

## County's 302<sup>nd</sup> Barn Quilt is Father's Day Gift

Jenny Christianson and her brother, Blair, have sponsored Shawano County's 302<sup>nd</sup> barn quilt as a father's day gift for their dad, Neil. The quilt, called Community Pastimes, is mounted on a barn owned by Christianson at N575 State Highway 187, Shiocton, in the township of Navarino. "The idea of this barn quilt reflecting Community Pastimes and the integration of the area's historic and cultural heritage seemed like an appropriate theme to highlight the Navarino area," Neil said. "I think it looks just great."

The quilt pattern, featuring a silhouette of a snow skier, reflects the Christianson family's interest in skiing as well as their Norwegian heritage. It's been said that a local Lutheran pastor, who was Norwegian by birth, mentioned as early as 1949 that the young people of the area needed some opportunities for recreation. The idea was discussed among neighbors from time to time and continued to grow, ultimately resulting in the first ski jumping meet being held in 1950. Ski jumping became a popular activity that continued through 1967.

In 1954, Robert and Phyllis Christianson purchased the farm at N575 State Highway 187, just down the road from what is called Navarino Hills. They too were of Norwegian descent and their family enjoyed the sport of skiing and ski jumping. As the decade of the '60s came to a close, more people were looking to do some skiing locally.

Bob and Phyllis, along with some relatives and neighbors as co-owners, began to transition the ski jump area into a downhill ski hill. Approximately 140,000 yards of dirt were hauled to build up the hill, a chair lift was installed and, in 1973, Navarino Hills was open for business.

The co-owners, relatives and area residents provided whatever help was needed, whether it be grooming the trails, ski patrolling, giving ski lessons or making snow. A two-story chalet was built and was manned by the same crew. At the chalet, skis were rented and refreshments sold. The chalet itself was a popular place for wedding receptions, family and class reunions, as well as confirmation and graduation parties.

Activities at the ski hill had area young people literally growing up on the premises. When there was snow, you could count on the kids being on the hill. It became so popular that some skiing events drew as many as 700 people!

### Dairy Operation Grows

Over the years, Bob and Phyllis purchased additional acreage to grow crops for their increasing dairy herd. In 1960, a loafing barn was built and a double-five herringbone milking parlor added that is still in use today.

In 1991, Bob and Phyllis retired and sold the farm to their son, Neil, and his wife, Noreen. In 2010, a new free-stall barn was built to accommodate 150 cows. A total of 600 acres are now used to grow feed for the larger dairy herd. The original barn on the farm, built of sawed 2" x 10" timbers, is also still in use.

Neil's interest in dairying accompanies his life-long interest in skiing and other outdoor recreational activities. For the past 15 years, Neil has made his land available for use by disabled hunters and is an integral part of the "Challenge the Outdoors" charity organization.

The Christianson 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.