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Our Town

If you're looking for the quiet country life but want to be within driving distance of the big city, Mukwonago is the place to be.

Nestled off of a major interstate in southwestern Waukesha County, Mukwonago offers visitors and its 20,000 residents a small-town feel with big-city amenities a short drive away.

Large commercial developments such as Pick 'n Save, Home Depot and Walmart anchor the north and south ends of the village, offering easy shopping and multiple employment opportunities as the village and township grows.

Mukwonago is also home to a YMCA, which provides activities for kids, youth and adults all year long.

With the abundance of community festivals and activities, there's always something to do.

The Mukwonago Area Chamber of Commerce and local non-profit organizations like the Lions Club and American Legion Post sponsor events all year long, including an annual ice fishing jamboree, egg hunt, Father's Day and Memorial Day parades, Summerfeste, Balloons Over Mukwonago, Fall Fest, Jack 'o Lantern Jaunt and the winter festival,

Midnight Magic.

Mukwonago is also home to The Elegant Farmer, which has garnered national attention and even prompted world-renowned Chef Bobby Flay to take on its "Brown Bag Apple Pie" in an episode of Throwdown. The pie has been named "best pie in America" by the Wall Street Journal, Gourmet and Food Network. Dan Scheel and John Bauer, of The Elegant Farmer, won the showdown with Flay.

A bit of history

The Village of Mukwonago was first settled by the Potawatomi Indians in the 1700s. The term "Mukwonago" translates to "Place of the Bear," according to the village's website.

In spring of 1836, Sewall Andrews and Henry H. Camp built their homes just northwest of the Indian Village. In 1836, Mukwonago's first plat was made. Soon afterward, more residents would begin developing homesteads and businesses in the area. The Andrew's house still stands today and is now home to the Mukwonago Red Brick Museum.

So, welcome to Mukwonago! Enjoy your stay!

Mukwonago,
Wisconsin 2022-23

OUR TOWN

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above: Cameron Cruz shows his mom, Molly, how to pick the Lucky Duck during this year's annual Summerfest celebration. The Mukwonago Lions Club hosts the event and parade over Father's Day weekend. **on the cover:** Two-year-old Hollie Horlacher dances in the bubbles during the 2022 National Night Out celebration in Field Park.

LISA SMITH *Our Town*

our schools

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Shooting for more

Mukwonago basketball program supports Make-A-Wish

By Lisa Smith
CORRESPONDENT

When Kaden's Wish began close to a decade ago, the event generated enough to grant one or two wishes. This year's event will grant 23 or 24 wishes to wish kids and their families.

With more than 500 children waiting for a wish (largely because of the COVID-19 pandemic), this year's fundraising goal was set at \$100,000.

The Mukwonago High School basketball program and the community rallied to reach their goal. The boys and girls basketball teams worked hard in the last month, both on and off the court. All levels of the Mukwonago basketball program (grades 4 through 12) participated in the annual fundraising event for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

All money raised goes to Make-A-Wish Wisconsin, granting wishes for kids battling critical illnesses.

Hundreds of kids took part in the Free-Throw-A-Thon this year at Mukwonago High School in January. With 459 participants and more than 1,200 total donations, the fundraiser exceeded everybody's expectations.

With a total of \$137,171 collected, it

will be possible to grant more than 20 wishes. As of Jan. 14, the Free-Throw-A-Thon became the largest kids-for-wish-kids fundraiser in Wisconsin and the country.

The success and growth of this fundraiser has a lot to do with wish recipient Kaden Stark and his family. Stark's wish was granted in 2011 with a trip to Disneyland. The wish experience had such an amazing impact on Stark and his family that they wanted to do more to make wishes come true for others.

Stark set a goal of helping to grant 100 wishes. Sadly, Kaden Stark passed away in 2019, at the age of 14. Before his passing however, he had been instrumental in granting more than 60 wishes.

The Stark family continues to work hard in Kaden's memory and has granted over 115 wishes. Now they aim to "reach higher" and go for 1,000 wishes. Kaden's legacy and spirit of "doing more" and giving back affected all that knew him. His family, friends and entire community will continue to honor his memory at the annual Kaden's Wish/Free-Throw-A-Thon in his hometown and throughout the year at various Kaden's Wish events.

