

Rock County barn quilts project still growing

By CATHERINE IDZERDA

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Photo



Photo by [Dan Lassiter](#)

This is a barn quilt at the Daluge Farm on Janesville's south side.

JANESVILLE — A year ago, the Barn Quilts of Rock County project wasn't much more than a few earnest volunteers and a couple of cans of paint.

Now, more than 100 barns, outbuildings and other structures feature the brilliant squares of color.

“We now have 8-, 4- and 2-foot squares,” said Jeanette Beard, one of the project's organizers. “We continue to add quilts, and we hope to update the barn quilts (tour) map at the end of the year.”

What's a barn quilt? It's a large square of wood, painted with a traditional quilt pattern and hung up on the side of a barn where passing motorists can see it.

Each square features a unique pattern. Sometimes, those patterns have special meaning to the quilts' owners. For example, two women, both of them farmers and both of them farmers' daughters, picked "Farmer's Daughter" quilt pattern. An ultralight owner picked "Starry Path" for his pattern

The idea for barn quilts started in Iowa, where a young woman decided she wanted to create a tribute to her mother, who was an avid quilter.

The idea took off, and now several counties in the upper Midwest have quilt tours.

Locally, the project has generated so much interest that organizers are putting together a bus tour designed to appeal to quilters, local history buffs and anyone who wants to discover the hidden pockets of beauty in their own backyards.

The tour is planned for Aug. 17, with registrations due Aug. 1.

"I took a tour like this in Green County," Beard said. "We'll be talking about the designs and some of the history."

Beard hopes the tour will include stops at local quilt shops.

As she's worked on the project, Beard has become more and more intrigued by the history of the barns themselves and has started to collect information about their histories.

People can still order quilt squares, Beard said. The large squares are \$185; medium are, \$85, and small are \$50.

After picking a pattern, buyers can pick from a palette of 30 colors.

TO LEARN MORE

For more information about Barn Quilts of Rock County, visit barnquiltsfroccounty.org. The website features a listing of all the quilts and their locations, and printable maps.

Maps are also available at the Janesville Convention and Visitors Bureau, 20 S. Main St., No. 17, Janesville.

To register for the bus tour, send a \$30 check made out to "Rock County HCE" to Bonnie Forslund, 114 N. Randall Ave., Janesville, Wis., 53545. The cost for Rock County Home and Community Education Association (HCE) members is \$25.

For more information about the tour, contact Jeanette Beard, (608) 868-4240.

For more information about barn quilts, contact Beard or Phil Woodworth, (608) 295-5112; Vaughn Johnson, (608) 365-5209; or Ronna Morton-Ballmer (608) 758-9600.

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