

HELPING HANDS



Photos by Carrie Snyder / The Forum

Bruce Emery recently lost his wife and suffered a knee injury, preventing him from farming this spring. Volunteers from Farm Rescue on Wednesday came out to his farm in Luverne to help with planting.

Group helps plant ND farmer's crops

Luverne, N.D.

Planting season loomed ominously for Bruce Emery this year.

He was nursing a badly injured knee and mourning his wife and reliable farm sidekick of 20 years, Tamara. For the first time in 36 years of running his family farm, he knew he wouldn't get by on his own.

He didn't have to.

A band of strangers from as far away as Wisconsin converged Wednesday on Emery's farm, 15 miles north of Valley City. They planted 600 acres of wheat and soybeans, free of charge.

FARM RESCUE: Back Page



Brian Verkuehlen helps plant soybeans on Emery's farm.

"It's a new experience for me to depend on people."

– Bruce Emery, Luverne farmer

FARM RESCUE: Group has helped more than 100 farm families since 2005

From Page A1

Jamestown-based nonprofit Farm Rescue summoned them there. This spring, the 5-year-old group is dispatching volunteers to some 20 farms where misfortune recently struck: a severed hand, a brain tumor, ribs crushed by an out-of-control bull, a neck broken in a pickup rollover.

"We're helping Bruce through a difficult time," said Farm Rescue founder Bill Gross, a full-time pilot and one-time North Dakota farm boy.

This spring, Emery's 17-year-old son, Jarret, juggled homework and calving the family's 200 cows. He got up at 5:30 each morning and, occasionally, went to bed come morning.

Laid up in his room, Bruce was antsy.

"My cell phone would go off pretty regularly," said Jarret.

The Valley City High junior took to calling his newly overprotective dad "grandma." Bruce sat him down for a chat.

"I just don't need any more accidents in my life," he told Jarret.

Tamara, a school volunteer and Girl Scout leader, died in November at Fargo's MeritCare after an ATV accident. The tragedy delayed daughter Shana's deployment to Afghanistan with the National Guard.

In February, Emery slipped in his driveway on the way to church and tore a knee cap tendon.

Neighbors and friends rallied to help. For weeks after Tamara's funeral, the family's two freezers were packed with home-cooked dishes. A neighbor combined Emery's beans that fall. But planting season was different.

"You hate to impose on neighbors because everybody's busy," Emery said. "It was pretty stressful thinking about what we were going to do."

That's when a neighbor,



For more information

To find out more about Farm Rescue, visit www.farmrescue.org or call (701) 252-2017.

Tony Heinze, contacted Farm Rescue.

Since 2005, the group has helped more than 100 down-on-their-luck farm families in Minnesota, the Dakotas and Montana. On the heels of coverage in People magazine and on the "Today" show, volunteers flocked from Texas, Pennsylvania and Kentucky.

"I grew up on a family farm, so I can really relate to the hardships these guys encounter," said Joel Kaczynski of Breckenridge, Minn., who came out to run an air seeder on Emery's farm.

More often than not, neighbors reach out to the Farm Rescue, says Gross: "Farmers are proud, independent people who don't want to ask for help."

Emery admits it's been tough for him to watch from his pickup as others tackle the chores he's handled for decades.

"It's a new experience for me to depend on people," he said Wednesday as he watched volunteers prepare to plant the last of his soybean seeds. "I've always done things on my own, and it's hard to turn them over to somebody else, especially strangers."

But he is grateful for the help nevertheless. Now "down to just one crutch," he hopes he will take over again by harvest time. Besides, he has discovered a new trusty sidekick: his son, Jarret.

Inform searchword: Farm Rescue

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Above and below: Farm Rescue volunteers plant soybeans in Bruce Emery's field Wednesday in Luverne, N.D.

Left: Jarret Emery, Bruce Emery's son, is helping out with the farming this spring.

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