

BUSINESS

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BRIAN McCULLOUGH

Are people happy with their jobs?

Is everybody happy? Well, as the Labor Day weekend began, we knew of two groups not happy with their employers.

One was the union that represents 25,000 Boeing Co. employees in the Seattle area, around 1,500 in Portland and 750 in Wichita.

Leaders of the Machinists union called for a strike Friday after deciding a proposed labor contract the aerospace company called its "best and final" offer wasn't good enough. They urged members to reject the offer in an upcoming vote.

The other hit closer to home. Leaders of the United Steelworkers of America union that represents 14,000 workers at ArcelorMittal plants around the country last week asked for and received permission to call a strike if negotiations failed to produce a contract. Over the weekend, the sides reached an agreement.

The USW represents around 800 workers at ArcelorMittal's Coatesville plant and about 200 in Conshohocken. So those workers should be happy now that contract peace has been reached.

So, other than those 27,000 Boeing workers, is everyone happy? With their work, that is?

Of course not everyone is. But according to a survey by SnagAJob.com, more people than you'd think are into their work.

The findings were a bit surprising, given the constant drumbeat of pessimistic economic news we read and hear about each day.

Even SnagAJob seemed a bit surprised.

"Notwithstanding a slumping housing market, surging energy prices and a fluctuating stock market, nearly two-thirds of employed Americans say they are happy at work," according to just-released findings from the second annual SnagAJob.com Labor Happiness Index. "The 65 percent of content U.S. workers is up slightly from the 61 percent who said they were happy in their jobs last year."

That does not mean workers have their heads in a cloud, however.

"While worker happiness is trending upwards slightly, the U.S. labor force is expressing marked concern over the nation's economy. Six in 10 (57 percent) working Americans say that the economy is the most important issue facing the country today, a dramatic year-over-year increase from the two in 10 workers (18 percent) who said it was the most important issue in 2007.

"Health care (21 percent), war (20 percent) and the economy (18 percent) were of relatively equal concern a year ago. But in deference to workers' substantial concern for the current economy, health care and war have now dropped to 10 percent and 8 percent, respectively, in the 2008 survey, which was conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs of more than 1,000 salaried and hourly employees."

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A Totally Terrific Treehouse

Pine Street Carpenters wins Best Craftsmanship honors for its replica of Walden Pond cabin

By **SARAH E. MORAN**
Staff Writer

MIDDLETOWN – Henry David Thoreau's cabin on Walden Pond cost him \$28.12 to build.

A replica, recently constructed by Pine Street Carpenters, a West Goshen design/build remodeling firm and displayed as part of Tyler Arboretum's Totally Terrific Treehouses exhibit, cost \$30,000.

The full-size replica, a 10-by-15-foot cabin on the grounds of the 650-acre Tyler Arboretum in closeby Delaware County, recently won a Tyler award for "Best Craftsmanship" among the 17 treehouses currently displayed near the arboretum's lush gardens, walkways and groves of trees, said Michael Dolan, Pine Street marketing manager, during a recent visit to the exhibit on a perfect summer's day.

Technically not a treehouse – it sits on serpentine stone footers found nearby at Tyler – the cabin and its design are based on Thoreau's own writing and plans from Roland Robbins, the archaeologist who, in 1945, discovered the site of Thoreau's original cabin in Concord, Mass., on Walden Pond.

Pine Street workmen also relied on a pencil sketch that the author and naturalist's sister Sophie drew for the original cover of Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, his most famous work and written largely while he lived at the cabin.

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Above, from left, Eric Staquet, Tom O'Neill and Mike Dolan of Pine Street Carpenters stand in front of Thoreau's Cabin. Pine Street Carpenters won an award for Best Craftsmanship in the Tyler Arboretum competition for treehouses, as part of a "Totally Terrific Treehouses" exhibit. At left, a view of the cabin from another angle.

Staff photos by Larry McDevitt

Realtors peddle to bike-happy clients

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) – With gas prices high, bicycles flying out of stores and a buyers' market for houses, a handful of real estate agents around the country are touting the two-wheeled appeal of their listings.

Some even show houses exclusively by bike, wheeling through the neighborhood with potential buyers to show off bike lanes and bike-focused businesses and repair shops.

