

## Cancer Survivor Sponsors County's 226<sup>th</sup> Barn Quilt

Ruth Kopitzke, a breast cancer survivor, has sponsored Shawano County's 226<sup>th</sup> barn quilt at W15501 Linke Road, Tigerton. The pattern she chose, called Evening's Last, is painted in pink and purple colors to represent breast cancer awareness. "I want to dedicate our barn quilt to my husband, Gordon, our son John and his wife Rita, our daughter Karen and her husband John Riemer, and our seven grandchildren, Chris, Hunter, Gunner and Summer Kopitzke, Nikole Pooock, and Cody and Chelsea Riemer, for their support in my fight against breast cancer," Ruth said.

Ruth's roller coaster fight against breast cancer started in September 2008. Her treatments included numerous radiation treatments, blood transfusions, chemotherapy and a mastectomy. "Of course, one of the most devastating side effects of chemotherapy is hair loss," Ruth said, "but I opted not to wear a wig, but rather chose to wear a baseball cap."

Gordon and Ruth's faithful family pet, Yukon, a chocolate Labrador, was by Ruth's side during her numerous cancer treatments. "He succumbed to lung cancer in 2011," Ruth said, "and died lying at my feet."

The Kopitzke barn quilt is mounted on a machine shed that faces Highway 45 just southeast of Tigerton. "We could have put it on the barn," Gordon said, "but then no one could really see it. This way, we can share it with others as they drive by on highway 45."

The Kopitzke family century farm began in 1890 when Ruth's great grandfather, Ernest Thies, acquired 80 acres of the present property from F.W. Rhineland for \$390. The Thies family had emigrated from Germany and settled at Split Rock in 1885.

Ernest sold the farm to Ruth's grandparents, Albert and Emma (Marquardt) Thies in 1918. On Albert's death in 1947, the farm went to his wife, Emma, and daughter, Wilma Linke. In 1962, Emma sold her interest to daughter, Wilma, and son-in-law Reinhold Linke. When Wilma and Reinhold died in 1996, the home 160 acres went to Gordon and Ruth. Ruth had actually been born on the farm.

Working off the farm, Gordon as a high school educator and Ruth as a registered nurse for 40 years (ending her nursing career doing home care hospice), helped keep the family dairy farm viable over the years. At present, Gordon and Ruth lease their 390 acres of cropland.

The Kopitzke barn quilt was painted by the Shawano County barn quilt committee and was put up 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 [jamesmleuenberger@yahoo.com](mailto:jamesmleuenberger@yahoo.com). You can also contact Patti Peterson, tourism manager at the Shawano Country Chamber of Commerce at 715-524-2139 or [tourism@shawano.com](mailto:tourism@shawano.com). 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](http://www.shawanocountry.com) and click on the barn quilt icon.