



Kenneth Chyle of Auburn, Ky., a volunteer with Farm Rescue, plants soybeans in a field near Leola for Richard Traphagen of Columbia on Tuesday.

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LEOLA—

After Richard Traphagen of Columbia had surgery to remove a burst appendix in April, he knew he would need help planting his 2,800 acres.

His doctor told him he would need about four months to recover.

He and his son, Trent, normally farm their land near Columbia and Leola together. On Tuesday, volunteers from Farm Rescue helped the Traphagens plant soybeans on 250 acres. The nonprofit organization

plants and harvests crops for free for farm families who have experienced hardships, such as a major illness, injury or natural disasters.

Traphagen heard about Farm Rescue before, but never thought he would have to ask for the volunteers' help, he said. Though it's less than 10 percent of his total land (the remainder of the planting was done by Trap-hagen's son with the help of neighbors), Traphagen said any bit of land counts.

"I've never been one for taking something from anybody and it's just the way I've always been," Traphagen said. "But I'm glad I did now because it really helped Trent out and our operation."

Based in **Jamestown**, N.D., Farm Rescue was started in 2006. The organization's reach stretches to farmers in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa and the western part of Montana, according to the organization.

Levi Wielenga, 28, of Sioux City, Iowa, is a train engineer for BNSF Railway, but he volunteers with Farm Rescue for part of the year. The organization is comprised of volunteers who are sent out to help farmers. Along with Wielenga, three other volunteers helped Traphagen.

This is an opportunity to serve God, serve others and farm, all at once, Wielengaa said.

Wielenga said often the farmer in need hears about the organization through family, word of mouth, advertisements or equipment suppliers.

Farmers make an application, which is given to the organization's board for review and approval. If an application is approved, the family is contacted and a date is scheduled.

"We had a farmer about a week ago, and tears came to his eyes and down his face," said Jack Rutledge, 69, a volunteer who lives in

Georgia. "He's a proud man and didn't want to ask for help, but he was grateful."

Though the work is voluntary, Rutledge said he receives his reward through the look of relief on the farmers' faces when they realize they have some income.

Traphagen, who will be out for at least another two months, would recommend the service for farmers in need.

"It's quite an organization, and that's what they're there for," he said.

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