

## Wagner Farms Hosts County's 294<sup>th</sup> Barn Quilt

Shawano County's 294<sup>th</sup> barn quilt is now on display at the Hank and Pam Wagner dairy farm at N6928 County BB, Cecil. Sponsored by the Shawano County 4-H Leaders, the quilt pattern is called Building Blocks of Youth. The quilt has a 4-H theme in honor of Hank's dad, Tony, for his more than 40 years as a 4-H Leader. "We couldn't think of a better example of what 4-H is all about than Tony," said Terri Brunner, Shawano County 4-H program assistant. In response, Tony said, "4-H past, present and future has given and will continue to give me opportunities to travel and meet other leaders while learning skills in leadership and the confidence to speak to people. 4-H has helped build my life and I appreciate the opportunity to pass on what I have learned to our future leaders, today's youth."

Mary Lou Kugel, president of the Shawano County 4-H Leaders, said the quilt pattern is very significant. "The outside gold border celebrates the year 2014, the centennial year of 4-H in the state of Wisconsin," she said. "The 'blocks' in the pattern represent 4-H youth building a better version of themselves through community service, leadership and project activities. Finally, the 'ribbon' effect in the pattern represents 4-H youth and adults working together to carry out the mission of the 4-H program, which is 'to make the best better'."

### Farm History

Wagner Farms was started in 1896, with the land being purchased from a lumber company. Being all wooded at the time, the land was cleared with hand saws and horses. Many of the logs from that initial clearing were used to build some of the early farm buildings. In 1918, the barn burned after being struck by lightning, but it was rebuilt and is the barn the quilt is mounted on.

Hank's grandfather, Peter Wagner, operated the farm until Tony took over in 1956. In 1952, the first somewhat 'automated' milking machine had arrived, prior to which all the cows were milked by hand. When Tony took over, he started with a herd of 15 cows, which grew to 35 cows, and then to 65.

In 1987, Hank and his wife, Pam, took over as owners of the farm, with Tony as an employee. "I immediately found out that managing a dairy farm was not as easy as I thought it would be," Hank said. "Pam and I agreed that family and personal goals needed to come first, but we also realized we would need to expand and make our facilities more efficient if we were going to be a viable part of the dairy industry. Words cannot fully express the importance of taking time to thoroughly think through personal, family and business goals of every person involved in our operation. We use our personal goals and regular business plan updates along with the very important lessons learned early on to keep us on our journey of success."

Through several very calculated steps, the Wagner herd has grown to 650 cows being milked in a double twelve parallel milking parlor. Wagner Dairy Farm is truly a family operation, with all members being an integral part of its success.

This special barn quilt was painted by the Shawano County barn quilt committee and Mary Lou Kugel. It was put on display by LeRoy Raddant and Bruce Teetzen of Raddant Electric in Shawano.