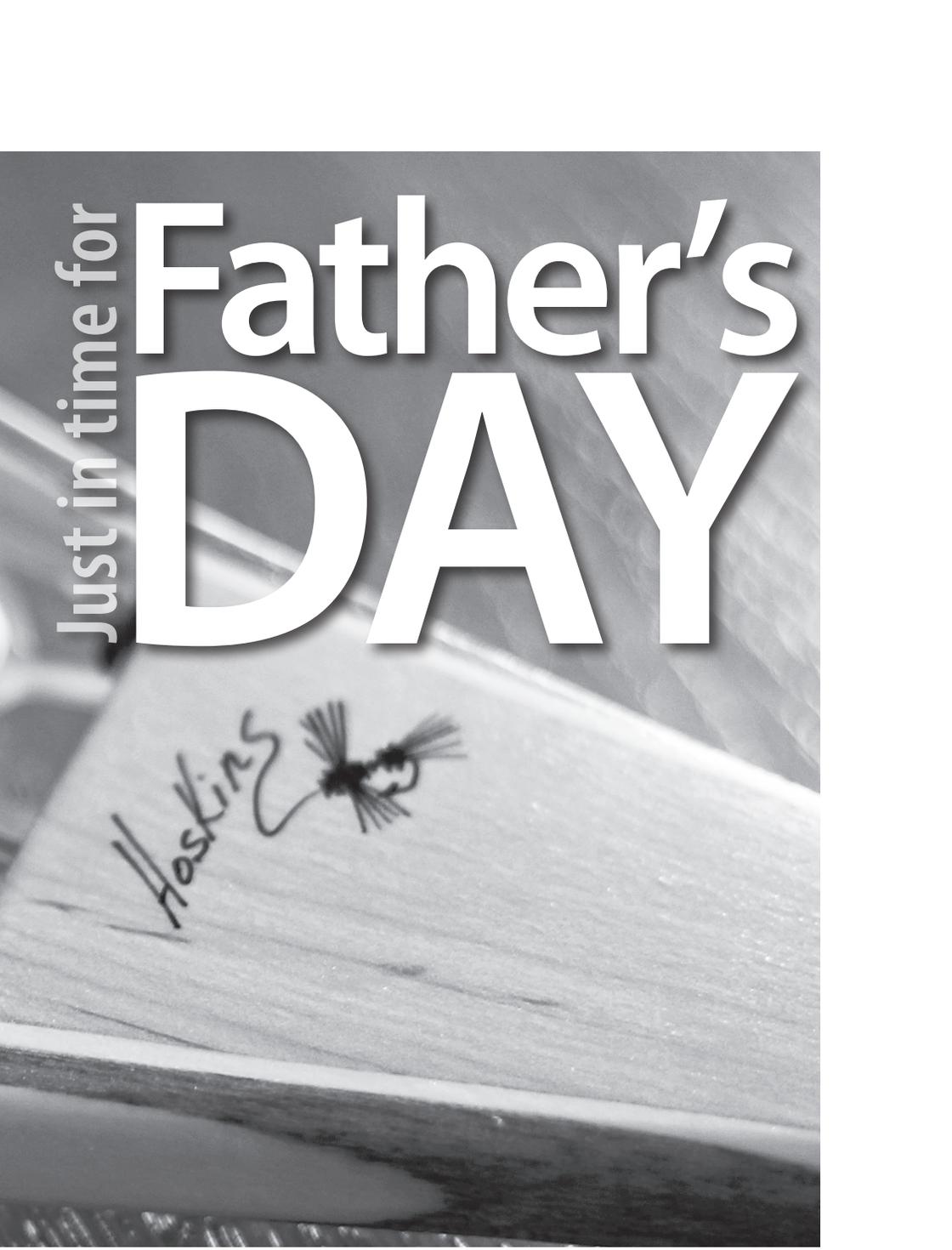




## Handcrafted trout nets

BY LESLIE KLIPSCH

**R**etired social studies teacher Tom Hoskins of Bettendorf fills his days reading, playing Sudoku, working in his garden and, as he says, “tinkering.” All of this, he expected when he retired from Pleasant Valley High School. What he didn’t expect was to pursue a new skill that would turn into a pleasurable hobby and then a new business venture. Two years into retirement, Mr. Hoskins has a new passion: handcrafting custom-made trout nets.



Just in time for **Father's DAY**

Leslie Klipsch

It all began when he saw the 1992 movie “A River Runs Through It” and became interested in fly fishing. “I never would have thought about picking up fly fishing unless I had seen that movie. It was a sport that looked unbelievably cool to me,” he recalled. Shortly after viewing the film he taught himself how to fly fish and began

taking vacations to Colorado to fish and hike with his wife and two children.