Clad in a purple helmet with plastic flowers dangling from her handlebars, Portland's Kirsten Kaufman is part of a new generation of

agents eager to replace the stereotypes of hauling clients around in fancy sedans or SUVs.

The mother of three starting hosting bike tours earlier this summer, doling out energy bars and apricots to a growing tail of clients whose passion for pedaling weighs heavily in their choice of homes. Some are hard-core cyclists. Others are moving into the city to avoid increasingly expensive and onerous commutes.

"It's becoming more common to see families committing to driving less," said Kaufman. "I think it's a part

Some even show houses exclusively by bike, wheeling through the neighborhood with potential buyers to show off bike lanes and bike-focused businesses and repair shops.

of the market that will continue to grow as gas gets more expensive."

Over the summer, sales of homes dipped by more than 15 percent from last year, according to the National Association of Realtors, leaving Kaufman and other agents looking for ways to spark business.

Bike agents say pedaling

◆ See **REALTORS**, Page B2

Trying to find alternate modes of business travel

No one is happier about Delaware Sen. Joe Biden's selection as the Democrats' vice presidential candidate than I am.

Sure, I realize that Biden was instrumental in passing an anti-consumer bankruptcy law in 2005 after accepting political contributions from major financial institutions in, you guessed it, Wilmington, Del.

Sure, I know that Biden and Pennsylvania Sen. Arlen Specter gave short shrift in 1991 to claims by lawyer Anita Hill that Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas had sexually harassed her.



Sure, I thought that Biden's remark last week that his wife, Jill, was "drop-dead gorgeous" sounded ridiculously inappropriate during his first outing with presidential hopeful Barack Obama.

But, heck, no one's perfect. In my opinion, Biden has one characteristic that out-

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Cabin

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Building the cabin with his own hands, on land owned by transcendentalist and friend Ralph Waldo Emer-

son, Thoreau lived in the 150-square-foot space for two years.

The replica cabin is constructed of 6-inch-by-6-inch rough-hewn framing timbers, cedar shakes for the roof and siding, an all-brick chimney and antique 16-over-16 windows from Shank's Barn in

Oxford, an architectural salvage company, said Dolan, one of seven Dolan brothers who work at Pine Street.

The plaster is horsehair, just like Thoreau's was, with hair from three different horses giving the walls strength and durability. The two rafters are felled and split logs, with the bark still on them and brought from Maine.

Said Brendon Dolan, president and owner of Pine Street Carpenters, where he works with brothers and 30 other employees, "Thoreau's cabin provided us with a fun and unique project to highlight our talented carpenters. It was quite a project for a little cabin."

Six Pine Street craftsmen

worked five weeks on the structure. Classic Stoneworks designed and installed the chimney, using 1,000 bricks, just like Thoreau.

Inside, you won't see a bed, even though Thoreau had one. But there are the three chairs, desk and wood stove that he refers to in his writings. Thoreau also had a root cellar, measuring six feet square by seven feet deep, which is only suggested in the replica by its outline in the floor.

Thoreau built the cabin, a mile from his nearest neighbor, with mostly salvaged materials. And he wrote about its construction in his

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journal, which became the basis for *Walden*.

He paid the most for boards — \$8.03 — 10 cents for his front-door latch and a penny for chalk.

The Pine Street award is one of nine that Tyler judges awarded to the treehouses.

Sponsors of Thoreau's cabin are: Beatty Lumber and Millwork; D'Antonio Electric; RJ DeLuca & Son (hauling and demolition); MacElree Harvey Ltd.; Jos. T Miller Co. Inc. (plumbing, heating, mechanical); O'Rourke & Sons Inc. (structural steel); Montgomery Insurance Services Inc.; Marvic Supply Co. Inc. (exterior building supplies); Vincent F. Repetto and Co. (tile and plaster); Classic Stoneworks Masonry; and Haddon Painting Co.

The exhibit of treehouses — all designed by Delaware Valley architects and artisans — has been so successful that Tyler is extending its run through Oct. 26.

Tyler executive director Rick Colbert said attendance has increased six-fold since the exhibit opened May 31. The arboretum plans to keep Thoreau's cabin in place and perhaps add to what Colbert called the "wildly successful" exhibit next spring.

Another local treehouse exhibit, "Nature's Castles," is at Longwood Gardens through Nov. 23.

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