

# Grain Elevator Converted To Eye-Catching Public Art

A few years ago the folks in Woodbine, Iowa (population 1,459) converted a huge, abandoned grain elevator into a beautiful work of public art that welcomes visitors to the town. The 20 by 20 by 65-ft. tall grain elevator is adorned with a 45-ft. high rust-colored metal corn stalk, set inside a rectangular metal frame that has a colorful green and white-striped field in the background. Wildflowers grace the foreground, and LED floodlights light up the scene at night.

"The town pulled together to save the elevator. The artwork has made it a real point of pride for the community," says Deb Sprecker, executive director of Main Street, a historic preservation group that spearheaded the project. "The elevator was built in the 1940's and originally had a feed mill attached to it. About 25 years ago a local co-op stopped using the buildings, and they sat abandoned for 20 years and slowly deteriorated."

There was a movement to have the elevator razed, says Sprecker. "But taking it off the horizon was going to alter Woodbine's skyline, and the old 'milk carton-shaped' elevator, perched at the junction of Hwy. 30 and the historic, brick-paved transcontinental

Lincoln Highway, had been a prominent Woodbine sentinel for several generations.

The project, fueled by a funding partnership between the city, a local farm cooperative, and Main Street, became a reality after securing grants to assist with tearing down some non-contributing structures, rehabbing the elevator façade, and then working through a community design process to determine what would appear as art on the building.

"The community wanted to save the elevator because so many other wooden elevators in the Midwest have been torn down and lost forever. They really rallied around the project," says Sprecker.

The field background, which shows contour farming strips, symbolizes a unique formation of wind-deposited soil called the Loess Hills, located in the western part of Iowa along the Missouri River.

Main Street received some grant funding and contracted with TMCO, a Lincoln, Nebraska company, to do the metal work. Emily Broderson designed the artwork.

"We wanted the artwork to be as sustainable as possible so we designed it to last at least 20 years without requiring any maintenance," says Sprecker. "It's made with high quality



Photo courtesy Deb Sprecker, Woodbine Main Street

Folks driving through Woodbine, Iowa, can't miss the impressive work of art that welcomes visitors to town - a 45-ft. high, rust-colored metal corn stalk on an abandoned grain elevator.

paint, and with LED lights we won't have to change the light bulbs for a long time."

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Pioneer seed dealer Bob Erickson made a giant ear of corn to promote his business using plastic milk jugs.

## Ear Of Corn Boosts Seed Business

Who knew plastic milk jugs could be made up to look like corn kernels? The idea came to Pioneer seed dealer Bob Erickson when he was trying to figure out how to make a giant ear of corn to promote his business. About 1,000 milk jugs and lots of trial and error later he had a 16-ft. long ear of corn sitting in his Westby, Wis., yard.

The inside frame is four sections of concrete reinforcing mesh. The top of the jugs fit perfectly inside the squares. Erickson cut holes in the sides of the jugs and wove fencing wire through them and the mesh. To maintain the ear's round shape, he cut round pieces of 1-in. foam board to place on the ends and between each of his four wire mesh sections. He bent the mesh to shape the ends and spray painted the kernels yellow.

"There's not much weight, but it's strong," Erickson says.

And it's popular at parades, where Erickson throws out bags of "Norwegian Sweet Corn" (candy corn) with his business cards.

Since he built his ear of corn 10 years ago, he's made two more. One for a town that holds a corn festival and one for Richard Kastning, also a Pioneer seed dealer.

"It fits my work, and we have different signs that we mount. Others have borrowed it as well," Kastning says.

A blacksmith painted the corn and built a saddle out of a calf hutch wire frame to hold it on a running gear trailer. When not in a parade, Kastning parks it in his yard with old

John Deere equipment.

Erickson leaves his ear of corn out year round. He maintains it by blowing off loose paint and repainting it annually; so far the jugs are holding up well.

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Bernie and Jackie Legg use an impact wrench to insert lag screws into their rubber boots, improving the traction. They used the same idea on their snowblower's tires.



## Need Some Traction? Stud It!

Whether you get around on 2 legs or 4 wheels, small lag screws can provide cheap traction, say Bernie and Jackie Legg of Lawrencetown, Nova Scotia, who were featured in a recent issue of Rural Delivery magazine.

The Leggs weren't looking forward to buying snow chains for their snowblower at about \$150, so they came up with the idea of studding the tires. They spent about \$5 on

some small lag screws and used an impact wrench to insert them into the tread on both tires.

While Bernie was studding the tires, his wife was complaining that she was losing traction in her rubber boots while walking the dog, so guess what? Yup, she got studded boots as well.

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