

The Story of the Lansing Barn Quilt Project By Dawn Richardson, Vice President, GLAD

A conversation in the park with my family while walking turned into an award-winning bright idea. My family spends a lot of time at the Lansing Creeper Trail Park walking the loop. We were there almost two years ago walking when I made a comment that a barn quilt would look great on the barn there. My husband and I are both teachers at Ashe County Middle School and at the time had twins at the middle school so I immediately started thinking about how I could get students involved in making this happen.

I currently serve as the vice president of the Greater Lansing Area Development (GLAD) committee and decided to present the idea at a meeting to see what everyone's thoughts were about pursuing the idea. The committee was interested, and I started thinking about how to fund it. I have received Bright Idea Grants in the past and thought this would be a perfect candidate for the grant through Blue Ridge Energies. I applied for the grant in the Fall of 2019 and was awarded the money to complete two quilts. One for the barn and another for the new restroom facility. The grant was to include students in the planning and execution of completing the project. I had lined up community member Jim Parsons, a local historian, and Rianna Barker from Silas Creek Barn Quilts to help with the project. The plan was to include history lessons of the area and allow students to select, plan, draw and paint. I wanted the students to learn about their town and take pride in where they came from. It was my hope to have students learn to think about the history of an area and make connections to create meaningful artwork with the hopes of them taking this and spreading their newfound talents to other communities in the county.

A lot of the plan was quickly changed when COVID hit right as we were getting started. I was not able to include the students due to restrictions but when plans change you make new plans. Rianna Barker, her grandson, my two daughters and myself set out to make sure as much of the project as possible was completed. Rianna was wonderful to work with and volunteered countless hours to help. She is a great teacher and quickly became an even closer friend. We spent many hours together with her teaching us how to complete this process. When we finished, we had enough money to purchase several smaller squares that will be used with students at Ashe County Middle School next school year. Rianna is going to join me at school to teach the students how to create their own small barn quilt. We are going for the same goal at the end but are having to get there in a totally different way than planned. I look forward to working with Rianna and teaching these students an art that they can use and maybe pass on to future generations.