Eventually, Mr. Hoskins bought nets for he and his wife and, once again encouraged by his love of learning new things, taught himself how to create a good quality trout net in his Bettendorf garage. He watched YouTube videos and read books that helped



him master the craft, quickly realizing that the process might be one to enjoy in retirement.

“I’ve always enjoyed learning new things,” Mr. Hoskins says. “For example, there’s a large learning curve to fly fishing. But I love to read books. I like to figure things out on my own and I’m not afraid to ask people and rely on other resources.”

Though Mr. Hoskins recalled that he once

caught a 10-pound trout in a cold-water, spring-fed pond near Preston, Iowa, he mostly puts his nets to use in Summit County, Colorado.

“We catch beautiful fish in Colorado,” he said. “There’s a little stream above the Leadville National Fish Hatchery stocked with greenback trout. They’re beautiful fish.”

The Hoskins family has enjoyed fishing in Colorado for years, sometimes renting

a condo for a month at a time. “The state is absolutely beautiful — the blue skies, the mountains, and the streams. I like to say that it’s God’s country. The setting just doesn’t get any better. Even if I don’t catch fish, it’s OK,” Mr. Hoskins said. He pauses and laughs, “I’m probably lying. I want to catch fish.”

## Why I love Mr. Hoskins’ nets

Many will celebrate Father’s Day this month and I can’t help but think a hand-crafted trout net made by a Quad-Citizen would make a great gift. According to the Department of Natural Resources, Iowa boasts some of the most beautiful and plentiful trout streams in the Upper Midwest and the northeast region of Iowa is dotted with hundreds of miles of trout streams. Anyone with an interest in trout fishing will enjoy Mr. Hoskins’ handcrafted nets. And even if you don’t fancy yourself a fisherman or woman, the artistry of Mr. Hoskins’ nets is impressive and would make a unique accessory to a “man cave” or an attractive wall hanging or mantle piece.

## What Mr. Hoskins loves about his nets

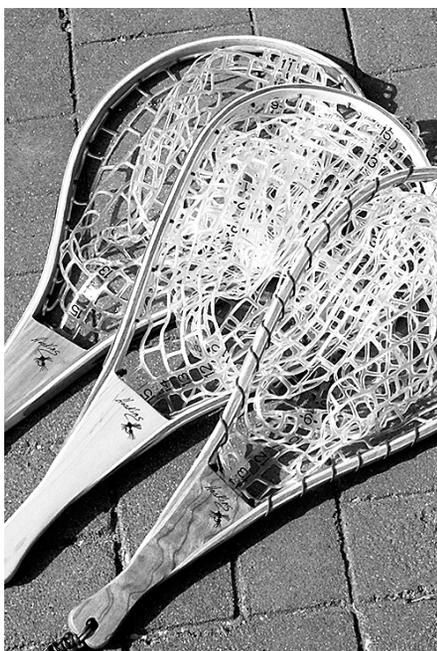
“A lot of people are picky about their equipment and the nets I make are a high-quality product,” Mr. Hoskins said. “I’m very careful in the process of making them and they end up being a really unique tool to have in your trout toolbox.”

The process of making a net takes two weeks and involves many laborious steps. Three strips of wood (maple, mahogany or aspen, for example) are formed as the net hoop, and hickory, maple, or cherry is used as the handle. The net itself is a rubberized, fish friendly measured bag, and can be ordered with a traditional or spiral wrap

attaching the bag to the hoop. Mr. Hoskins finishes each net with a custom lanyard and his hand-drawn logo. “It’s all quite time consuming,” he said, “but the nets are coming out better than I ever thought they would.”

## The details

Trout nets are available at Crafted QC, 217 E. 2nd St., downtown Davenport and can be purchased at Mr. Hoskins’ online Etsy shop ([etsy.com/shop/HoskinsNets](https://www.etsy.com/shop/HoskinsNets)). Orders can be placed directly through Mr. Hoskins by calling 563-359-8507 or 563-370-6404 or by emailing [hoskinsnets@gmail.com](mailto:hoskinsnets@gmail.com). Nets range in price from \$95 to \$120.



Each month in The Gold Standard, Leslie Klipsch, a freelance writer and editor based in Davenport, shines a spotlight on the gems of the Quad-Cities area — for Gold Book readers. She enjoys reading, cooking, spending time with her husband and three young children and exploring all that the Quad-Cities has to offer. Read more of Leslie at [leslieklipsch.com](http://leslieklipsch.com).

