By JESSICA CRAWFORD • Daily Leader

“Dances With Wolves” author Michael Blake visited Beaver, Okla., Wednesday bringing with him an appreciation for small town spirit and unity. Along with discussing his novels, he brought with him a lesson of never giving up – a lesson he learned first hand.

Local historian and program chairman of the Beaver County Historical Society Pauline Hodges was proud to introduce Blake to those in attendance at the Activity Center Wednesday evening.

“We really are honored to have the historical society present Michael Blake tonight as our featured author and program,” Hodges said. “You know, of course, that he is best known for his book and film adaptation of ‘Dances With Wolves’ for which he has received the Academy Award. However, he has many other awards, but I am not even going to name all of them because we would be here until midnight.

But some of those are the Golden Globe Award, the Silver Spur Award, the Eleanor Roosevelt Award and an award from the American Library Association.”

Although Blake is most commonly known for his creation of “Dances With Wolves,” he has several other novels under his belt as well – including “The Holy Road,” which is the sequel to “Dances With Wolves,” “Airman Mortensen,” “Marching to Vahalla” and his most recent novel, “Twelve is King.”

As he addressed the Oklahoma Panhandle audience, he very much wanted to convey to them the concept of never giving up on a goal – regardless of how difficult that goal may seem to achieve at the time.

“There is a reason that an internationally known author would come to Beaver, Okla.,” Blake said. “That reason is after ‘Dances With Wolves’ came out, I had lived hand to mouth for many, many, many years. Actually, I left home when I was 17 years old, and until I was

44 years old, I never made more than $10,000 in a year.

“We all come from different areas and do different things, but we all have one thing deeply in common,” he continued. “We do not give up, period. To me it is very important that people with something to offer, with something to share, will not just go to the big cities.

Because, frankly, I like towns like Beaver, Okla., much better than I do driving around L.A., New York, Chicago or St. Louis. It is in towns like this that people are essentially connected. That is what we need more and more in this country – for people to be connected in some way.”

Blake became very interested in Indian history over the years and was encouraged by his friend Kevin Costner to write a novel about the subject. Blake did just that and ultimately found success beyond his wildest dreams.

“‘Dances With Wolves,’ the novel ,was written in a Chrysler 300 that I drove around in L.A. for a year – that I bought for $700,” Blake said of the experience. “I crashed at friends’ houses and slept on their couches, floors and took care of their homes when they were on the road.

“When I finished the book, no one would read it except my friends,”

he said. “So, I decided to exile myself from Hollywood, and I went east to get into the west.”

While Blake was working as a dishwasher in a Chinese restaurant, he received a call from Costner stating he loved the book and requested Blake adapt the novel into a screenplay. Blake did so, and Costner ultimately starred in the 1989 film.

Blake’s most recent publication, “Twelve is King” is something he said, “that came out of my heart and soul.” The story documents the life of a special animal in Blake’s life – a horse named “Twelve.”

“In 1991, I adopted a wild stallion from a concentration camp up in Nevada,” he said. “Most wild horses live to be maybe a dozen years old. He was more than 20 years old when he was captured.

“I was told he was unadoptable because he was too old,” he explained.

“ I ultimately adopted him. He lived with me for 14-and-a-half years but what he did for me, is he taught me more about life on earth than I had ever gotten from another human being, book or movie. I wanted to honor him by writing a book about our relationship and what he taught me over those 14-and-a-half years.”