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CAPITAL ELECTRIC COMMENTS

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OPERATION ROUND UP helps area farmers



Even though yields are down, Merlin Backman is thankful he has a crop to harvest. In this month's center pages, read how Farm Rescue is helping area farmers like Backman, and how your electric cooperative is supporting the program.

OCTOBER IN THIS ISSUE

- Co-op supports family farmers
- Operation Round Up gives grants
- Capital credit claims
- Co-op seeks Youth Tour representative
- Meeting minutes and more!



A resident of Wilton, Merlin Backman farms land that's been in his family for three generations. His parents are Capital members Arvid and Helen Backman, who still live on the homestead northeast of Wilton. Arvid helps Merlin move equipment and still drives the combine on occasion, and Helen works in Bismarck.

One good deed spurs another

GOOD SAMARITAN: One ready and generous in helping those in distress.
--Webster's Collegiate Dictionary

Story and photos by Carmen Devney

When Merlin Backman stopped to help a stranded motorist in March, he wasn't thinking about the crops he planned to seed in a few short weeks. He was focused on helping the young lady and getting her to safety.

As he helped dislodge her car from the snow, Backman felt a tear in his arm. At the time, the pain was replaced with relief in having helped someone in need. But when the arm didn't heal, a trip to the doctor confirmed he had torn a tendon, which had to be reattached to the bone. Surgery, which could not be delayed, was scheduled for April Fools' Day.

Backman, who normally plants wheat, flax and peas in the Capital Electric Cooperative service area northeast of Wilton, was given lifting restrictions follow surgery. Planting a crop — and providing for his family — would be a challenge for the year.

Now in North Dakota, neighbor still helps neighbor. It's the co-op way. But even though Backman had offers of help, he knew everyone would be rushing to plant their crops.

"It was so wet, and everyone was getting behind. A lot of neighbors offered to help, and they would have. But they were having trouble getting their own crops in, and it would have set them back. I hated to do that," he confesses.

Someone suggested he contact Farm Rescue, a one-of-a-kind nonprofit organization that plants and harvests crops free of charge for family farmers who have suffered a major illness, injury or natural disaster.

"I knew of it, and thought they helped other people. I never

thought I'd have to use it," he admits.

Backman applied for help and completed necessary paperwork. Bill Gross, a Cleveland, N.D. native who launched Farm Rescue in 2005, called while he was on business in China to discuss the weather and crops. A few weeks later, Farm Rescue dispatched three volunteers who brought in a John Deere tractor and an air seeder from RDO Equipment Co. of Washburn, and planted 600 acres of wheat in three days.

"All I needed to do was have the trucks there with the seed and fertilizer, and they took care of the rest," Backman



Backman says while this year's crops looked good, yields are low. Farm Rescue wasn't able to seed all his land this spring because of wet conditions, and what did get planted suffered from too much water or disease.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL JOHNSON AND BHG LEADER NEWS

A Farm Rescue crew plants one of Merlin Backman's fields this spring, after Backman tore a tendon helping a stranded motorist.

describes. Neighbors helped provide the extra trucks needed.

And even though the volunteers had everything under control, Gross, a full-time pilot for UPS Airlines, stopped by the farm to continue planting wheat at night.

"He's a pretty neat guy," Backman shares.

While Backman will have to take care of his injured arm for the rest of his life, he was able to harvest his crops in August and September. And even though yields were low due to wet conditions and disease, Backman is thankful he had something to harvest.

Back in March when he stopped to help the stranded motorist, Backman didn't know the young lady, and it didn't matter. She needed assistance, and he wanted to help. A few short weeks later, Backman needed help. And people he didn't know volunteered their time and equipment to plant his crops



COURTESY PHOTO

Meet the Backman family from Wilton

- Merlin is a third-generation farmer. He says farming is all he ever wanted to do.
- Karla is a social worker with the N.D. Department of Human Services.
- Logan, 15, Nicholas, 11, and Kesley, 7, attend school in Wilton.

and help him provide for his family. The generosity shown by Good Samaritans of all kinds starts and builds on one act of kindness.

"I really hated to ask for help," Backman summarizes. "I appreciate the volunteers for coming and doing this, and I am really thankful that there is a program like Farm Rescue for people who need it."



One of the biggest financial drains on a family is an unexpected medical injury, illness or natural disaster. It is even more pronounced on a farm where a family's livelihood depends on the ability to plant or harvest a crop.

Farm Rescue allows families to continue their livelihood by providing the necessary equipment and manpower to plant or harvest their crop, free of charge. The program is active in North Dakota, South Dakota, western Minnesota and eastern Montana.

Founded in 2005 by North Dakota native Bill Gross, Farm Rescue is 100 percent dependent upon volunteers (many of whom are retired farmers), sponsors and individual donors who give their time, talents and financial resources to help put a crop in the ground or harvest its bounty for families in crisis.

For more information on Farm Rescue, call (701) 252-2017, e-mail info@farmrescue.org or visit www.farmrescue.org.

FUNDRAISERS

- Farm Rescue will be holding a banquet on Friday, Oct. 14 at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel in Bismarck. The social starts at 5 p.m. and the dinner starts at 6 p.m. For tickets go to www.farmrescue.org and click on "shop."
- When you bring in the crop, let your local elevator representative know you want to donate a bushel or more to Farm Rescue. Donations are tax deductible. For more information call (701) 252-2017.