For more information, go to kadenswish.org.



top: The Mukwonago fundraising program and its sizable donation were recognized by the Make-A-Wish Foundation in January. The coaches, players and community are making dozens of wishes come true after this year's Free-Throw-A-Thon and Kaden's Wish fundraisers. **above:** Milwaukee Bucks guard Pat Connaughton helped tip off the Kaden's Wish fundraising event at Mukwonago High School. The NBA star is seen here with fan and wish recipient, Wyatt Lewitzke, who was granted his wish in 2014 to go to Disney World before his brain surgery.

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Farm tales

LOCAL AUTHOR CHRONICLES FAMILY'S DAIRY FARM HISTORY IN NEW BOOK

by **Dave Fidlin**
CORRESPONDENT

Farming is deep within Corey Geiger's DNA. So, too, is a love of writing.

The melding of the two disparate disciplines has come together for the Mukwonago resident in his book, "On a Wisconsin Family Farm: Historic Tales of Character, Community and Culture," that is the outgrowth of the cultivation of stories he accumulated from ancestors of bygone eras.

Geiger, who grew up on a dairy farm, serves as the lead editor of the Fort Atkinson-based Hoard's Dairyman magazine. He also has used his writing skills over the years to chronicle his family's farming history.



Author Corey Geiger has written a book detailing life on his family's dairy farm. "On a Wisconsin Family Farm: Historic Tales of Character, Community and Culture," is available online and at several area book stores.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS Our Town

The personal tales initially were published in a series of local newspaper columns – 95 total – and have since morphed into a collection of short stories in the 31-chapter compilation of his ancestor's experiences.

All told, Geiger captures six generations of local tales in his book. Anna Satorie, who Geiger describes as "a maternal maverick," is among the featured farmers. Satorie bucked a trend in the first decade of 1900 and became the sole owner of her family's homestead.

"People were encouraging me to write a book," Geiger recalls of the seed that was planted years back. "I did have the idea in the back of my head for some time, but their encouragement pushed me to do that."

"On a Wisconsin Family Farm" was initially published through Arcadia Publishing in March and most recently went into a third printing cycle because prior editions have been selling out.

As he reflects on his near-first year of publishing the book, Geiger said he has come to a full realization the newspaper columns and subsequent book have struck a chord with readers.

"It has been very rewarding," he said of the response. "One of the consistent themes that I hear is that it reminds people of their families. It reminds them of stories their grandparents have told them."

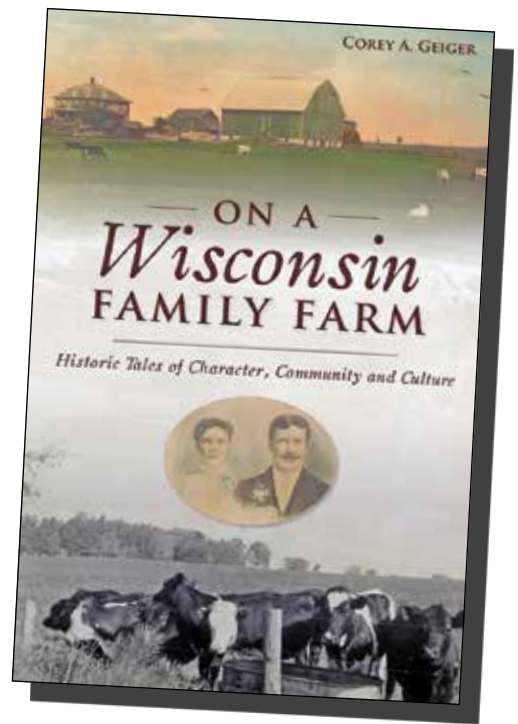
There is another recurring theme Geiger said he has fielded from readers – one he took note of as his grandparents grew older.

"People will tell me that they wish they would have listened more closely (to their elders) when they were younger," he said.

As a child, Geiger said he was captivated by some of his grandparents' stories and did begin listening more closely as they entered their 80s.

"I heard stories – they were great storytellers – about what happened," Geiger said of the trials and triumphs of operating a farm at a time when some of today's modern conveniences were not commonplace.

Geiger initially had planned on publishing "On a Wisconsin Family Farm"



in 2019, but a series of events, including the passing of his father that year, ultimately postponed the release to this year.

"My dad was able to read most of the story manuscripts because I was pretty far along, so that was cool," Geiger said of a bittersweet anecdote of the book assembly process.

