Setting off on a slightly chilly and cloudy 4th of July morning at approximately 10 a.m., the "Nicole Marie" made its maiden voyage across the Holyoke Lions' Fish Pond, much to the delight (and relief) of builder Rick Hinck and his friends and family who gathered for the christianing at the shoreline.

By day, Hinck runs his own business installing and repairing sprinkler systems. However, over the past three months, he has spent his evenings and weekends as a boat engineer, constructing a rowboat out of oak in his own living room.

Truly a labor of love, the boat was built for his nine grandkids and numerous nieces and nephews to enjoy.

"My grandkids like to ride boats and they can't ride motorized ones at the Fish Pond," said Hinck. "So I decided to build a rowboat for them." He added buying was never an option because it's "too impersonal."

Helping him in the construction process, said Hinck, were his brother Craig, son-in-law Billy Andersen and his grandkids—whom, he added, were instrumental in overseeing the whole project.

Having built another boat back in 1984, Hinck decided to style this one after the McKenzie River Drift, which he said was one of the first types of boats to travel down the Colorado River. "Nicole Marie" is 11 feet long and 44 inches wide, with 24-inch high sides. It weighs a total of 160 pounds and fits easily in the back of a pickup.

The name "Nicole Marie" comes from combining the middle names of Hinck's two daughters Katie Andersen and Jennifer Hayes, who he said were very supportive of his endeavor.

Feeling inspired by his latest creation, Hinck said he plans to continue his new hobby into the

future. He still has cosmetic work he'd like to finish on "Nicole Marie" and he already has ideas for another boat he'd like to put together.

It is his hope that his work also inspires others in the community who have some spare time and an interest in handmade boats. "I got nearly all my materials locally," he said, "and I would encourage others to do so as well."