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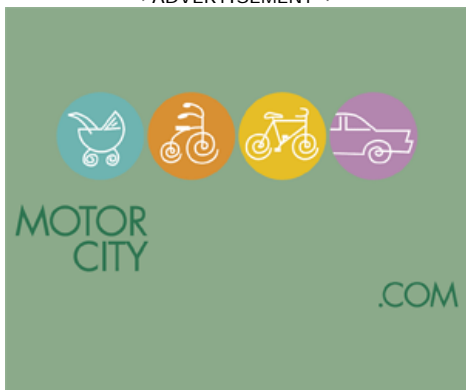
Thayer's Corner Nature Area wins Barn of the Year for 2008

STAFF WRITER

By Pam Fleming

Motorists used to be able to spot the weather-beaten barn on the east side of Sheldon Road north of Six Mile Road in the Ravines subdivision.

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Now completely restored and located at Thayer's Corner Nature Area on Napier Road north of Six Mile Road, the beautiful barn has won the Michigan Barn Preservation Network's Barn of the Year Award for 2008 in the Non-Profit Use

category.

The award was presented on Saturday, March 8, during the network's 13th annual conference as part of Agriculture and Natural Resources Week at Michigan State University in East Lansing.

Five barns received awards, with others hailing from Harrison, Mason, Middleville and Owosso. The winners were selected from more than 30 nominations across the state.

Those present from the township to accept the award included Marv Gans, a member of Friends of Thayer's Corner Nature Area who was instrumental in the project; Ken Brock, who helped get the barn moved; and Carol Poenisch of the Northville Historic District Commission.

The plaque was shown at the March 20 Northville Township Board of Trustees meeting and now hangs in the township hall.

"I really consider this significant accomplishment," said Mark Abbo, township supervisor. "Thank you. It's great being recognized, and it's nice to preserve a little bit of

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The Thayer's Corner Nature Area Barn won "Barn of the Year" this month from the Michigan Barn Preservation Network. The award was presented at Michigan State University's Kellogg Center on Saturday, March 8. Pictured at the event is Marv Gans, a member of Friends of Thayer's Corner Nature Area; Ken Brock, who helped move the barn from its previous location at the Island Lake subdivision in Novi; Tim Wyles, Michigan Barn Preservation Network; and Carol Poenisch of the Northville Historic District Commission. Submitted photo

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history."

Ravines homeowners help out

Gans explained that the Ravines of Northville Homeowners Association wanted to raze the old barn, but it was going to cost \$10,000 to do it.

Instead, the Ravines homeowners contributed the \$10,000 to move and restore the barn. The barn was moved on Oct. 1, 2005.

In all, local citizens raised a total of \$212,000 to move and restore the barn to its original glory. The 32- by 44-foot timber-framed, gable-roofed bank barn features a rare swing beam truss.

The mortise-and-tenon structure is hand-hewn and estimated to have been built in the mid-1800s by a couple who immigrated from Lichtenstein.

Once used as a horse racing stable, the barn's first home was near Northville Downs.

When developers acquired the property and built Ravines of Northville, the local effort was launched to find a new use for the barn.

Business and individual donations, reuse of materials and volunteer help contributed to saving the barn, which will be used for events, classes and private functions.

Gans said that Brock was not only instrumental in helping to move the barn the 5 miles from Sheldon Road to Napier Road, but he was also heavily involved in its restoration.

"Because of him, the barn was restored in the way it was built," Gans said.

"The neatest thing about it was that it was a community project," said Tim Wiles of Howell, a Michigan Barn Preservation Network trustee. "That's the kind of thing we look for when we present these awards.

"The authenticity of putting the barns back in their original condition and also plans to use them for educational purposes in the future are also important," Wiles said.

Last Saturday, members of Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society members from Schoolcraft College as well as a few local citizens volunteered their time to spruce up Thayer's Corner Nature Area. The work day was so successful that the students plan to return this Saturday. A formal cleanup/work day is slated for Saturday, April 26, from 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Program began 12 years ago

The Barn of the Year awards program began 12 years ago, soon after the Michigan Barn Preservation Network was founded as a way to draw attention to preservation networks.

As rural Michigan has changed, and barn uses have expanded beyond traditional farm buildings, the recognition

program has grown.

The 2008 awards are the first year that the barn awards were presented in four categories. Two awards were presented in the Family/Private Adaptive Use category.

Other categories were the Commercial Use Award and the Family/Private Continued Agricultural Use Award.


A special award was presented in recognition of volunteers working to save a barn in Highland Township in Oakland County.

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Originally published April 3, 2008

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