise to help Cub Scouts prepare for their annual Pinewood Derby. Seven Shedders and a dozen Cub Scouts convened at our woodworking headquarters. Scout leaders and parents familiarized the Scouts with hammers, screwdrivers, and wrenches and helped them understand friction, weight distribution, and wind resistance in designing their race cars. Shedders rough cut and shaped the pine blocks. Parents ran Sanders to smooth them out. The Scouts attached the axles and wheels and painted their cars.

Shedders and Scouts working shoulder to shoulder was a rewarding and special experience for all involved. "It's nice keeping us connected with the younger generation," said Shedder Fred Krauth. "You know the kids had fun just by listening to them." Pinewood Committee Chair Jason Allen said, "The Shedders help was invaluable to the scouts." Future collaborations are now being discussed.

PHOTO TAKEN AT OUR STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING.
RUSTON MEN’S SHED  
Dean Kirby

We were overjoyed to have 60 members celebrate our first anniversary on November 9. ’Twas an event greatly anticipated by our founder, Beulah Laster, who suddenly passed away the day before the event. We were comforted to know that she enjoyed her last days as a very happy Shedder, pleased by the success and growth of her vision. Because of her establishment of the Men’s Shed and many other activities, Mrs. Beulah was chosen to be this year’s recipient of Ruston Rotary Club’s Bill Best Humanitarian Award, to be awarded posthumously at the Ruston Chamber of Commerce’s 100th Annual Awards Banquet.

We’re making 150 membership plaques for the Ruston/Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. It was an ambitious project that required many hours, much pizza, coffee and multiple members working together. She Shed Mondays developed roots as female members enjoyed working together on the plaque lettering. They decided to meet on a regular basis to work on other projects as well.

We plan to involve others in making cornhole boards for special needs students. Generous donations from individuals and businesses and proceeds from selling cornhole boards, lighted wood Christmas trees and various small items will pay for a SawStop Pro Table Saw and a Resaw Bandsaw.

HAWAII KAI MEN’S SHED  
Art Kam, President

We’re just getting off the ground and have high hopes for the future. We meet in a garage and have lots of donated equipment; a table saw, chop saw, planer, drill press and refrigerator. We’re installing peg boards, placing insulation and improving ventilation. With our compressor, shop vac and water faucet and hose we open our Shed for residents to wash their cars and put air in their tires. By doing safety checks and repairing wheelchairs and walkers, we have become valuable members of our community.

HONOLULU MEN’S SHED  
Michael Trojan, President

Our membership has grown to over 100. We’re upgrading our building -on loan from the State Harbors Division. The Atherton Family Foundation granted us funds to rewire our Shed and install a dust collection system.

Enthusiastic members work on a variety of projects: rebuilding an antique koa wood canoe, making cabinets, making orchid baskets, repairing and making surfboards, carving wooden therapy birds and making a shadow box. Recent gifts of a milling machine, lathe and cutting tools will allow members to develop a whole new set of skills.

HERE WE SEE TIM O’DONNELL AND STEVE PRZYBELINSKI WORKING ON OUR ELECTRICAL SYSTEM.
NORTH COUNTY MEN’S SHED “SUCCESS STORIES”

Steve Werner

In October, 2018 we opened at a Senior Center with five members. We are now 25 and grow in numbers and activities/events on offer. I’ll highlight some of our many success stories.

An 89 year old joined the Shed at the suggestion of his daughter. Though he at first felt disoriented and confused (he suffers hearing and sight loss), he soon became an active Shed member. He has attracted new guys to the Shed and he loves the Shed environment…a success story!

When we opened, members left as soon as an activity ended. Soon members were hanging back and chatting; discovering common interests, becoming friends and making plans to get together outside of Shed hours. Two guys are pursuing their love of photography and taking 'field trips'

One man wanted to join the Shed but our times conflicted with Bridge, his first love. However, he showed up at the next meeting and has become a regular attendee. Clearly being a Shed member is important to him. A Shed member brought a prospective member to our meeting one day saying he was unlikely to join. To our surprise, he loved the Shed and has since hardly missed a meeting. He’s become a strong advocate for the Shed, has attracted new members and has promoted numerous activities and events and we’ve become good friends - a bonus.

A man who lived 30 miles away showed up one week and stayed to chat. He liked the concept of the Shed and enjoyed the company but felt he lived too far away. To my surprise, he came to the next meeting and continues to be a regular. Recently, he said he might start a Shed closer to home.

