

Rainbow Iris is County's 130th Barn Quilt

A beautiful, colorful flower pattern, called Rainbow Iris, is Shawano County's 130th barn quilt. The quilt is on a barn at Windswept Acres, N5502 Highway 117, just south of Cecil, owned by Reed and Mary Lee Johnson. The quilt was sponsored by the Shawano Woman's Club and was painted by the Shawano County barn quilt committee, with the help of Sally Brumlic, who is a member of the Woman's Club.

The Johnsons have owned the farm since 1998 and grow more than 300 varieties of flowers they sell wholesale as cut flowers to florists from Green Bay to Milwaukee. Four days a week, Reed is on the road delivering cut flowers. For two days he delivers them to Green Bay, the Fox Valley and the Lakeshore and the other two days in the Milwaukee area. Their biggest sellers are Sunflowers, Zinnias, Dahlias and Vernacula. The operation includes four greenhouses, which gives the Johnsons the ability to grow flowers that wouldn't normally grow in this area. The farm totals 120 acres, 35 of which are in production of cut flowers.

The original homesteaders of the farm were the H.B. Bublitz family, one of the founding families of the Town of Washington. The barn on which the quilt is displayed was built in 1904 and the farm was always a dairy operation. A Starks family owned the farm from 1994 to 1998.

Reed Johnson worked as a forester for many years, later for Scott Paper in Maine, then for Ducks Unlimited in Wisconsin. He started working for Mary Lee in 2005. With a degree in Botany, Mary Lee had worked as a florist and had grown cut flowers for more than 30 years. They started selling cut flowers wholesale in 2001.

"We really appreciate the Shawano Woman's Club sponsoring the quilt for us," Mary Lee said. Her mother, Helen Montoure, who works part time on the farm, is a member of the Club and had recommended the quilt be displayed at Windswept Acres.

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