

Pesall feels humbled by outreach during recovery

by Amanda Fanger

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Following open heart surgery earlier this summer, Day County farmer Greg Pesall was in no shape to handle fall harvest.

That's when Farm Rescue stepped in.

A North Dakota based volunteer program, Farm Rescue harvested 316 acres of wheat for Greg free of charge during the first part of September.

Greg's field where volunteers harvested his grain was near Medina, ND. According to Greg, that job would have cost him over \$12,000 to hire done with a custom harvest crew.

Farm Rescue was started in 2006 by Bill Gross, a pilot who had been raised on a North Dakota farm. He had a vision to provide planting, harvesting and haying assistance to farm families who were experiencing a major injury, illness or natural disasters. That help comes in the form of volunteers and is free of charge to the families.

Based in North Dakota, Farm Rescue has reached out to farmers in the Dakotas, Minnesota, Iowa and parts of Montana so far.

The nonprofit organization is run on volunteerism, donations and sponsorships. Equipment for the planting, harvesting and haying is provided by RDO Equipment.

When Greg realized he wasn't going to be recovered from his Aug. 13 procedure in time for fall harvest, family and friends encouraged him to apply for Farm Rescue assistance.

"I did a lot of soul searching. I had to swallow my pride. I was so weak, I couldn't do a dang thing," he said. "Nothing makes you more humble than when you're knocking at heaven's door."

Two days after he submit-

VOLUNTEERS HELP DAY COUNTY RESIDENT



Subscriber snapshots

Following open heart surgery, Greg Pesall, third from left, got a hand from Farm Rescue this fall. Pictured with him are Field Operations Manager Faron Wahl, wife Judy, volunteer John Robertson, Levi and Carol Wielenga and son Justus.

ted an application, he heard back from the Farm Rescue board that his case had been approved and that a team of volunteers would be coming to harvest his wheat.

Those volunteers who came to harvest his fields were from as far away as Texas and Colorado.

And those who came were not what Greg was expecting.

"It changed my whole attitude on the program," he remarked. "You'd think it'd be all men doing it, but it was entire families."

One young family brought their children with.

On Nov. 1, Greg and wife Judy attended the Farm Rescue banquet in Medina,



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Greg Pesall

ND. There, they got to hear the stories of other families who were helped by Farm Rescue this year.

"We were really impressed by the turnout," Greg said, adding that by attending the banquet, he realized, "What I went through is nothing compared to what some families have to deal with."

While Greg is nearly recovered from the surgery to remove a heart aneurysm, he said he still tends to tire a little towards the end of the day and will sometimes get out of breath. "They say it's normal," he said.

Following his ordeal, Greg says he's more appreciative of the local community and organizations that lend a helping hand, such as Farm Rescue.

"I used to just work all the time and not give back to the community. I never realized doing things for the community is just as important as working all the time," he said.

Come this next year, Greg plans to give back to Farm Rescue by becoming a volunteer.

Judy even plans to have a fundraiser of some sort in the future, possibly a hair cutting booth at the Farm, Home & Sports show later this winter where all the pro-

ceeds will be donated to Farm Rescue.

Judy said, "I just want to make sure people know how appreciative we are of what they've done for us."

In recent years, other Day County residents who have been recipient to the Farm Rescue program are Dan Ash and Curtis Morehouse.

In addition to the support Greg received from Farm Rescue, he says he was just as surprised by the outpouring of support he received from those in the community of Day County.

"I was on death's doorstep. People I didn't think cared a tinker's darn about me sent cards and called to check on me," Greg said. "I've come away with a different feeling of the people in our community."

He says he realized that although people have their differences, he witnessed a firsthand account of people pulling together. He said, "I have a newfound respect for our community of Day County."

This year, Farm Rescue helped 50 families, helping them to achieve a milestone of over 300 families that have been helped since it's incorporation. Haying and baling was new for the program this year.

A HELPING HAND DURING HARVEST



Greg Pesall, left, stands at the edge of his field and talks with a group of volunteers with Farm Rescue who harvested 316 acres of wheat free of charge this fall. Greg was unable to harvest his own fall crop because of having undergone open heart surgery Aug. 13.