

HFF Custom Rods makes fishing a unique experience

By Susan Thwing
For MediaNews Group



Anyone who has been to Michigan, knows it's a great place to fish. Matter of fact, a survey done by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs shows Michigan ranks first among the Great Lakes states for generating more than \$11.2 billion annually due to fishing and hunting.

For sports enthusiasts who want to enhance their fishing experience, HFF Custom Rods is ready to help. The Taylor-based business is the place to find all of the fishing rod parts, components, tools, and equipment needed to create a one-of-a-kind fishing experience. The business also offers classes to help customers build the rod to their personal specifications.

HFF Custom Rods, located at 13233 Hancock Drive in Taylor, is owned by the father and son team of Steve and Joe Haywood. Steve first learned about custom-made rods while on a guided fishing trip on the Pere Marquette River near Baldwin, Michigan. Their guide, David Roller of Pere Marquette Outfitters, had made the rods used on his boat and agreed to show Steve how to build his own rod. Steve said the first rod he made was for his father who was an avid fisherman. He remembers he put an inscription on the rod that said, "Built for Doug 'Dad' Haywood." He also numbered it "1 of 1".

"It was pretty special to be able to make that myself and give it to my dad," he recalled.

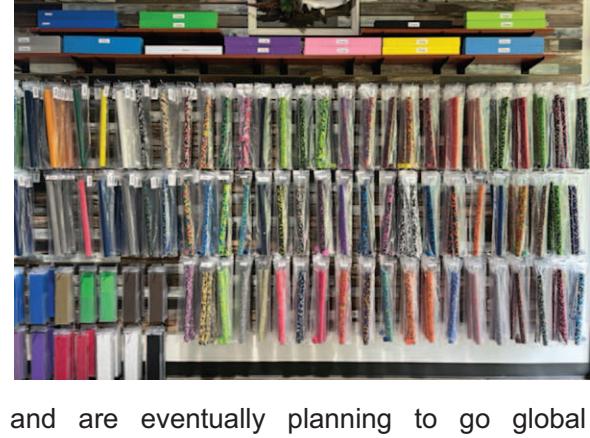
As their hobby turned into a business, they opened their first storefront in an 1,100-square-foot building in the Downriver area. Word quickly spread about their unique business, and they soon had customers walking through the door. In 2022, their business had grown into

a 6,000-square-foot building in Taylor including a brand new 2,000-square-foot showroom, 800 square-foot Rod Building Classroom and a Shipping/Receiving area.

Joe said the appeal of a custom rod is almost an addiction. "It's like going down a rabbit hole. You create your first rod and as soon as you're done you are thinking about building the next one – whether it is for yourself or a friend or relative."

Building a custom rod is a step-by-step process with the first step being determining the type of fish wanted at the end of the hook. With everything from Coho Salmon to Pike to Brook Trout – more than 155 species of fish are noted in Michigan, although all are not 'fished' – that decision of "what to fish" can be broad.

"Because of our location, we sell a lot of Walleye rods, and Bass fishing is also very popular," Joe said. "But we also have orders from neighboring states and across the country,



and are eventually planning to go global with outreach to Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, so the options are endless."

Joe Haywood said building your own fishing rod gives you a tremendous amount of pride and satisfaction. After that first build, customers are usually building the next rods for family members and friends. Some customers turn it into a business, selling custom built fishing rods.

A first-time rod builder can be easily overwhelmed at the selection of blanks and components HFF has in inventory. Joe and Steve help the first timers narrow down the

selection by asking what kind of fish they plan to catch. They will also talk about the type of handles, reel seats, and guides. "After that all they have to pick out is the thread. Some people pick out a thread color they like, others are looking for a theme, whether it be a sports team, college colors, or anything else," Joe said.

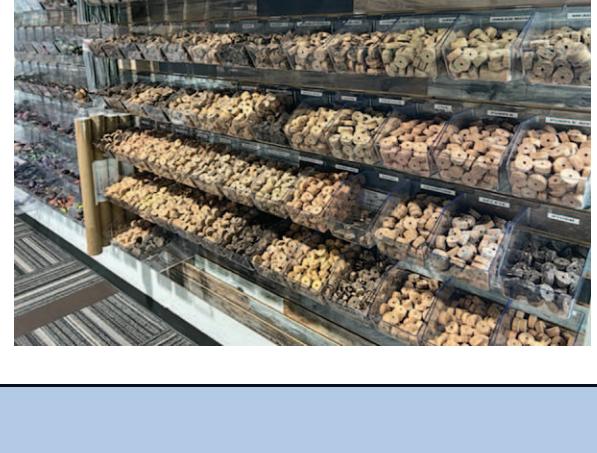
Joe said the rod building classes have been very successful.

"The classes give participants the chance to see if rod building is really something they like doing. By taking the class, each student gets to use our equipment, tools, and supplies. After that initial class they are much better informed as to what kind of equipment they want to invest in if they plan to build more rods."

For local residents interested in learning more about custom fishing rods, HFF Custom Rods will host the inaugural Great Lakes Rod Builders Gathering at its storefront in Taylor on Saturday, June 3 beginning at 10 a.m. At the event, Roger Hinchcliff, vice president of Lamiglas, will talk about the company's Walleye and Salmon/Steelhead Closer Blanks.

Also, giveaways are planned including Batson Enterprises (donated by Bill Batson) blanks, components, swag, and a power wrapper. Sales are also planned throughout the store and the public is invited to attend.

HFF Custom Rods is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday; 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday; and closed Sunday and Monday. For more information about HFF Custom Rods, visit hffcustomrods.com.



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Free to attend

**Special Guest Roger Hinchcliff - Lamiglas V.P. This event is open to everyone!
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Call 888-413-1692 or email: contactus@hffcustomrods.com



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Hours:
Tues - Fri: 10am - 6pm
Sat: 9am - 1pm
Sun: Closed • Mon: Closed