

## Sunflower Pattern is County's 299<sup>th</sup> Barn Quilt

Shawano County's 299<sup>th</sup> barn quilt, called Harvesting Happiness, is a greater-than-lifesize sunflower pattern. It is on display on a barn owned by Joel and Wanda Nischke, W744 Bohn Road, Oconto Falls. The quilt was sponsored by The Egan Foundation.

When originally homesteaded in 1859, the farm totaled 40 acres. It changed owners many times over the years until being purchased by Evertt Benz in 1946. Benz had a dairy herd and registered the farm name as The Valley Best Dairy Farm.

Benz later sold the farm to a Winter family, who in turn sold it to Norbert Nischke Sr. At the time, it was no longer being operated as an active dairy farm. Norbert's son, Donald, took over the farm in 1966 and started raising hogs. Joel now owns the farm which totals 120 acres. He raises several hundred hogs annually, most of which are marketed locally.

In 2000, Joel named the farm Valley Best Hogs after learning about the history of the farm name. Next year will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> year of raising hogs on the farm.

In commenting on why the sunflower pattern was selected for the quilt, Wanda said, "To me, the sunflower in full bloom tells us fall is right around the corner. Fall is my favorite season of the year, bringing back memories of Joel and my first dates, beautiful sunsets, cooler temperatures and harvesting of our crops.

"The fall season has all my favorite colors, too," Wanda said, "with yellow representing happiness, gold as harvest time and brown being practical and down to earth. When I heard we were getting a barn quilt, I knew right away the design had to be one that brought happy thoughts. And this one certainly does."

Joel and Wanda have four children, Zachary-15, Nicole-14, Tyler-9 and Riley-7.

The Nischke 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.

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