The book is historical, of course, but in a showing of how life comes full circle, it also touches on themes – such as immigration and enduring pandemics – that are front-of-mind in today's society.

"Americans are blessed – they really are," Geiger said of a concept he tried to drive home in the book. "And I think, when you read this book, you realize how precious freedom was and how hard people worked so their children had a better life and how important education was."

While "On a Wisconsin Family Farm" has an undeniable agricultural focus, Geiger said there are other universal principles he hopes readers take away after turning the book's pages.

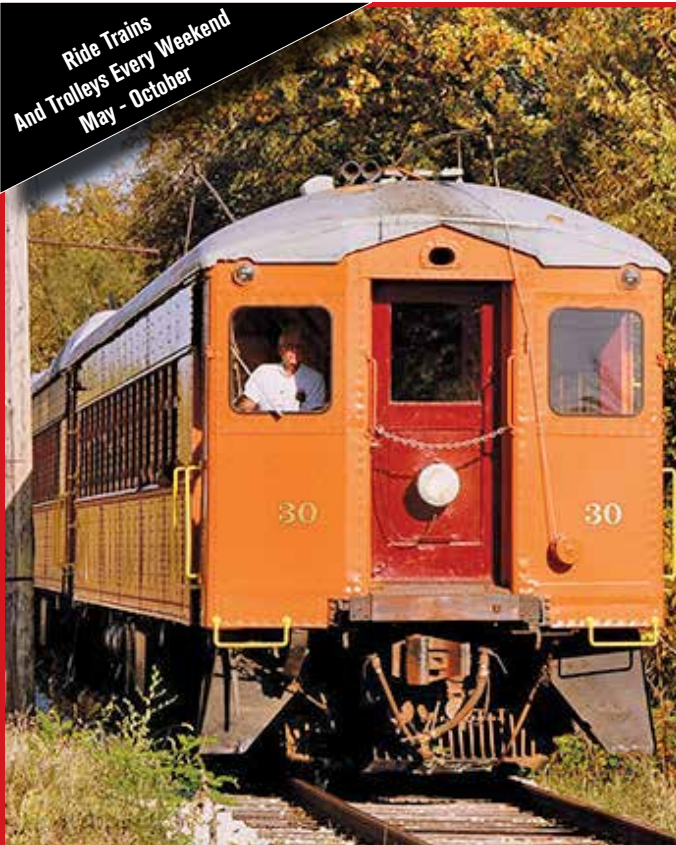
"I think it's been a conversation starter for people and their family's oral history," he said. "If that's one of the legacies of this book, I'm very, very happy with that."

Buy the book

Copies of "On a Wisconsin Family Farm: Historic Tales of Character, Community and Culture" are available at the following local bookstores:

- Blue House Books, Kenosha;
 - Dust Bunny Books, Lake Geneva;
 - Espresso Love Coffee, Mukwonago;
 - Geneva Lake Museum, Lake Geneva;
 - InkLink Books, East Troy;
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'We're not in Kansas anymore, Toto'

Area pup steals the show at the Fireside Theater

By **Tracy Ouellette**

EDITOR

When Patti Muraczewski was called to help find a dog to play "Toto" in the Fireside Theater's summer production of "The Wizard of Oz" she knew just the right doggo to fill the roll.

