

# 'A lot of good-hearted people'

## Farm Rescue helps another local family

BY SUE KRAFT

*Benson County Farmers Press*

When Leeds resident Kevin Anderson underwent heart surgery in January, he thought the worst was behind him -- but, unfortunately, he was wrong.

Anderson experienced several complications and was in and out of hospitals for months. He is now recuperating back home and said he is very grateful to those who kept his farm going when he was unable to work.

"Luckily for Farm Rescue and our neighbors, everything is done," he said.

Anderson underwent an aortic

The ambulance took him to Minot where doctors discovered blood and water around his heart.

He spent three weeks in the Minot hospital, but found he still had a hard time breathing, so he went to the nearby Towner County Medical Center.

"I was in Cando for 12 days and they sent me to Rochester," he said. The doctors there "took about 20 minutes" to discover he had a hole in his heart.

"They did a test and the air bubbles were going to one side," he said. "That probably caused my lack of oxygen."

The doctors scheduled an opera-

He said at one point he began to cough and the doctors removed the mask with anesthesia. He said the pain became very intense very fast and he wanted the mask returned.

"I said, 'I think I'm okay now,'" he recalled with a smile.

Anderson made it back to his farm northwest of Leeds on April 5.

"I'm still really tired," he said. "Most of the time I'm okay, I just can't do a heck of a lot."

He said he isn't sure when he will be back to 100 percent, but he is looking forward to it.

"I hope it's soon," he said.

Anderson said friends and family have been rallying around him with support and he and his wife are so appreciative.

"Our son Jason went with (to Rochester), drove us down there, we'd have been lost without him," Anderson said. "We'd be at an appointment and he'd run ahead and get the next appointment ready."

Jason lives in Devils Lake; the couple's other son, Brady, lives in Fargo.

Anderson said neighbor Mark Ahlberg has also been invaluable.

"He calls every day, he's been lining up people to work," he said.

Anderson said he doesn't have any livestock, but he farms about 2,200 acres. He said many friends and neighbors have helped to get his crop in the ground, but he wasn't sure they had time to complete it.

That's where Farm Rescue came in.

"Dad was the first one (to mention it)," he said. "My uncle used to work for Farm Rescue. That's how we got the application."

Farm Rescue is a nonprofit organization that will help with planting, harvesting and haying, free of charge, to family farmers who have suffered an injury, illness or natural disaster. Volunteers from all over the country lend a hand to the farmers in need.

Farm Rescue spokesperson Carol Wielenga said some volunteers are retired farmers and others are younger guys, who use their vacation time to help others.

"It's a lot of good-hearted people," she said.

Anderson said he was very relieved when he found out the organization would finish planting his final 500 acres of beans.

He said two volunteers from Farm Rescue visited his farm -- Benson County native Mike Melaas and one volunteer from Ohio.

Melaas is a 1996 graduate of Minnewaukan High School and the son of Kathy Melaas and the late Randy Melaas.

Currently living in Minot, Melaas said he takes one week in the spring and one week in the fall to volunteer for Farm Rescue. As a former farm boy, he said he enjoys getting back out in the field and helping local farmers.

The volunteers worked Memorial Day weekend at the Anderson farm, planting beans on Saturday and Sunday and picking up the equipment Monday morning. The team was then heading to Minnesota to help another farmer in need.

Anderson said he thanked the guys for coming and joked a bit with Melaas.

"He said, 'It's my vacation,' and I said, 'Wouldn't you rather be at the beach?'" Anderson recalled. "He said, 'No, I like this.'"

For more information on Farm Rescue or to obtain an application, visit [farmrescue.org](http://farmrescue.org).



Kevin and Donna Anderson are pictured outside their home near Leeds on May 27. The couple says they are very grateful for the help they received from friends, neighbors and Farm Rescue to get their crops planted.

valve replacement on Jan. 28, 2015 and thought he was on the road to recovery.

"That went okay," he said. "But, about a week later, I got sick and had to call an ambulance."

It was the first day his wife, Donna, had returned to work.

tion for him on his birthday, April 3. Anderson said they implanted a closure device in his heart through his leg, the same way an angioplasty is performed -- and just as painful.

"You have to be awake through it," he said. "They give you anesthesia."



Leeds farmer Kevin Anderson (right) visits with Farm Rescue volunteer Mike Melaas before the day's work began. Melaas, a graduate of Minnewaukan High School, volunteers for the organization twice a year -- one week in the spring and another in the fall.



Farm Rescue volunteer Mike Melaas is shown preparing the beans to be planted at the Anderson farm. Melaas, who was raised on a farm near Maddock, currently lives in Minot and says he is thankful whenever the organization brings him back to his home county.



The Farm Rescue tractor and equipment sit idle at the Anderson farm near Leeds on Sat., May 23. The organization helped the family with seeding after Kevin Anderson underwent heart surgery and suffered from numerous complications.