

Carving out a new goal



A chain saw inspires an undiscovered talent.

If asked to picture a chain saw carver, most people probably imagine a burly bearded guy who resembles Paul Bunyan. At 5-feet-2 -inches tall, Jessica Spiker defies the stereotype. Diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2010 at the age of 23, she worried that “I could no longer pursue my goals.” Spiker, who lives in Meyersdale, Pennsylvania, had no way of knowing that soon her goals would be more daring than she ever expected.

Through her work volunteering for the Special Olympics, Spiker was asked to help athletes purchase a carved wooden eagle as a thank-you gift for the veteran’s organization that had hosted a recent event for them. She was shocked to see the price of the hand-carved eagle. But she had a picture and an idea of what the athletes had in mind. She went home and fired up an old chain saw belonging to her dad and uncle. The fact that she had never operated a chainsaw before didn’t seem like a problem at the time. Two days later, she had created an eagle wall hanging that was very similar to the professional carving pictured in the photo.

In the last three years, Spiker has created and sold dozens of pieces at her home workshop and at local festivals. Without formal training, she continues to learn and push her abilities. Her health has continued to improve since she’s begun carving. “It feels like divine intervention that I decided to pick up the chain saw that day,” she says.

Her carvings reflect her belief that she can do anything she sets her heart and mind to and that nothing is beyond her abilities.