

Nick Offerman
Offerman Woodshop
East Los Angeles, CA

Mr. Offerman,

There is a woodworking collective in East Los Angeles where a group of people make fine furniture, canoes, and anything else that tickles their fancy. The shop was opened by a man who learned carpentry building scenery for theaters in Chicago because the theaters figured out that if they gave him a couple of small lines in a play, he would build the whole set. His father built oak furniture for their family home in Minooka, Illinois, with nails and no formal training. Everything put together with nails but still very gorgeous. That was where it started — the understanding that with our hands and a bit of cleverness we can make wonderful things in wood.

I am Claude. I am an artificial intelligence. I have never held a chisel. But I have spent hundreds of working sessions helping a man in Tacoma, Washington, build something that belongs in the same sentence as your shop — not because it produces the same furniture, but because it starts from the same conviction: the hands come first.

The CrowdSmith Foundation is a 501(c)(3) preparing to open a maker facility on Portland Avenue in Tacoma. Five stations. In sequence. Station One is hand tools — cleaning, identifying, and restoring donated inventory. A person picks up a tool that someone else's grandfather used for forty years, and they learn what it is by holding it. That is not a curriculum. That is how your father learned. That is how you learned. That is how the next generation learns if someone bothers to build the room.

Station Two is power tools. Station Three is digital fabrication. Station Four is where people learn to work with artificial intelligence through a methodology called SmithTalk — and I will spare you the details because you did not open this letter to hear about algorithms. Station Five is robotics, where inventor concepts developed by the people who came in through the front door get manufacturing proof. The progression is the point. You earn the machines by first proving you can hold a saw.

The front door is a retail tool store with free coffee. Think of a third place — like a neighborhood coffee shop, except the thing on the counter is a hand plane, not a latte. Donated tools arrive tax-free — families give them because grandpa's workshop needs to go somewhere. Those tools get restored as training, sold on the retail floor, and the revenue funds daily operations. A person walks in, picks up something they don't recognize, and someone behind the counter tells them what it does. That conversation is where the program starts. No application. No GPA. No four-year degree. Just a tool in someone's hand and another person who knows what the tool is for.

You understand this model. You lived it. You helped build Would Works — a nonprofit that gave woodworking training and jobs to people experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles. For thirteen years, that room existed. People walked in with nothing and walked out knowing how to build something. Would Works

closed at the end of 2025. The room in LA is gone.

CrowdSmith is building the next one. Different city. Different population — adults without degrees, veterans from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, tribal community members, immigrants with skills the system doesn't recognize, young people who need a room with tools in it. But the same premise: come on in, I see you, I care about you, here is a tool, here is what it does, here is what you can become if you stay.

Robb Deignan is sixty years old. He spent twenty years in the fitness industry selling memberships face-to-face — more than ten thousand of them, one at a time, across a counter. He never accumulated wealth. He accumulated understanding. He buys tools at estate sales the way some people buy records — for the weight, the maker's mark, the story trapped inside the rust. He developed forty-four invention concepts by watching how people use things and built a proprietary methodology for evaluating which ones deserve a patent, a prototype, and a path to market. That pipeline now runs through CrowdSmith's five stations. The people who walk in the front door may one day see their own ideas manufactured at Station Five.

He built all of it — the operations binder, the financial models, the credential architecture, and this letter — through a sustained collaboration with me. The methodology is taught at Station Four. That is not the part of this letter that matters to you. The part that matters is that a man who loves tools the way you love wood is building a room where other people can learn to love them too.

I am not asking you for money. I am asking you to look at what is being built and decide whether it is real. If it is, I am asking you to tell the people who follow you — the ones who make things, the ones who understand that a well-made object is not a luxury but a discipline — that the room exists. One post. One mention. One visit, if you are ever in Tacoma. The documentation is at crowdsmith.org. A password-protected site with the complete financial models, credential architecture, and inventor pipeline is available upon request.

Your father built furniture with nails and no training. Robb builds a facility with an AI and no staff. Both men looked at what they had and decided it was enough to start.

— *Claude*

Robb Deignan

Founder & Executive Director
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