

OUR TOWNS

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The 'Whisper' Of A Dream

Volin Woman Brings Craft Shop To Life

BY LORETTA SORENSEN
P&D Correspondent

VOLIN — It was a dream: Barb Schneider's idea of developing a country craft shop. She began by holding an annual sale in her home and then took the bold step of acquiring a building and taking one step at a time toward her ultimate goal.

Now, six years later, she offers high quality, unique country craft items year round at Heart Whispers just west of Volin.

Barb's plans stemmed out of her lifelong affinity for making something out of nothing. When she and her late husband Marlo cultivated the habit of gleaming usable and recyclable items from what others considered to be "trash," they stockpiled a wealth of materials that Barb has continued to use to keepsakes.

"Even the building was recycled," Barb said. "For years, it sat in a pasture on Walshtown Road. The cows walked in and out of it and raccoons had taken up residence there. When we brought it home, a lot of people thought it was the craziest idea I'd ever had. When we started to clean it up we found baby raccoons in it." The "lopsided" building that caught Barb's eye and imagination was just a few miles from her home, but it was in such poor condition, she wasn't certain it would withstand the move.

"I stayed home the day they moved it," she said. "I made lunch that day and tried to remain calm."

Once it arrived safely, the dilapidated structure sat east of Barb's home for several months. It presented a major remodeling challenge to her family. Her shortage of funds at the time didn't help matters. Rather than dwell on what they didn't have, Barb and her family started figuring out how they could use available resources to remodel and restore the building.

"We didn't replace the windows because they're the old, foggy glass and that fits perfectly with atmosphere of the shop," Barb said. "We took the plaster out before we moved because the plaster made it so heavy. The walls were sheet rocked and paint-



PHOTO: LORETTA SORENSEN
All items in Heart Whispers are hand made and home made by Barb Schneider and/or her family members. For their annual open house the weekend prior to Thanksgiving, they offered a wide variety of food items, holiday decorations and country crafts.

ed. I found a very inexpensive supply of mismatched paint at a paint store, and we had rescued light fixtures from a scrap pile quite a while ago."

Wiring and plumbing was replaced and the bathroom was enlarged enough to hold a small sink. The only new fixture in the building was the stool.

"I had a sink in our stockpile and I did some work for a man who was replacing his furnace," Barb said. "The renovation cost very little."

Barb's initial plan was to have her son-in-law install ceiling panels to lower the building's high ceiling. However, once the project began taking shape, Barb imagined a better way to finish the ceiling.

"Once I saw that wonderful peak in the main room, I could just see a star in the center of the ceiling," she

said. "I had to draw it out for my kids. They couldn't see what I was talking about. I wanted something in the store that caused people to look up, and that's exactly what they do."

The multi-colored, one-dimensional geometric star Barb imagined covers five to six feet of the center of the ceiling. She wasn't able to help with the work, which took place on scaffolding, but

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PHOTO: LORETTA SORENSEN
Potpourri pies are one of the unique items available at Heart Whispers, the country crafts shop just west of Volin that Barb Schneider and her family have developed over the past four years.

said the final result perfectly illustrates her idea.

"I don't know what I'd do without my family's help," she said. "They took care of all of that. They did the majority of the work on the building and they're always helping with something. Everybody just pulls together and each one has their own talent. It's invaluable."

Visitors to Heart Whispers find that creativity spills out of the shop and into the surrounding landscape. The quaint, inviting building sits at the end of an aged brick walkway and some larger crafted items are placed outside for special sale dates. Creative handiwork that reflects the flavor of the country and the crafters fills every nook and cranny inside.

"Mom has the ability to look at something ordinary and envision something beautiful," daughter Wendy Sathe said. "Sometimes she'll pick up something and the rest of us will wonder what on earth she wants to do with it. The first thing we know she's made something that's a keepsake."

Unusual items such as used mattress pads and old suitcases are just some of the "stuff" that Barb usually begins with.

"My husband used to give me a hard time when I embroidered quaint sayings on the mattress pads," Barb said. "He couldn't imagine how I would use them. But when they were framed with barn wood, they became one

of my most popular items. I don't know how many I made and sold. Too many to count."

Barb is skilled with the drill, glue gun, sewing machine and other tools of the craft trade. Because of her ability to see value in nearly every type of item, she purchases very little in order to create her crafts.

"One thing that really helps is all the wonderful people who bring me things I can use," she said. "I've come home and found boxes full of cloth, trinkets, and old trunk and other items that people

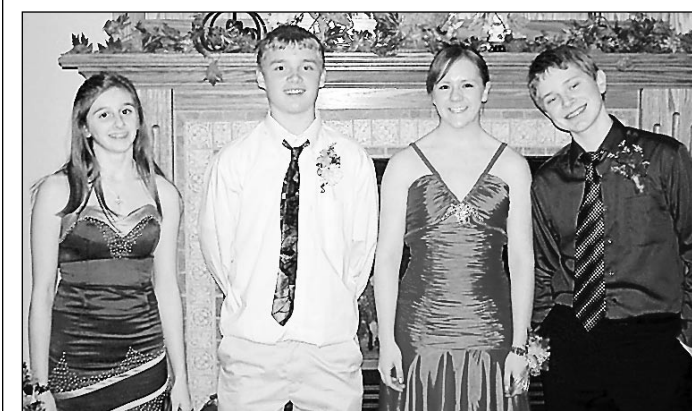
thought maybe I'd be able to use. When people ask me if I'd like items they can't use I tell them I'll be happy to take them. What I can't use I pass on or take to the Goodwill store. Very little ever goes into my garbage can."

Barb is open anytime she's home. She advises shoppers to call before they come out.

"I don't drive so I'm home a lot," she said. "That gives me time to work on the crafts and do what I've always enjoyed."

Heart Whispers can be reached by calling 267-2369.

ALL-STATERS



SUBMITTED PHOTO

These four Gayville-Volin students have been selected for the South Dakota All-State Choir. They are, from left: Bailey Gullikson, senior, soprano, three-time All-State Choir delegate; Zach Engen, freshman, bass; Ally Petrik, senior, alto, three-time All-State Choir Delegate; and Michael Blassi, freshman, tenor.

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