

County's 253rd Barn Quilt is Home for Birds

Jim and Patty Schweitzer, owners of the South Forty at 704 South Main Street in Shawano, have sponsored Shawano County's 253rd barn quilt. The pattern is appropriately called Avian Abode, since it is a collection of three bird houses. Having bird houses in the pattern is also appropriate for the South Forty, since the store offers some of the best custom-blended bird seed in the area, along with bird feeders and feed and seed for any and all small animals.

The quilt pattern was designed and painted by Shawano County's barn quilt project coordinator Jim Leuenberger. "When I presented the idea for the pattern to Jim and Patty, both thought it looked great. And Patty especially liked the bright colors," Leuenberger said. "Although one of our main goals for the Shawano County barn quilt project is to encourage the preservation of historic old barns in Shawano County, we felt having one on the South Forty was appropriate since it an historic structure and services the area's agricultural industry," he added.

The original "South Forty" was a grist mill owned by John Glawe built before 1907. It was sold to Richmond Horton Milling Company in 1919, who then sold it to M.A. Peterson Sr. and A.O. Anderson in 1926, and it became Shawano Flour and Feed Company. The operation was sold to New Richmond Roller Mills in 1929 and in 1939 the name was changed to Doughboy Mills Inc. Seven years later the name was changed to Doughboy Industries Inc. It was sold in 1952 to Edwin Bakke and in 1964 he changed the name to Bakke Feed and Seed Inc.

When the Schweitzers purchased the business from Jim and Dawn Bahr in October 2013, it was called the South Forty. The Bahrs had owned it for ten years.

Most of the bird seed sold at the South Forty are custom blends that have been passed down from owner to owner over the years. "Our biggest seller is what we call 'Our Own' bird seed," Jim said. "Some weeks we actually produce over two tons of just the Our Own blend," he said. Jim does all the mixing, whether it's seed for birds, or feed for rabbits, chickens, ducks, horses, dogs, cats...whatever people need," he said.

Jim's family homesteaded near Stony Hill west of Shawano. His dad, Harold, was born in Thornton, but grew up in the Sugarbush/Clintonville area. Patty is from Appleton and has owned and operated the ceramic shop on Center Street in Shawano for the past ten years. Jim was a dairy farmer for 22 years and also worked in feed mills throughout the state. "I like working here at the South Forty, though, because I enjoy meeting and visiting with people," he said. "And now, with our fantastic barn quilt, hopefully even more folks will be stopping in."

Local Shawano resident Jan Lewellyn said she has been watching the barn quilts go up all over Shawano County since the beginning. "I've enjoyed them all, but this one is my favorite. The bright colors and the bird houses make a really enjoyable combination," Jan said.

The South Forty is open Tuesday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., and Monday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Mondays in the winter. It will be closed on Mondays from June through October.

The Avian Abode was put on display by Bruce Teetzen and Keith Raddant of Raddant Electric in Shawano with the assistance of a lift truck provided by Scott Breitrack of Marion.

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

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