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*"They were such a gift from God really."*

**Angela Strand**

whose family received help from Farm Rescue to keep their Nome, N.D., farm operating

## Farm Rescue works to save families

**By Katie Ryan**

THE JAMESTOWN SUN

After her husband suffered two strokes last year, Angela Strand and her family didn't know what to do.

In addition to Brent Strand's physical therapy appointments, the Strand family had a farm to keep and planting to do, she said.



**John M. Steiner** / The Sun

Bill Gross, president and founder of Farm Rescue, said the organization aided 36 farms last year. The group assists with planting and harvesting to help families suffering from injury, illness or natural disaster.

The family had some help, she said, but not enough.

Brent Strand's father, then 10-year-old son and hired hand did what they could. But the three couldn't plant all 1,700 acres of soybeans in time, so last May volunteers from Farm Rescue traveled to the Strands' farm in Nome, N.D., to help.

“They were such a gift from God really,” she said.

Volunteers like Bill Gross, president and founder of Farm Rescue, planted about 700 acres of soybeans throughout the day and all through the night. Gross himself planted during a 1 to 7 a.m. shift.

Farm Rescue made a difference for her family, Strand said. Without it, the family may have lost its livelihood.

“It was the difference between failing and making it last year, and they (Farm Rescue volunteers) did it,” Strand said.

Last year, Farm Rescue aided 36 farms. Since its founding in 2005, the nonprofit has helped almost 70 farms in North Dakota, South Dakota, western Minnesota and eastern Montana, Gross said. The organization doesn’t give financial aid, Gross said. It assists with planting and harvesting to help families suffering from injury, illness or natural disaster.

Gross, a farm boy from Cleveland, N.D., saw how devastating those events were for farm families. Now, he said, it’s even worse.

“It just has become harder and harder for neighbors to help one another,” Gross said.

Today, Gross, a full-time UPS pilot, devotes his vacation, free time and every available layover to Farm Rescue.

“It’s basically a full-time second job for me,” he said.

Like Gross, more than 50 volunteers actively help with Farm Rescue operations. Except for two full-time staff members, no one is paid, he said.

*“I got as much of a reward helping these families, as you know, as most people do going to Disney World.”*

**Dave Sette**

Farm Rescue volunteer who drove 700 miles to pitch in

Most of the volunteers are from the Upper Midwest, Gross said. But some, like Dave Sette, came a long distance for the cause. He drove more than 700 miles to do volunteer work for Farm Rescue.

Sette saw a “Today” show broadcast one morning featuring the organization. He identified with one of the farmers, he said, because the farmer’s wife was battling cancer.

Sette, who lost his mother to the disease in 2001, said working on the farm helped him cope.

“I got as much of a reward helping these families, as you know, as most people do going to Disney world,” he said.

The work is rewarding, Gross said, because the families are so grateful. Farm Rescue workers see a mix of emotions, Gross said. Some of the families smile, he said. Others cry.

“You can practically see it in their faces when we pull into the yard with the equipment and volunteers,” he said.

Volunteers like Gross and Sette did more than planting for her family, Strand said. They also comforted and encouraged her scared and stressed husband and children.

“‘Thank you’ does not even touch the gratitude that we have in our heart,” she said.

More than 500 have offered to volunteer, Gross said, but because of financial constraints, Farm Rescue will not expand this year. The organization had to turn down about half of the families who’d requested help, Gross said.

“It isn’t that we have a lack of volunteers, it’s a financial thing,” he said.

Even so, Sette plans to make another 12-hour trip. Although it’s a lengthy drive, Farm Rescue and its mission just fit, he said.

“Wherever I can do the most good for them is where I’ll go,” Sette said.

To help or make a donation to Farm Rescue, visit [www.farmrescue.org](http://www.farmrescue.org).

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