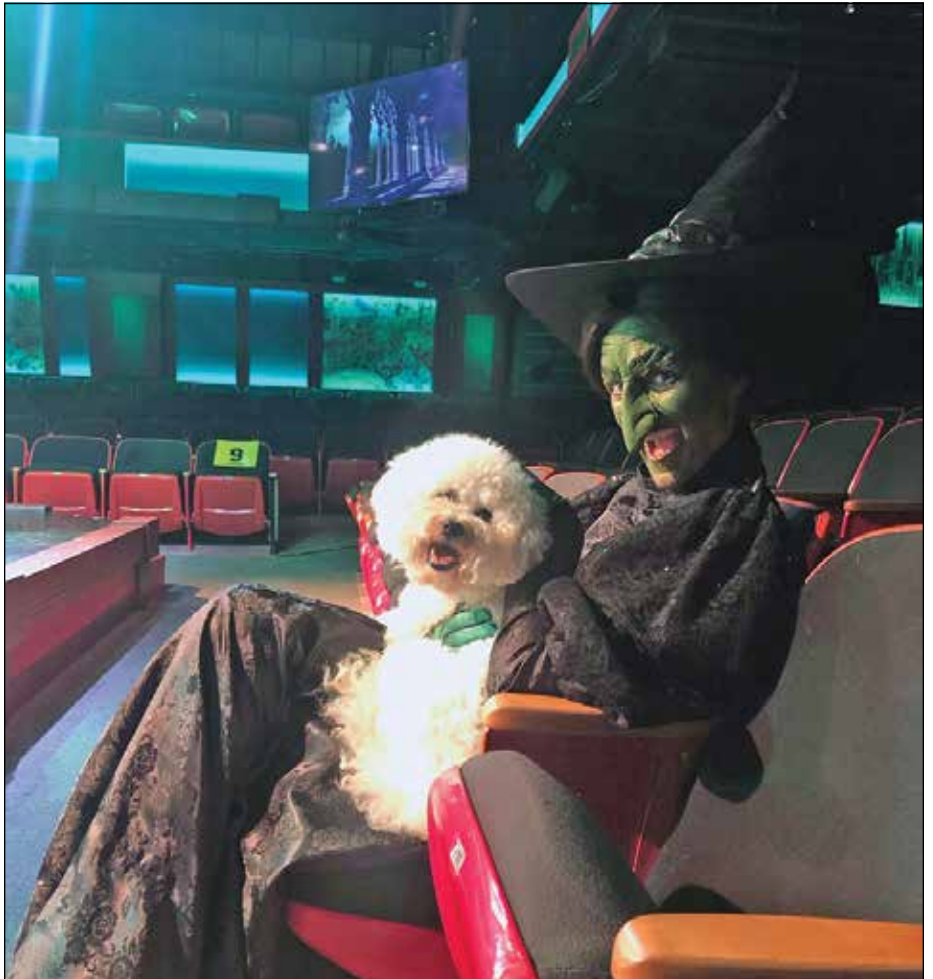
"A lot of people have really good dogs for plays, but in this case, they needed a dog that could handle the sights and sounds and scary costumes," she said. "You don't want to traumatize the dog every night!"

Muraczewski said when the play's director, Ed Flesch, contacted her about the role, she gave it some serious thought and decided her 5-year-old Bichon Frise, Breeze, was the perfect fit.

"The Fireside called and said they needed a dog, Ed knows I'm a dog trainer and have contacts with people," Muraczewski recalled. "Nine years ago they needed a dog, but that friend's dog was too busy this time; it's a big time commitment, you have to be there to handle the dog the whole time and they couldn't do it this time."

Muraczewski, who owned For Pet's Sake in Mukwonago for many years, decided to take on the project.

"It's a lot of time, there are sometimes two performances a day," she said. "But it's extremely therapeutic too. Breeze just loves it! Bichon Frise loosely translated into 'curly lap dog.' They're companion animals, very friendly and outgoing to a



Breeze enjoys watching dress rehearsal with the Wicked Witch played by Laura Cable during this past summer's production of "The Wizard of Oz" at the Fireside Theatre. Breeze spent a lot of time visiting with cast members while they were in costume to get used to being around them.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATELYN ZELON *Our Town*



Breeze hangs out with the winged monkeys, played by Zander Nicholson and Joey Maxwell.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KATELYN ZELON *Our Town*

fault. She loves it and is so happy because everyone spends so much time with her."

The relationship between the dog and actors is vital for a role like this, Muraczewski said. Breeze spends quite a bit of his time backstage just hanging out with the cast members while they are in costume.

"Not only is this a wonderful play, these dogs who do things like this, it's comparable to a service dog," Muraczewski said. "They can handle the stress, lights and sounds. And she loves the cast, she really likes the Cowardly Lion.

But even so, Breeze can get scared. "Normally she would kiss the Cowardly Lion when she saw him, but the first night with the sounds, sights and lights she just wanted off stage. But now she knows it's just him and she runs to him."

Being an adorable pup, Breeze has stolen more than just the hearts of the cast and crew, some times, she steals the scene, Muraczewski said.

"They had to change the first scene with 'Over the Rainbow' in it," she said. "Breeze was too scene stealing, looking at the audience, kissing Dorothy while she's hitting the high notes. The director said 'You know, I think we're going to have to do this without her, we have a beautiful actress with a great voice and everyone is looking at the dog!'"

