

Quilt Reflects Family's Life with Autism

Terry and Diana Radtke have chosen a pattern called Autism Awareness for the barn quilt they sponsored and that now is on display on their century old barn at N4223 County F, Bonduel, just north of Zachow.

They chose the pattern because autism has been a part of their family for the past 35 years. It was then, when their son Tom was 13 months old, that he became autistic literally over night. It was the end of the 1970s, a time when no one knew much about autism.

"We were the first generation to keep our disabled child at home," Diana said. Tom was the first student identified with autism in the Bonduel School District. Back then, there was little outside support for dealing with an autistic child.

"Not even our immediate family members knew how to help us with his behaviors," Diana said. "But thankfully, now there are many resources and support organizations to help parents with a child on the Autism Spectrum."

The Radtkes encourage families with children on the Autism Spectrum to contact them and to stop to see their barn quilt. A great resource for information on autism can be found online at www.autismspeaks.org.

The original owner of the 5-acre property where the Radtkes live was Hilbert Schultz, although Terry's grandfather owned a minnow house on the property. Later Terry's dad, Harvey, owned the farm, which was operated as a dairy farm for many years. Terry and Diana purchased the property and built a new home in 1976.

Diana works for CESA in Gillett. Terry is retired. Previously he ran a garage in Zachow and also worked for Collins Radio in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.