

## Guitar jeweler helps charities

(by Mollie Gray - April 21, 2009)

A carpenter by trade, 42-year old Vince Madonia can take an old, beat-up chunk of wood and mold it into something unique.

When he came in contact with an old mandolin, something similar occurred.

It was about seven or eight years ago and Madonia was removing the old fret wire on the mandolin and replacing it with new wire, a process called “refretting.” Fret wire is used on the fingerboard of a guitar neck so that when the strings are pressed against the frets, a chord is sounded.

Madonia took one of the unused wires, wrapped it around his wrist, and decided to wear it in memory of his grandfather, an accomplished musician who played violin for the New York Philharmonic. (His grandfather passed away in 2001, and Madonia inherited his collection of instruments.)

The bracelet was the first piece of jewelry Madonia ever made and he said he “didn't do it with any intentions other than in memory of my grandfather.”

“Years went by and everywhere I go people come up to me asking me about my bracelet,” said Madonia. “I finally decided to patent it.”

Madonia added no further decoration to the wire, keeping its distinct, vintage look in tact. He bent it into a circle and added a chain and hook to make it wearable. He describes it as “unisex.”

His endeavor has expanded into a much larger fund-raising project, however.

When someone buys a bracelet, Madonia will donate a percentage of all his sales toward the buyer's cancer charity.

“On one hand it's a fashion statement, it's a music fashion bracelet and on the other hand, I'm gonna try to do something good with it and give back,” he said.

An avid drum player since he was a kid, Madonia currently performs at open mike events across the state and in the metro area. As a hobby, he custom designs and builds guitars.

In crafting his bracelets, he special orders the fret wire, made from nickel and silver. He always uses the same brand and he assembles each bracelet by hand. He makes the bracelets in two different styles; single and tri-band and in four sizes; extra small, small, medium and large. It takes him about 10-15 minutes to make one bracelet, using his dining room in his apartment as his workshop, he said. The process requires cutting the wire, bending it and then creating the final, refined product.

“I curve the wire into the proper shape, I cut them, I solder them, I polish them,” he said.

About 4 years ago, Madonia attended the funeral of his cousin who died from breast cancer at the age of 33. Now people he's come to know over the years, from close friends to customers of his, are becoming impacted by the epidemic, he said.

Madonia said he plans to focus more time on selling the bracelets and raising as much money as he can for cancer research. He just launched his new Web site, [www.fretwirebracelet.com](http://www.fretwirebracelet.com), where he shares his story and makes it easy for anyone to purchase a bracelet.

“I seem to be surrounded by people who are passing away with cancer,” Madonia said. “I find it weird — the more involved with the cancer issue I get, the more people I know of have cancer.”

“I had someone say to me, ‘What do you care so much for?’ he said. “Should I care only if it happens to me? Why can't I just care because I have people, friends and family, who are passing away of cancer.”