

Premier Community Bank Sponsors 82nd Shawano County Barn Quilt

Premier Community Bank, with eight locations in northeast Wisconsin, including Shawano, annually celebrates June Dairy Month at each of its locations in a variety of ways. They give away dairy products like milk, cheese and ice cream, and offer various prizes as well. However, this year, the Shawano Branch decided to do something different. Employee Kathy Fischer came up with the idea for the Branch to sponsor a barn quilt. "It was a perfect way to show our support and appreciation to our farmers, communities, the Shawano Chamber and the Barn Quilt Project," Shawano Branch Manager Dawn Kelley said.

Premier Community Bank customers were given the chance to "apply" to have a quilt sponsored for their farm. After reviewing the applications submitted, they chose the farm of Alft's Longhorn Acres, N12075 County J, Tigerton, owned by Keith Alft. When Alft and his wife Debbie met with project coordinator Jim Leuenberger to choose a pattern, they wanted something with an agricultural theme.

The pattern they selected is called simply "Red Barn." Alft said it pays tribute to all the beautiful barns in Shawano County, many of which are being restored and/or preserved for future generations to enjoy.

The Alft farm was originally purchased by Fred Schlender in the 1930s and was sold to Carl and Emma Fietz in 1945. Ten years later they passed it on to their son Richard and his wife Delores. They had a dairy herd, then Angus beef cattle, and then back to dairy. In 1978, Keith Alft Sr. and his wife Carole bought the farm, using it as a second farm on which to house their dairy heifers.

In 1993, Keith Jr. and Debbie Alft bought the farm from Keith's parents and moved their Texas Longhorn beef cattle operation there. Their son Kyle of Tigerton and daughter Heather of Marion help with the direct marketing Lean Beef Business Keith and Debbie started in 1985, which features Texas Longhorn beef products and skulls.

Keith said when he was a small boy riding on the school bus, they would drive by this farm every school day. "I remember being in awe of the Angus cattle they had there," he said. "Little did I know that someday I would own that farm and be raising Texas Longhorns."

The Alfts are very thankful to Premier Community bank for sponsoring their barn quilt. "I also want to thank Jeff Koepke Construction of Tigerton for putting up the metal siding and trim on the barn on which the barn quilt is mounted," Keith said. "The quilt pattern looks great and is a true testament to what it took and still takes to be a farm, a strong barn."

Kelley added that "the Barn Quilt project is truly unique and certainly provides a special recognition to the farming culture. We are excited and proud to sponsor a quilt." The barn quilt was put up by LeRoy and Keith Raddant of Raddant Electric, with the help of Scott Breitrick's Tree Service.