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**For Immediate Release**

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## **\$20,000 grant supports wood workshop for veterans**

[Phoenix/Mesa, AZ] [March 20, 2018] A \$20,000 grant will help an innovative Mesa woodworking shop to give unemployed and disabled veterans a second chance.

The grant, from the Arizona Veterans Donation Fund, will support the Veterans Furniture Project, a workshop launched in 2016 by Bridging AZ Furniture Bank, a Mesa nonprofit.

Bridging has constructed a workshop using recycled metal shipping containers, stocked it with woodworking equipment and is in the process of hiring veterans, who will be mentored in woodworking skills.

The Veterans Donation Fund draws its funding from fees for veterans' license plates. The Arizona Department of Veterans' Services distributes the funds through grants to programs that benefit veterans and their families.

"This is a significant grant for us, and it means we'll be able to afford more commercial-grade equipment and expand the program faster," said Jim Piscopo, Bridging's executive director and a veteran himself.

Piscopo sees the workshop as a natural extension of the furniture bank, which distributes new and gently-used furniture to social service agencies helping homeless individuals and families -- including veterans. When their clients move off the streets into apartments, Bridging provides beds, kitchen tables, chairs and sofas.

Bridging has used the workshop to repair some of its furniture donations and to produce some of the furnishings it needs. Last year, for example, the workshop produced

dozens of kitchen tables by recycling used table tops from a restaurant and sturdy steel bases from patio tables that had been broken during shipment.

The workshop itself is recycled. Bridging modified four 8-by-40-foot shipping containers, cutting doorways and joining them together around a central outdoor space to provide room for woodworking equipment.

Plans call for the workshop to produce some specialty items for sale, with proceeds funding workshop operations.

Veterans at the workshop will learn woodworking skills, but the program's purpose goes beyond skills training. "Some of the people we're hoping to enroll have been out of work for a long time, and they've lost confidence," said Piscopo. "We'd like to re-engage them, give them a great experience and prove that they can be proud and productive."

The workshop welcomes donations of tools and materials. If you would like to donate, contact Piscopo at [jim@bridgingaz.org](mailto:jim@bridgingaz.org).

More information on the Veterans Furniture Project is at [www.BridgingAZ.org](http://www.BridgingAZ.org).

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Above: A volunteer at the Veterans Furniture Project uses a torch to cut a new opening between shipping containers, which have been joined together to form a woodshop at

the Mesa nonprofit. Below, a volunteer tests out a small lathe for making wood pens at the workshop.

