

Neighbors, Farm Rescue cooperate to get crop in the bin near Conde

BY CONNIE SIEH GROOP

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Last week, in a field near Conde, just off State Highway 37, it didn't matter what color the equipment was, there was work to be done. As twilight approached, movement continued, racing toward the goal of helping a friend in need. An injury sidelined a Conde farmer, but his crop is taken care of, thanks to the team from Farm Rescue and to neighbors.

Steve Schaller's crop is in the bin. That's what counts.

Neighbor Steve Dunker believes that 21 people were involved in getting the work done. Depending on their situation, farm machines rotated into the working group. In total, there were six combines helping, four-grain carts and a dozen trucks. RDO furnished food for them on Oct. 20.

"It was pretty crazy to have all that equipment driving around," Schaller said this week.

Schaller said he hasn't had much use of his shoulder after his rotator cuff tore. He's been battling this injury for 9 months. He did put this spring's crop in and had shoulder work redone in June.

Schaller has been told to stay away from dirt and dust, which is next to impossible during harvest season. "My body rejected what was done and I ended up with a serious infection," he said. "Each day, I

have been going to Sanford in Aberdeen for IVs to help battle this infection."

As harvest neared, he knew he couldn't get this year's crop off the fields by himself. He called Farm Rescue. Three weeks later they came and started on the crop.

With warm, dry conditions, that crew got about 400 acres done. Then with neighbors pitching in, 600 to 700 more acres got taken out in a couple of days. Using combines with 12-row headers, grain-carts that could rove around the fields and dump into the trucks, it didn't take long to clear the fields. The corn yielded about 150 bushels an acre.

"They really saved me," Schaller said. "I've farmed by myself since I was 18. I was really humbled by all the help I got." Schaller has lived on the farm since 1981.

"It was tough to see so many doing my work. I had so many mixed emotions," Schaller said. "It was wonderful. Craig Dunker got everyone pulled together. What can I say?"

Schaller was in Omaha this week to have an exterior drain installed in his shoulder. He'll be out of commission for another 2 1/2 weeks, and then doctors will evaluate and see what the next step will be.

"What a blessing, it was a real Godsend," Schaller said.

Understanding equipment

Farm Rescue coordinator Dexter Schaible organized the

team and coordinated with the neighbors to handle the harvest push at Schallers.

Schaible lives north of Sioux City and has been working with Farm Rescue for six months. This is his third time out. He spent 42 years working in the ag machinery business, has designed products and worked with many facets of the industry all over the world. He worked for AGCO until 2007. He worked in another farm manufacturing business and now is with Farm Rescue. He understands equipment, and he enjoys working with farmers. This outreach is a great way to contribute to those in need in the ag community.

"It's a great organization with a tremendous volunteer effort," Schaible said.

Banquet for volunteers

Founder of Farm Rescue, Bill Gross, called from Seattle to add his praise for the volunteers.

"Normally we do a project like this ourselves," Gross said. "Having some of the neighbors assist got the job done quickly. What a great help that was for the family."

This was the 298th case for the volunteer organization. After helping the Schallers, the crew moved to Gary and Janet Kopecky's farm in Orient. On Thursday this week, they were

scheduled to help the 300th family, John and Sheree Dubbels near Fergus Falls, Minn. The group started helping farmers in need in 2006; volunteers come from all over the country. This year they have had representatives from 15 different states, to help with planting, harvesting or haying.

Farm Rescue's annual banquet will be Nov. 1 in Fargo at the Ramada Plaza Suite, with a 5 p.m. social, 6 p.m. meal. It will recognize and celebrate with volunteers, farm families and sponsors. There will be a raffle drawing and a concert by Jason Brown and his band from

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Kenneth Chyle of Auburn, Kent., came to South Dakota to help the Farm Rescue crew.

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Iowa. Go to farmrescue.org to get tickets.

How has Farm Rescue changed through the years? Gross said there are hundreds and hundreds of volunteers. "It has a much bigger workforce than when we started," Gross said, "We have more equipment provided by RDO. This is the first year we've been able to provide help with haying in addition to planting and harvesting."

The geographical area has been extended into Iowa. Farm Rescue hays, plants and harvests crops for farmers in the Dakotas, Minnesota, Iowa and eastern Montana who have experienced an illness, injury or natural disaster. Donations, business sponsors and about 1,000 volunteers support it.

"In 2014, we will have helped 50 to 52 farm families," Gross said. "It's a record year and a milestone year."

Major sponsors are RDO providing John Deere equip-

ment, Dacotah Bank, North Central Farmers Elevator, Wheat Growers, Glacial Lakes Energy and Wal-Mart,

Kentucky help

Not all those working in Conde knew Schaller. Age 66, Kenneth Chyle of Auburn, Kent., retired from farming in 2007. He knows how to drive a combine with a 12-row header and didn't mind talking to an ag writer while driving down the rows. Dust sometimes obscured his view but instinctively, he piloted the harvest machine through the field. A flashing light signaled when it was time to dump a load into a grain cart. The machine scooped up the ears, stripped the kernels and poured the gold-colored grain into the waiting wagon, never missing a beat.

This is Chyle's fourth year with Farm Rescue. He came to help on Oct. 7 and will stay until the crew puts the machines away for the year. It may be mid-November, it may be

Thanksgiving, but he'll stay until the work is done.

He raised corn, beans, wheat and tobacco on his farm. An average of 60 inches of rain would fall on his own land in Kentucky, netting 180 to 200 bushels of corn per acre. To give a perspective of the differences, a friend of Chyle had 4,000 acres of wheat with an average of 86 bushels per acres. In that area, beans, which average 50 bushels per acre, can be planted after the wheat is taken off the



Farm Forum Photo by Connie Sieh Group

Combine silhouetted in a cornfield near Conde.

land. Chyle said lime needs to be added to the soil to make the nutrients in the soil function.

"It's my time to give back," Chyle said. "I lost two wives

and got a lot of help. My first wife was in the hospital for 17 days after a car crash. The neighbors milked my cows and took care of things while I stayed at the hospital until she died. I couldn't have survived without their help."

Now retired, Chyle has time to help others.

"It was a choice between getting bigger or getting out," Chyle said. "I decided since the kids weren't coming back, it was time to get out. Farm Rescue gives me a chance to give back."

If there are families out there that still need help due to illness, injury or natural disaster that prevented them from planting, haying or harvesting their crop in a timely manner, it's not too late. Applications can be made at farmrescue.org. Referrals can also be made for those families who may need help.

"Life changes," Schaller said. "You never know when you're going to need help."



Steve Schaller

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