

Bridge Group Sponsors County's 204th Barn Quilt

Eight Shawano area women who are long time friends and who have played bridge together for more than 30 years have sponsored Shawano County's 204th barn quilt. It is on display on a barn on property being leased by Shawn and Lori Mathwich, W13103 Highway 29, Shawano.

Speaking for the bridge group, LuAnn Stern said, "Sponsoring a barn quilt was a wonderful opportunity to show our support for this great project. We have enjoyed watching the barn quilts appear throughout Shawano County and reading the histories of the barns and their owners. We look forward to seeing each new quilt that adds to the beauty of Shawano County and commend everyone who has contributed to the success of this project." Members of the bridge group who sponsored the quilt are Carol Stern, LuAnn Stern, Donna Thomas, Elsie Greenhill, Holly Zander, Judy Judd, Pam Kuck and Janet Crawford.

Both Shawn and Lori have been serving in the Wisconsin National Guard for the past 17 ½ years. Shawn, a Sergeant E-5, has served two tours of duty in Iraq and has been called to help with every natural disaster in the United States, including hurricanes Katrina and Irene. Lori, a Sergeant First Class E-7, is in the Active Guard Reserve, has served one tour of duty in Iraq as well as in Guatemala, Panama and Nicaragua. Presently she helps train troops for going overseas. She has been honored as one of the best in the National Guard for preparing troops for active duty.

The pattern Shawn and Lori chose for their barn quilt is called The American Way. "We wanted a pattern that represented the importance of what we do in the National Guard," Shawn said. "The helicopter represents our role in helping to evacuate wounded troops. And the "Never Forget" symbol reminds us we can never forget those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defending our freedom."

Sometime between 1910 and 1915, John and Adela Maas purchased about 90 acres and started farming in the Town of Seneca where the barn quilt is located. In the early 1940s, about 100 acres north of highway 29 were purchased. Shortly after the purchase of the property, the original hip roof barn was raised and a masonry foundation put under the frame building.

John Maas died in 1964 and all assets purchased by Maas Farms Inc. (Sonja and Duane Maas and Kermit Maas) from Adela Maas in September 1969. Duane and Sonja purchased 20 acres of the property north of highway 29 in 1970 and built a house there. It is where Shawn and Lori live and operate Valhalla Bed & Breakfast.

Kermit operated a dairy farm for Maas Farms until 1976. When he retired he sold his interest in Maas Farms to Sonja and Duane, who entered into a dairy beef feeding operation with Eugene Voelz and his sons. This ended in 2011 after Eugene died and his sons realized they had to commit all their time to their dairy operation. It was then that Maas Farms entered into an agreement with Shawn and Lori to lease the remaining Maas Farms property and began operating as Valhalla Farms.

Shawn and Lori are in the process of purchasing about 75 acres on which the barn is located. They have worked literally thousands of hours restoring the barn and hope to eventually have a small herd of beef cattle.

The 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.

Anyone who would like to participate in Shawano County's barn quilt project can contact project coordinator Jim Leuenberger at 715-524-5685 or by email at jamesmleuenberger@yahoo.com. 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.