Breeze is a professional, however, and didn't take it to heart.

"It's wonderful for us to get to see behind the scenes and to see the wonderful talent they have in the play," Muraczewski said.

For more information about the theater and current shows, visit www.firesidetheatre.com.

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Village Board president recognized in ceremony

WINCHOWKY HAS SERVED THE VILLAGE FOR 50 YEARS

This year marks Village Board President Fred Winchowky's 50th year of service to the Village of Mukwonago. The village recognized his hard work during a ceremony this summer where he was presented with a plaque, honoring his service.

According to a news release from the village, Winchowky long tenure has provided consistency and steadiness to the community.

"This is important, as the turnover inherent in the short-term election cycle cycles often whiplashes local communities with wild changes in focus and direction. Not so in Mukwonago, which has benefited from long-term, stable and progressive leadership," Village Clerk-Treasure Diana Dykstra said in the release.

"As a former elected official and a public servant active in local government for over 30 years, I can assure you the uninitiated that government service is not an easy role," Dykstra added. "The job for all of us is filled with late night evening meetings, constituent complaints, attending numerous community events – often on weekends, very tough decisions that anger people on both sides of a debate.

"We frequently come home very late, very tired, and very frustrated. It can also be very rewarding and important work. We really can have a meaningful impact on our communities."

Dykstra pointed out that families often bear the burden and make the many sacrifices necessary people can serve the communities.

"It is our families that help to put us together again after a contentious disagreement; it is our families who stay up late, making sure we are fed because we had to skip dinner to attend a meeting. It is our families who assure us that everything will be all right and better tomorrow. They are our advisers, our confidants, our supportive critics and our greatest champions. And while we public servants are sometimes rewarded with a successful policy or a project that is passed, our families are silently in the background but truly, they are the ones who make our work possible," Dykstra said.

Dykstra added her thanks on behalf of the village.

"So while I want to thank President Fred for his extraordinary service to the residents of Mukwonago, I also want to thank President Fred's bride, Mary Winchowky, because I can only imagine how much she has quietly sacrificed over the past 50 years. Mary is the wind beneath Fred's wings. Thanks to both of you," Dykstra said.



Mukwonago Village Board President Fred Winchowky receives a plaque recognizing his 50-year service to the village from his wife, Mary Winchowky. The village sponsored the award to honor the long-serving public servant.

SUBMITTED PHOTO *Our Town*

our parks

VILLAGE OF MUKWONAGO

The Village of Mukwonago park and open space system consists of 526.20 total acres of public park land and special use areas, including public school facilities, under the control of the Village.

The system includes a full range of developed facilities including neighborhood parks, community parks and special use areas located throughout the Village of Mukwonago, as well as a wealth of preserved environmental corridor and natural area sites.

Field Park

Field Park is on the southwest corner of the intersection of highways 83 and NN and is the most widely used park in the Village of Mukwonago.

The park has a 3,000-square-foot pavilion, which includes a full kitchen, a baseball diamond and an encompassing walking path surrounded by many large oak trees. It is home to such events as Maxwell Street Days, Mukwonago Summerfeste and Croatian Day Picnic.

An 800-square-foot open pavilion located near the children's play area provides shelter from the sun and rain as well as provides relaxation for those enjoying the park. The pavilion is host to many family, friends and business picnics throughout the summer.

The park and pavilion may be rented out on a first-come-first-serve basis starting January 1 of each year. For the latest rates and application for renting Field Park, click here.

Miniwaukan Park

Miniwaukan Park is at the end of McKenzie Road, behind the Mukwonago Industrial Park and Meadow Park Estates Subdivision, is mainly used by youth sports organizations such as Mukwonago Area Soccer Club and Mukwonago Braves Football.

Miniwaukan Park features one football field, six soccer fields, six baseball fields, a Frisbee-golf course,

and a newly launched Born Learning Trail.

For information the Frisbee-golf course and leagues, call Paul or Mike at (262) 968-4114.

Minor Park

Minor Park can be found on Highway LO just east of Highway I. It is home to the Mukwonago Women's Softball League. Two softball diamonds and a wooded picnic area with a small open shelter make up Minor Park.

Beautiful oak trees and landscape draw many photographers to the park for wedding and class photos.

