

Local toolmaker donates talents to war effort

By KAY RUDDEROW
Staff Writer

UPPER DEERFIELD TWP. — George Lesche isn't fighting the enemy on the front line, but his special digging tool is helping those who are.

He was honored at a press conference held in Winslow Friday, when U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo spoke at the U.A. Local 322 Plumbers and Pipefitters Union Hall.

When Lesche, a union member and well-known local toolmaker, had learned of the difficult task facing U.S. troops in Iraq when digging up mortars and landmines, using stan-

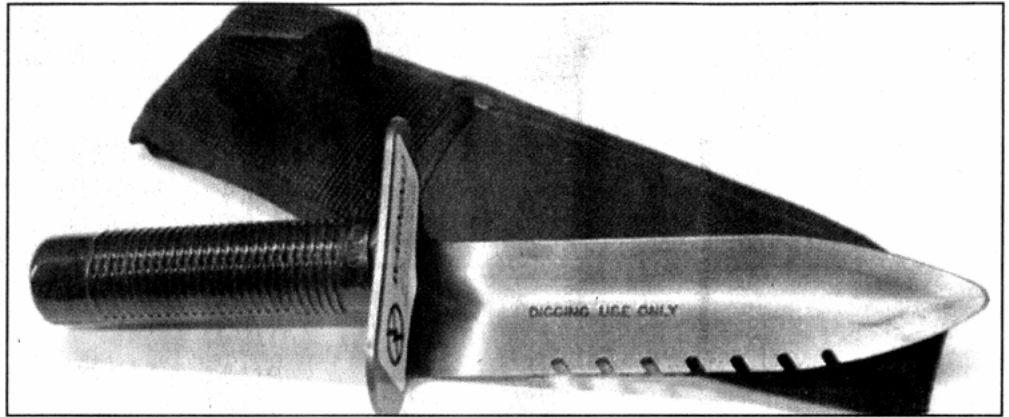


Photo special to the News

The predator was designed and donated by local union member and tool maker George Lesche.

dard, military issue shovels, he decided to take action.

Lesche had designed a trowel-like tool with a jagged edge that he had sent to workers excavating the rubble of the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack.

The tool turned out to be just what the U.S. troops needed, and he donated about 40 of them to the U.S. Army's 163rd Mechanized Infantry.

"They lined up to get the tool," Lesche said.

Similar in construction to the tool used at the WTC, Lesche said he had modified it for military use, such as having a

sharper edge, non-reflective finish, and a cushioned, non-reflective grip.

He also designed a sheath to hold the garden-type digging tool, one that fastens with Velcro tape so it can be quickly removed from the holder.

Lesche said he had donated his workmanship and had received contributions that paid for the raw materials.

LoBiondo lauded Lesche's work, noting that it has saved lives and limbs of the men and women fighting in Iraq.

"It is extremely helpful when our troops are uncovering landmines," the congressman said.

Lesche describes the tool as being able to "surgically

remove" dirt.

He takes pride, he said, in the precision he uses to make his various tools.

"If it saves one life, it will be worth it," he said. "When you have a tool that will do a better job, why not use it?"

The local union is sending additional tools to Iraq, and is encouraging other chapters throughout the country to do so as well.

To contribute toward the cost of the materials, donations can be sent to U.A. Local 322, 534 South Route 73, P.O. Box 73, Winslow, N.J. 08095.