

Barn Quilt Number 200 Salutes Shawano County's Dairy Industry

Shawano County's barn quilt project reached a major milestone on April 22 with the installation of the 200th barn quilt. The quilt was sponsored by the Shawano County 4-H Dairy Key committee and is on display on the Wayne and Connie Nischke farm at N4229 Cedar Road, Pulaski.

The pattern for the quilt is called A Salute to Dairying, which represents the importance the dairy industry has been and continues to be to Shawano County. "Our committee is honored to sponsor the 200th barn quilt," Jeff Styczynski, Shawano County 4-H Dairy Key committee chairman said. "And to have it on one of our county's progressive active dairy farms makes it very special." Connie is a member of the dairy key committee and said she and her family are proud to have been selected to display the county's 200th barn quilt.

Jim Leuenberger, coordinator of Shawano County's barn quilt project, is proud of the way the entire Shawano County community has embraced the project. "When I started the project in 2010, I hoped we could get at least 25 barn quilts around the county," he said, "but with the support of our entire area, we are going to have well over 200. That's pretty remarkable. And very rewarding."

Nancy Smith, Executive Director of the Shawano Country Chamber of Commerce, said the barn quilt project has been a real boon for their tourism efforts. "It has created interest from people all over the state and country who want to travel to our area to view our quilts," she said. "The fact that there are now 200 colorful quilts adorning barns throughout Shawano County is truly remarkable, thanks to the efforts of Jim Leuenberger and his wife, Irene, who have personally painted most of the 200 quilts."

The original 80 acre parcel of the Nischke farm was homesteaded by Robert Black in 1867. Gust Boettcher then took ownership in 1930, followed by Norman and Leona Moericke in 1958. John and Dixie Nischke purchased the farm in 1965 and sold it to their son Wayne, and his wife, Connie, in 1992. At that time, the milking herd consisted of 45 Holstein cows and 160 acres of land.

Eighty percent of the land on the Nischke Farm is tiled. In fact, it was one of the first farms in the area to tile back in the depression when men dug the tile by hand for \$1.00 per day.

Today, the herd totals 65 milking cows, over 100 head of young stock and 500 acres of land (owned and rented). Wayne and Connie's daughters, Ashley-21 and Kayla-20, are also involved in the farming operation, as is Ben Brown.

Future plans for Nischke Farms include increasing the size of the milking herd, operating more land, and including both Ashley and Kayla in the ownership of the farm.

The Nischke barn quilt was painted by the Shawano County barn quilt committee and was put on display by LeRoy Raddant and Bruce Teetzen of Raddant Electric in Shawano. Special thanks as well to Scott Breitrick for providing a truck to help put up the quilt.

Anyone who would like to participate in Shawano County's barn quilt project can contact project coordinator Jim Leuenberger at jamesmleuenberger@yahoo.com or by phone at 715-524-5685. You can also contact Patti Peterson, tourism manager at the Shawano Country Chamber of Commerce at tourism@shawano.com or 715-524-2139. A link on the Shawano Chamber Web site includes photos and information on every barn quilt on display in Shawano County. Just go to www.shawanocountry.com and click on the barn quilt icon.