

County's 282nd Barn Quilt Salutes American Farmers

Shawano County's 282nd barn quilt is now on display on the farm of Melvin and Jane Krueger, W10866 County M, Pella. Painted in four shades of blue with a gold star in the center, the Kruegers have named the quilt, Pride of the American Farmer. "Farming is a great way of life," Melvin said. "It takes a lot of hard work and dedication because you are there 24-7. But when you get a chance to sit back and reflect on all the years you have put into farming and supported your family, you have a real sense of pride in what you have accomplished."

The Krueger barn quilt was sponsored by Linda Bleser of Shawano, an avid quilter herself. "Being a quilter, I thought what better way would there be to foster the idea of quilting as an art form than to sponsor a barn quilt," Linda said. "Pioneer women settlers had very few resources at their disposal, so using every last scrap of fabric for household uses and quilt making was a way to survive."

"The Shawano County barn quilt project has brought another facet of tourism to Shawano County by providing a fun way for families and others to enjoy the beautiful countryside by driving or biking to see them," Linda added. "I've known about the barn quilt movement for several years and think it's a wonderful way to feature Shawano County's agricultural history."

Melvin and Jane purchased their farm in September 1973 from Roy and Bernice Zahn. It was Roy's home farm. His parents, Charles and Tillie Zahn, raised eight children there.

The Kruegers originally purchased 144 acres, plus all the livestock, machinery, equipment and personal property. Later they purchased another 32 acres from Clyde and Mildred Strelow and 50 from Rueben and Karen Reinke.

In 1973, they had a milking herd of 26 Holstein cows plus 50 head of young stock. Over the years, they increased the milking herd to 57 cows along with 50 head of young stock. They sold the milking herd in 2010 and today, their son, Lonnie, has 57 Holstein cows on the farm.

Melvin and Jane, who have been married 46 years, have three sons, Larry, who farms nearby, Lonnie, who works on the home farm, and Lyle, who works off the farm but helps when needed. They have three grandchildren, Amanda, Autumn and Jared.

The Krueger barn quilt was painted by the Shawano County barn quilt committee and was put on display by LeRoy and Keith Raddant 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 715-524-2139 or tourism@shawano.com. A link on the Shawano Chamber of Commerce Web site includes photos and information on every barn quilt on display in the county. Just go to www.shawanocountry.com and click on the barn quilt icon