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Farm Rescue Helps in the County

By SCOTT WAGAR

Tuesday, May 25, 2010

This past week Farm Rescue spent time in Bottineau County assisting two agricultural families who were in need of help in getting their crops planted.

Bill Gross, the CEO of Farm Rescue, literally came to the rescue for Duane and Nancy Jacques of Kramer, N.D., and Warren and Kristi Miller of Newburg, N.D., who over the winter saw some difficult times in their personal lives, and, which left them in a situation where they could not plant their spring crops.



Farm Rescue volunteers Bruce Radloff (left) and Randy Weaver (right) stand in a field with Duane and Nancy Jacques in Kramer, N.D., this past Monday afternoon.

“We are a one-of-a-kind nonprofit organization that plants and harvest crops free of charge for family farmers who have suffered a major illness, injury, or natural disaster,” Gross said. “Our ability to help families on the land is 100 percent dependent upon some pretty amazing people –

volunteers, sponsors and individual donors. They give of their time, talents and financial resources to help put a crop in the ground or harvest its bounty for families that are in crisis.”

For Duane Jacques, who had triple bypass surgery earlier this spring, his cardiologist has given him strict orders not to work until early June. However, by June it would have been too late for Duane to get his crop in. So, he and his wife called on Farm Rescue.

“It is a fantastic outfit,” Nancy said. “When you farm, and you know you cannot put your crop in, it is nice to have an organization like Farm Rescue – it is an outstanding organization.”

For the Jacques family, Farm Rescue seeded 600 acres of wheat for them. The nonprofit organization, which is made up of volunteers from around the nation who take their vacation time to assist others in need, literally work around the clock once they start seeding. For the group in Bottineau County, made up of three volunteers, they started seeding for the Jacques at 1 p.m. Sunday afternoon and completed the job by late Monday afternoon – seeding straight through the night. “They are a great bunch of people to work with,” Nancy said.

From the Jacques’ farmstead, Farm Rescue traveled over to Newburg to help the Miller family. Warren was diagnosed with colon cancer this past year and started his chemotherapy treatments in February.

“Each time Warren has his chemo treatments, it set him back five to seven days. Because of this we needed help. The community of Newburg has been great to us, but they are busy in the field, too, so we asked Farm Rescue for help,” Kristi said. “And Farm Rescue has been a blessing in disguise because they are easy to work with. They are a very nice group and they are very generous with their time.”

For the Miller family, Farm Rescue planted 650 acres of canola, which they started Tuesday at 8 p.m. and completed by Wednesday afternoon.

Farm Rescue supplies the equipment while the ag producers provided the seed and fertilizer.

Gross was accompanied to Bottineau County with Bruce Radloff of Interlaken, N.Y., and Randy Weaver of Shelbyville, Ky., who traveled all the way to North Dakota just to assist the farmers in need in Bottineau County.

The mission and vision for Farm Rescue is building “bridges” for a better life for others.

“Our mission is to help family farmers bridge crises so they have an opportunity to continue viable operations,” stated Farm Rescue’s website. “One of the biggest financial drains on a family is an unexpected medical injury or illness and, of course, a 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 gives families a chance to continue their livelihood by providing the necessary equipment and manpower to plant or harvest their crop, free of charge.”

Gross established Farm Rescue six years ago out of a dare.

“Gross, a native North Dakotan and full-time pilot for UPS Airlines, (was) like so many farm boys before him. Bill’s heart never left his family’s farm and ranch at Cleveland, N.D.” the Farm Rescue website stated. “And, like so many other farm families, his parents encouraged him to leave that farm in pursuit of a better life.

“But from a bird’s eye view, flying back and forth across our nation at 40,000 feet, Bill kept looking at the farms below. The changing demographics of rural America – fewer farms, less children per family, fewer neighbors – troubled him. And always in the back of his mind, he remembered his father’s concern about what would happen to their farm should anything debilitating happen,” the Farm Rescue website stated. “So, on a long flight over the Pacific Ocean one day, one of Bill’s co-pilots asked him what he was going to do when he retired. Bill didn’t hesitate: ‘I’m going to be this Good Samaritan that buys a tractor and goes around and helps farm families plant their crops.’ That generated some laughter until his co-worker realized Bill was serious. ‘Well, why wait until you retire?’ he challenged. Bill Gross launched Farm Rescue in 2005.”

Today, Gross and his volunteers assist agricultural families in North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Montana by being Good Samaritans on a rescue mission during a time and place in our nation’s history where farms’ ag producers are struggling to survive.

For more information on Farm Rescue, go to farmrescue.org.