

Ride With Pride is County's 271st Barn Quilt

Shawano County's 271st barn quilt is now on display at The South Forty, 704 South Main Street in Shawano, owned by Jim and Patty Schweitzer. The quilt was sponsored by Shawano Pathways, the fourth quilt the organization has sponsored.

The quilt pattern was designed by Brandon Reed in Jenny Ballwahn's third grade class last year in conjunction with the first Bike the Barn Quilts event held in September. The pattern includes an ear of corn in the center surrounded by red, white and blue stripes.

"When I see corn I think of farmers," Brandon said. "And when I see red, white and blue, I think America." The design was a tribute to Brandon's two grandfathers, one of whom was a farmer and the other in the Marine Corps.

An educational component was required as part of the Mielke Foundation grant that Shawano Pathways was awarded for the initial barn quilt ride. Several retired educators, Peg Gallagher, Mary Lewellin, Stephanie Spence, Gail Swanke, and Matty Mathison, along with wonderful technical help from the College of Menominee Nation, designed a curriculum for upper elementary students that used barn quilt patterns to study math, geography, art, social studies, agriculture, and bike/walking safety. An inservice was provided to all the Olga Brener teachers before school started and the great majority of them utilized many of the activities from this curriculum.

"The barn quilts in Shawano County have become a popular conversation around Shawano and even in our 3rd grade classroom where my students designed their own quilt on paper using a variety of geometry tools," Jenny Ballwahn said. "We started our learning by viewing the quilts online which generated quite a conversation as students recognized the quilts from their travels. There is also a website that is very student friendly with math problems and teacher talking points revolving around the barn quilts. After completing their quilts, students were excited to display them in the school hallways and at businesses around Shawano. Brandon came up with a very unique quilt that is a perfect reflection of our rural area."

"Choosing only one quilt pattern out of the 300+ quilts designed by the Olga Brener students was a daunting task," Mathison said. "However Brandon's seemed quite appropriate since Shawano Pathways had a designated spot on the South Forty Feed Mill. Brandon helped paint the quilt, and his parents, Steve and Barb Reed, are very proud of him. Thanks to Tim Conradt, owner of Mountain Bay Outfitters, and Bruce Teetzen and Jerry Timm of Raddant Electric, a bicycle was hung next to the quilt, and the quilt is appropriately titled Ride With Pride."

Anyone who would like to participate in the Shawano County 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.