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Farm Rescue Founder Receives Honorary Doctorate Degree

HORACE, ND, MAY 16, 2015 – Bill Gross, Founder and President of Farm Rescue, was one of the latest recipients of an honorary doctorate degree from the University of North Dakota, during the school's spring commencement ceremony. At the event, Honorary Doctor of Letter degrees were presented to UND alumnus Bill Gross; and fellow alum Gerald VandeWalle, chief justice of the North Dakota Supreme Court.

"Immense gratitude and humility best describe my feelings of being awarded an honorary doctorate degree from the University of North Dakota," said Bill Gross, Founder and President, Farm Rescue. "I greatly honor and respect the individuals who have dedicated their life to creating such a wonderful intellectual home as the University of North Dakota. Higher education not only allows us to better one's self, but to better the lives of others. I truly believe there is no higher purpose in life than to help one another. May we each use our successes toward an avenue of goodness in society."

"We are proud to call Bill Gross one of our very distinguished alumni at the University of North Dakota," said President Robert Kelley. "Bill is someone who's made a living soaring through the clouds, but his heart has always been connected to the ground and to the men and women whose livelihoods depend so deeply on the soil and for whom this nation owes a great debt of gratitude. He is truly deserving of this honor."

Following a dream of flying, Gross enrolled in UND's aviation program and earned his bachelor's degree in 1988. A skilled pilot while still a student, he was often chosen to fly UND's president (then Tom Clifford) to and from important meetings in Bismarck. These shuttle flights doubled as approved training flights for Gross. Following graduation, he was hired by Pan American Airlines. He then joined United Parcel Service (UPS) and has been flying for them since, delivering cargo around the world as a Boeing 747 Captain.

From his birds-eye view of the farms below, Gross often thought about the uncertainties of rural life, especially when serious injuries or other circumstances occur. In 2005, he put his thoughts into action and founded Farm Rescue. Gross was recognized nationally by CNN News in 2008 on their inaugural "CNN Heroes Show." In the fall of 2014, Farm Rescue provided help to its 300th farm family.

Last November, Gross visited UND to present a talk on "Creating Avenues of Goodness in a World of Detours." He discussed his own experiences with "the detours of life," and the importance of nonprofit organizations and the spirit of volunteering.

The University presents honorary degrees in recognition of outstanding career achievements and service, particularly to those with an association with the institution or with the state and region. The University of North Dakota has awarded honorary degrees since 1909. Among the recipients have been such notables as philosopher Mortimer Adler, heart surgeon Michael DeBakey, and President John F. Kennedy.

About Farm Rescue

Farm Rescue was founded in 2005 and has helped more than 315 families since its inception. The organization's mission is to help farmers who have experienced a major illness, injury, or natural disaster by providing the necessary equipment and manpower to plant, harvest or hay their crop free of charge. Farm

Rescue helps farm families in North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Minnesota, and Iowa. Applications are currently being accepted for the 2015 planting, haying and harvesting seasons, which can be obtained at 701-252-2017 or www.farmrescue.org.

About The University of North Dakota

The University of North Dakota is the state's oldest and largest University, with nearly 15,000 students and more than 225 fields of study. The University is a member of the North Dakota University System, and provides a wide range of challenging academic programs for undergraduate, professional and graduate students through the doctoral level. It encourages students to make informed choices, to communicate effectively, to be intellectually curious and creative, to commit themselves to lifelong learning and the service of others, and to share responsibility both for their own communities and for the world. To learn more, visit und.edu/discover.

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