A senior whom I did not know showed up at a meeting. He sat in the back with arms crossed and seemed to show little interest in what was happening and left immediately after the meeting. I was surprised to see him at the next meeting. He too has become a regular member and a strong advocate for the Shed. He has made a presentation and suggested and led other activities.

Let me tell you what the Shed has meant to me. Two years ago, I had never heard of a Shed. I had burned out from all of my volunteer/non-profit efforts and was nearing the end of a yearlong period of playing golf. Though unwilling to admit it, I was getting bored. One night my wife gave me an article about Men’s Sheds. It piqued my interest. My wife urged me to get involved. (Wives are often Men’s Shed’s best advocates).

Long story short, I helped start the North County Men’s Shed in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. It’s one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. A year ago, we struggled to get five members. Today, we have weekly activities and two pages of activities in queue. Many friendships have been made. Members excited about the Shed brag about what it’s done for them.

It’s an important part of my life. Now, becoming a member of the Board of Directors of US Men’s Shed Association has offered an opportunity to spread the word and encourage and help start new Sheds around the country.

HERE WE ARE, DEEP SEA FISHING AND HAVING A GRAND TIME TOGETHER
BEULAH LASTER, A PIONEERING WOMAN FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
Mark Winston, USMSA Board

In March of 2018 I was fortunate enough to have as one of many new emails sitting in my inbox, one from a woman named Beulah Laster. It was a delightful email which went into Beulah’s work history and what she wanted to do with starting a Men’s Shed in Ruston, Louisiana.

Being in the Shed movement one learns fairly quickly how important women can be as motivators for men to join Sheds. Here was an entrepreneurial women who wished to start a Men’s Shed with the support of Ruston’s Mayor. By April Beulah was working on the concept full time. In fact here is a quote from a subsequent email. “I am like a woman with a ‘fire in her heart’.

Well that fire was all consuming as we all discovered over the next eight months. Beulah engaged every member of the USMSA Board to extract the knowledge and experience we had. When she set her sights on something there was no stopping her. She was one of the most focused women I have had the honor of working with. She once told me, “No one better get in my way!” and she meant it. Her organizational abilities and energies were second to none.

By August, Beulah had a board of directors assembled for the Ruston Shed with a first meeting in the books. In conjunction with the administrative organization the first donations of tools and equipment began to come in. This was all really amazing considering Beulah was looking at a November Shed opening. Between August and November 2018 there were radio interviews, newspaper reports and a general buzz in Ruston concerning Men’s Sheds. Then on November 3, 2018, the Ruston Community Men’s shed opened its doors. Beulah is a perfect example of a pioneering woman for the 21st century. The grit and determination Beulah exhibited while on the trail to creating a Men’s Shed speaks to that pioneering spirit women had 150 years ago. Never give up. That attitude left Ruston with a powerful gift from Beulah. It will be there improving lives of seniors into the next century.

Last fall we learned with sadness that Beulah passed away on November 8, 2019. She obviously had work to do elsewhere.

The USMSA Board, Ruston Louisiana, the US Men’s Shed movement and anyone fortunate enough to have known Beulah will miss her creativity, dynamism, energy and sense of humor. We could all use a few more just like her.
HOPKINS MEN’S SHED  
Joe Holasek

In December we celebrated our third anniversary as a Shed. Our projects include refinishing doors for the Hopkins Activity Center and installing handicap handrails for a local senior daycare facility. We toured a boutique bottling company and a local Food Shelf. Since our start we have donated nearly 900 hours of volunteer time to community projects.

ROSEVILLE MEN’S SHED  
Norman Kunselman

Our tour of the State Capital featured holiday carolers in the rotunda. It was awesome to see the Minnesota State Capital after the extensive two-year remodeling and refurbishing project.

Shedders painted and assembled model tractors which we sold at two holiday fairs; proceeds went to the Roseville Area Schools Food Shelf. We toured the Federal Reserve Bank in Minneapolis and have plans to see the Model Train Museum in St. Paul, Minnesota. This spring we look forward to working on outdoor projects and partnering with Neighbors Helping Neighbors, a service for older adults which assists with home chores and minor repair work.

WANTED
Help with our website and grant applications.
Please contact GSears@Stanfordalumni.org

As you see, US Men’s Sheds are really taking off. We’ll keep you up-to-date with quarterly newsletters. Please send articles and photos for the next newsletter to Glenn Sears at gsears@stanfordalumni.org

REGARDING PHOTOS
A picture is worth a thousand words is true only if the picture tells a story. Send action photos with eyes on the activity in progress rather than on the camera. Photos of comradery and group efforts are especially interesting!
Glenn and Mary Sears, Editors