Indianhead Park

Indianhead Park is on Highway ES, adjacent to Phantom Lake and to the north of the Village Hall.

The park lies along the Mukwonago River, and it features a small, open pavilion, a beach and plenty of open space for other sports. A walking path cuts across the park for easy access to the Village Hall from Front Street. Large oak trees provide shade for those who just want to sit and relax and fish the river.

Phantom Glen Park

Phantom Glen Park sits at the end of Andrews Street, along Phantom Lake.

The small, quaint park consists of an open shelter with electricity and is ideal for a small, intimate gathering of friends and family.

Washington Avenue Park

Washington Avenue Park is in the block bordered by Park Avenue on the north, Washington Avenue on the South, Franklin Street on the West and Division Street on the East, directly next to the Mukwonago Community Library.

The park offers a basketball court and a baseball diamond, as well as plenty of open space for other recreational activities.

All Village parks are rented on a first-come-first-serve basis and can only be rented during the current year.

For availability of a specific park and/or to place a reservation, call the village clerk's office at (262) 363-6420.

For more information, visit www.villageofmukwonago.com/parks.htm.

TOWN OF MUKWONAGO

Town Park

Town Park is at W320 S8357 Beulah Road.

The park has electricity, picnic tables, soccer and baseball fields, playground, pavilions (one with an indoor kitchenette) and horseshoe pits.

Lauren Park

Lauren Park is at W315 S8555 Highway EE.

The park has electricity, picnic tables, sand volleyball courts, baseball fields, playground and a pavilion.

Oak Ridge Park

Oak Ridge Park is at W304 S8000 Oakridge Drive.

The park has soccer and baseball fields, picnic tables and a pavilion.

For more information on the township's parks visit www.townofmukwonago.us.

WAUKESHA COUNTY

Mukwonago County Park

Mukwonago Park, W325, S9945 Beulah Road, is part of the Waukesha County Park system.

The 355-acre park site includes a high ridge formed during the last glacial period, which stretches nearly the length of the park. The oak opening ridge is covered with pre-settlement vegetation including burr oak, shagbark hickory, and ground cover of prairie plants.

Mukwonago Park Dog Exercise Area, W325 S9925 Beulah Road, is open daily. Daily park entrance fees apply.

Park hours are sunrise to 10 p.m., year round. In summer the beach is open from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. (262) 548-7801





Sharing her love of art

LOCAL WOMAN TEACHES CLASSES FOR ALL AGES

By **Lisa Smith**
CORRESPONDENT

Sue Cusick has been inspiring artists and spreading the joy of creativity in the area for many years.

While she has held a few public classes, Cusick says her passion is teaching small, private groups in her home.

She volunteers a lot of her time working with Next Step Life Coach in Waterford, senior citizens at LindenGrove campuses and Shorehaven, and elementary and middle school art clubs in the Mukwonago Area School District.

Cusick discovered the art of barn quilting years ago while looking for a way to incorporate her love of quilting into a “hobby sharing day” for her granddaughter’s fifth-grade class.

“I wasn’t sure the boys would enjoy quilting, so I did some research and learned about barn quilts,” she said.

Barn quilts are simple geometric shapes painted in the likeness of a quilt pattern. They are painted on wooden squares and can be produced in a range of sizes. Most are traditionally displayed on barns, but can be hung anywhere.

Aside from the extra beauty they bring to the rural countryside, Cusick said many are symbolic or significant to an individual farm, a community or even an event. Years back, Cusick and her family spent time in

an Amish Village in Indiana where barn quilts were displayed.

“I was hooked, made my first one, and over 500 barn quilts later – I love it even more!” Cusick said with a smile.

She now spreads that joy and enthusiasm people in the community. Her energetic and encouraging nature make her a wonderful

teacher for artists of any age or ability.

Cusick does not charge for her classes and most often provides all materials and supplies. It’s her way of connecting with the community.

“When I retired, God blessed me with time and I want to keep giving back,” she said.



top: LindenGrove residents Virginia Smith (front from left), JoAnne Wielebski, Joyce Kirkvold, Beverly O’Connell, Sandra Bemowski, (back row) Dorothy Sugden, Sandra Jay, Shirley Amyx and Sue Cusick show off the painted quilt projects the completed in three classes with Sue Cusick.

above: Cusick demonstrates a painting technique to the class at LindenGrove last winter.

LISA SMITH *Our Town*

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