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PHOTOS BY ANN SCHNOEBELEN | CAPITAL JOURNAL

Charlie Bartsch (left), Marty Finley and Jay Schepp look out over Finley's winter wheat field on his farm near Onida. The combines, trucks and other equipment used by Farm Rescue are all paid for by the organization's local sponsors.

A farm rescue

Organization helps injured area farmer harvest his crops

BY ANN SCHNOEBELEN
news@capjournal.com

PIERRE — Looking at them, a person might guess the four men in blue jeans and worn work boots have known each other for years.

Standing amid the flattened gold stalks of wheat and between two pickup trucks, they talked and laughed as they sipped cool water under the July sun. They lamented the havoc severe weather can have on a crop season, shaking their heads as they discussed the hardships of other farmers they know.

"That's just awful," Marty Finley said as the others described wreckage of a farm hit by a tornado. "Boy, you think you got troubles."

Coming from Finley, the words seem a bit ironic.

Finley was thrown off his four-wheeler in May
SEE Farm • A2



Charlie Bartsch (from left), Jay Schepp, Marty Finley and Pete Von Bank talk Friday afternoon on Finley's farm. Bartsch, Schepp and Von Bank are volunteers for Farm Rescue, an organization that helps farm families affected by injury, illness or natural disasters.

Groups help locals cope

BY RUTH BROWN
ruth.brown@capjournal.com

PIERRE — This is an emotional and stressful time for local residents. But Capital Area Counseling Service and other organizations in the area continue to offer services to help residents cope with the historic flood.

Capital Area Counseling Service continues to offer free counseling for victims of the flood. The Boys & Girls Club of the Capital Area also is offering free membership for children, whether impacted from the flood or not, from 12:15-5:15 p.m.

Jodi Owen, clinical director at Capital Area Counseling, said CACS has had several dozen flood victims come in for counseling as the flood continues to take its emotional toll.

"We've seen the stress of people not being in their home and being cramped into other people's space causing tension," Owen said. "Friction among friends and family sharing that space can be stressful."

Fatigue and a sense of being overwhelmed has been another common issue for those who have come to CACS.

"Everyone says to us 'Gosh, I'm so tired,'" Owen said. "Americans are notorious for running on sleep deprivation and it's wearing on people. We get physically sick when we haven't slept and our immune systems are down."

"We haven't really seen major psychological breakdowns, but we've seen an increase in just being more emotional in general."

Becky Bowers, assistant director of the Boys & Girls Club of the Capital Area, said some of the kids who have come to the facility this summer are evacuees — one reason for the free memberships this summer.

Emily Currey, spokeswoman with Social Services, said the South Dakota Division of Community Behavioral Health also has been working in partnership with CACS to help residents.

CACS will provide service to residents who make appointments and walk-ins at their two locations — at St. Mary's Hospital on the third floor and at 2510 E. Franklin St.

SCOTTY PHILIP MEMORIAL WAGON TRAIL RIDE

Pioneering spirit alive and well with ride

BY EMILY WICKSTROM
news@capjournal.com

FORT PIERRE — After spending a week on the Bad River Trail, participants in the Scotty Philip Memorial Wagon Trail Ride fundraiser reached their final destination of Fort Pierre on Saturday.

But that wasn't necessarily the end of the trail — before the evening activities, the 200 or so participants paraded through Fort Pierre in Scotty Philip fashion.

Darby Nutter, president of the Verendrye Museum in Fort Pierre, said the idea for the memorial wagon ride to benefit the museum was started about a year and a half ago to pay tribute to Philip on the 100th anniversary of his death.



EMILY WICKSTROM | CAPITAL JOURNAL

After spending a week on the Bad River Trail, participants in the Scotty Philip Memorial Wagon Trail Ride fundraiser paraded through Fort Pierre on Saturday.

Philip came to the United States in 1874 and reportedly helped save the buffalo from

extinction. Philip also started the town of Stanley, just north of Fort Pierre.

"We are just very proud to have had him in our community," Nutter said. "During the

Capital fight, Scotty had his own steamboat called the 'Scotty Philip.' He promoted excursions from Pierre over to the buffalo pasture to show off his buffalo. That was one way he brought people to Pierre and he hoped they would vote for Pierre as the state Capital. Scotty was a great promoter and visionary."

To honor Philip, the wagon trains delivered mail to the Philip Post Office via pony express. Any mail coming back also was loaded on the stage coach.

"That was fantastic. We carried a lot of letters from students to students on both ends of the ride," Nutter said. "It gave students a little history and showed them the culture of early America."

SEE Wagon • A2

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(continued from A1...) and airlifted to Sioux Falls, where he underwent surgery to fuse together five vertebrae in his neck. His injuries have made it impossible to continue the portable welding he does to earn most of his income, and he can't use the machinery needed to harvest crops on the land he inherited from his father, located about 12 miles north of Oahe Dam.

Enter Charlie Bartsch, Jay Schepp and Pete Von Bank, all of North Dakota. They're volunteers for Farm Rescue, a nonprofit group based in Jamestown that helps farm families in need after an injury, illness or natural disaster. Finley applied for assistance after hearing about the group from his neighbor.

"I'm just thinking, well, this winter, there's not going to be any income coming in. It's going to be interesting," Finley said. "So anything I can save now can help in the long run."

Farm Rescue founder and president Bill Gross started the organization as a way to help families from backgrounds similar to his own. Gross and his siblings all left the family farm and Gross is now a Boeing 747 captain for UPS Inc., but he said he places a lot of value in family farms and how much hard work goes into their survival.

"I knew there were a lot of family farms that have been on the decline and less children on those farms nowadays," Gross said. "It's harder for neighbors to help one another and I just thought there should be a formal organization to help."

Finley will be Farm Rescue's 149th case, and one of the first in the area. The organization has continually grown, now serving people in North Dakota, South Dakota, eastern Montana and western Minnesota with the assistance of 40 to 50 regular volunteers and a database of close to 1,000. But Gross said he'd like to expand even farther and make certain farmers know about the organization.

"We don't give any money out," he said. "This is not a handout or a bailout. It's just to help a farm family that had an injury, illness or a natural disaster to get through a tough time so they can continue on."

Bartsch, Von Bank and Schepp give similar, simple answers to why they drive hours several times a year to work on the farms of people they don't even know.

"That's our duty," Von Bank said matter-of-factly. "These guys get hurt, we come and help."

Bartsch echoed those sentiments. And then some.

"It's to help people. And for me it's to keep involved with farming," Bartsch said. "It's all I've ever done. This, it's something to do. Living in town, you get kind of bored sitting around. You can only watch so much television."

"And you can only go to the mall so many times," Schepp added, nodding.

By Friday morning, they had finished 63 acres, about half the work. But the rain from the night before caused delays; they'll need to wait a couple hours for the wheat to dry out.

There's a pause in the conversation as chuckles over the last story fade, and Finley looks amiably at the men he met just a day earlier.

"Well," he said, "while we wait, what do you say we get dinner?"

For more information or to apply for assistance from Farm Rescue, visit its website at farmrescue.org or call 701-252-2017.